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General Certificate of Education (A-level)
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Geography GEOG2

(Specification 2030)

Unit 2: Geographical Skills

Report on the Examination

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General

This was the sixth series of Geog2 Geographical Skills. The paper followed a well established format with plenty of guidance material provided by past papers now available for centres.

Of the maximum 50 marks, 25 were available through the examination of Geographical Skills (Specification, page 16) and 25 through the examination fieldwork experience.

The 'vehicle' through which the skills are examined is either the Core Physical Section (Rivers) or Core Human Section (Population Change). In this paper Rivers was the theme. As with all Geog2 papers, there are 6 marks allocated to Assessment Objective One (Page 18 of the Specification). This means that subject content is also examined in each skills paper.

The second part of the paper worth 25 marks was a series of linked fieldwork questions; five in total on this paper. The questions had to be sufficiently broad to allow all candidates fair access to the paper. The basis for the questions is always the Investigative Skills section found on page 16 of the Specification.

It was pleasing to see so many candidates having undertaken a wide variety of enquiries. River studies were very common. Centres also have to be aware that the fieldwork must come from some part of the Specification. A minority of responses still showed at best only a very tenuous link to the Specification.

Candidates generally scored well in the first section. The standard deviation calculation was completed well by many candidates; though interpreting the result less so. Even those who had apparently not prepared so well for this sort of question could access at least some of the marks.

The guidance on the front of the paper continues to make reference to the necessary equipment for the completion of this paper. On this paper, a calculator and a sharp pencil were essential. Candidates without this equipment put themselves at risk of wasting time and losing credit. Bringing the correct equipment is essential for all Geog2 examinations.

In relation to the fieldwork section of the paper, it is important to note that questions will vary in every series in order to reduce the formulaic nature and potential predictability of writing about fieldwork. If candidates have undertaken a full piece of fieldwork and experienced all aspects of the subsequent write-up, they will have every chance of being successful in the examination. Question 2(b) stood out as one in which too many candidates misunderstood the command word and merely described the method of data collection. It is advisable for centres to ensure that their candidates have a clear grasp of the different demands which command words place on their ability to respond to different questions.

Question 1

1(a)(i) The key issue in the table related to using two decimal places. Candidates who went to more than two decimal places were not penalised, but those who rounded up incorrectly were penalised. Forgetting to calculate the square root meant that such candidates lost easy marks on the second part of the calculation.

1(a)(ii) Interpreting the calculated figure proved difficult for many candidates. Simple reference to large variation in rainfall along with some manipulation of the calculated figure would have scored full marks.

1(b)(i) The skill here was using and interpreting isolines. The first mark required candidates to simply join up the 5cm depths and extend the line to the top and bottom of the box on the correct side of the surrounding river depth measurements. The second mark was reserved for accuracy i.e. the line had to be drawn through the correct point between depth measurements e.g. for 1-7, the line had to be drawn through a point much closer to 7 than 1 and so on throughout the range. For the label of deep pool, anywhere inside the 25cm isoline was creditable.

1(b)(ii) This question was withdrawn from marking due to an error on the paper. The figure on the right hand side near to point Y should have read 0.05 not 0.5. All candidates were awarded full marks for this question.

1(c)(i) The question required an accurate plot and label on a logarithmic scale. Those who had experience of using the logarithmic scale scored two relatively straightforward marks. Some made simple errors by misreading the scale and others forgot to label the points, losing one mark.

1(c)(ii) For this question, candidates had to simply read off the graph and select the appropriate process. Those who did not complete 1(c)(i), could not complete this question. However, the majority of candidates scored full marks.

1(c)(iii) This question tested knowledge and understanding of the Hjulstrom curve. Candidates had to focus on the deposition process and explain how the smallest/ lightest clay and silt based particles are never deposited and instead remain as solute or suspended load. As particles become larger / heavier they remain deposited until velocity reaches speeds identifiable on the graph to be transported by traction, saltation or suspension. Use of Figure 4 in correlating certain particle sizes with corresponding river velocities to illustrate when deposition occurs would have constituted a full answer.

Question 2

2(a)(i) In outlining purpose, basic responses did little more than describe the aim and hypothesis, and were held to Level 1. In order to gain more credit, candidates needed to give greater detail on purpose in terms of exactly what they were researching or testing. Exploration of underlying theory was one mechanism. For a human study, identification and outline of the local issue was another possible approach.

2(a)(ii) For risk assessment, candidates had to clearly identify the risks associated with their study. For example bad weather creates the risk of hypothermia or heavy rain creates the risk of falling over and twisting an ankle. Weaker answers could not clearly and precisely identify risks. Following this, responses then needed to describe how such risks could be managed or minimised. Provided the first part was done properly this was relatively straightforward. The most sophisticated responses offered a mechanism for measuring the likelihood and potential magnitude of such risks and used this to design their management strategy. Others referred to ongoing risk management during the visit. Such responses comfortably scored Level 2.

2(b) The command word in this question was ‘evaluate’. The easiest way to evaluate the method was to refer to its strengths and weaknesses in relation to data being collected. Those who misunderstood the question and ‘described’ method of data collection scored no credit. Those who offered improvements also scored credit. For full marks there had to be some explicit evaluative comment such as ‘...this method was broadly effective in allowing me to achieve my objectives though there were some limitations...’.

2(c) In summarising the findings, candidates needed to briefly outline the main elements arising out of the study. Listing of results from particular sites scored only one mark as did repetitive statements such as ‘...the river got wider downstream... the river got deeper downstream etc’. Using of supporting data and identification of anomalies provided the main approaches to scoring credit.

2(d) Candidates needed to briefly revisit expected outcomes and explore extent to which findings were realised. This should have included exploration of relationships where appropriate and the extent to which findings matched underlying theories, concepts or ideas. Where findings did not match those which were expected credit was available for examining this and offering reasons for such alternative outcomes.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results statistics page of the AQA Website.

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