



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2011**

General Studies B

GENB2

(Specification 2765)

Unit 2: Space

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on **the Examination** are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2011 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

GENB2 Space

General Comments

Time management was much less of an issue this session. Very few candidates appeared to be struggling to write full answers to Question 3 because of that factor. Similarly, the final parts of each of the other questions received appropriate attention. This was very gratifying as candidates appeared to be able to achieve on all questions.

Quality of English was generally good but there was still evidence of poor handwriting which made a number of scripts very difficult to read. Fewer candidates than last year were using pale inks; it must be emphasised that writing should be in black. All questions and their constituent parts were well attempted and there was again evidence of the specification having been taught and candidates applying their knowledge.

A final introductory point, one referred to several times below, is that it is crucial that candidates read a question carefully, answering the one that has been set and not the one they wished or expected might be set.

Question 1(a)

This is always a challenging question, especially as it is the first on the paper. The evidence is that candidates handled it rather better this year and were able to pick out the changes and trends. Unfortunately, far too many merely described the data or wrote about the why of a trend, without any reference to the data. Few realised that the figures for 2011 and 2012 were projections and wrote as if they had already happened. The most common reason cited was the search for an alternative planet or other life forms. A few disappeared into science fiction but most provided sensible ideas. It was encouraging that some, albeit not many, knew that the space shuttle was being decommissioned but many could link advances in technology to space observation and the greater sophistication of monitoring the earth from space. The relatively constant figures for education confused some who believed that people were better educated at school and now had degrees, therefore NASA was no longer responsible for teaching them to GCSE (sic) level. Rather few candidates were able to spell astronaut correctly.

Question 1(b)(i)

This was much better done than on previous occasions. The vast majority of candidates could work out percentages. Lost marks were attributable generally to three factors:

- careless addition
- failure to provide an overall total
- inaccurate rounding of the percentage

Question 1(b)(ii)

Most candidates managed to provide two adequate reasons with a little amplification. Candidates would help themselves if they clearly identified the reasons in separate short paragraphs, even labelling them “Reason 1” etc.

The majority of candidates who lost marks did so because they did not read the question properly. It was about earth observation and not about space observation or the spin-offs resulting from earth observation. Consequently, candidates who wrote about observing Mars, SATNAVS and communications satellites failed to gain credit. Similarly, those who made the same point but gave two different examples would not have been given credit:

surveillance, for example, was a good answer if exemplified by reference to espionage or monitoring hostile powers but not by separating them into two different reasons. Perhaps too many candidates watch *Spooks* and are influenced by this programme towards quite fanciful ideas.

Question 1(c)

Reading the question, again, proved a major problem for some candidates. This part was about space research and not Earth observation. Vagueness of answers was a problem here, with few candidates being aware of how we have benefited indirectly from space research. However, most candidates could write a two-sided answer and there were some very good responses which balanced output from space research with the prior need to resolve problems such as health, poverty, education and global warming on Earth. Very few candidates could refer specifically to scientific examples like the Hubble telescope and its importance. However, there was a small number of candidates who showed excellent technical knowledge and could apply it to the question. It was disturbing to read from a number of candidates that it was not until the NASA space programmes began that we realised the Earth was not flat.

Question 2(a)

This question proved to be very accessible, with candidates picking up clues from the image. There were interesting and well amplified points relating to celebrations, cultural activities, community spirit, dress, food and entertainment. The optimism in most answers was enormously encouraging particularly over issues like tolerance, understanding and co-operation. Weaker responses tended to be generalised whilst better ones drew on specific references and, frequently, local and personal knowledge. Only one candidate could not work out why the weather was so dull for a carnival in Brazil and why the British police officer was there.

Question 2(b)

The weakness of many answers was a focus on immigration rather than multi-culturalism. The more sensitive answers reflected on the changing nature of Britain as a consequence and how it might create issues. Good answers referred to contemporary issues particularly those generated by groups like the BNP but too many dwelled on Nazi Germany to illustrate the mistreatment of one part of society by another, which suggests that a contemporary approach to this topic was not being taken in some centres.

There were, however, many good answers that talked about culture-clash, challenges to the status quo, the decline of the notional 'traditional' British way of life, segregation in some towns and cities and the impact of positive discrimination. Sadly, there was a minority who chose to express their own, often ill-informed points of view on immigration and multi-culturalism.

Question 2(c)

Reading the question was an issue here, too, with far too many candidates assuming it was about migrants to Britain. Unless a generic point about issues surrounding migration was mentioned at the start, candidates who took this line were unlikely to score marks. A surprisingly large number of candidates did not know the difference between immigration and emigration. Many of those who did grasp the idea that it was partly about leaving Britain, still wrote what might have been prepared responses about fleeing famine, natural disasters, and wars, taking on unskilled work, providing cheap labour and helping to repopulate countries

with low birth rates. It is almost as if many candidates could not believe the question was not about migration to Britain.

More successful answers often focused on Australia and its quota system and desire for skilled labour and professionals, altruistic work in more economically-deprived parts of the world, and the whole concept of a 'better' life. Retirement to the south of France and Spain featured prominently with some thoughtful insight into the impact of British migrants on the local infrastructure, economy and traditional culture.

Question 3(a)

Gratifyingly, candidates by and large realised that both parts of Question 3 require one-sided responses and there were very few who attempted to give a two-sided answer. With both parts of this question, candidates need to select judiciously from the source and then develop their ideas, giving wherever possible their own ideas and examples. Relatively few candidates addressed the position of different interested parties and their reasons. This was a key to entering the top Level of marks. It is important that reference is made to the groups who would have a view on the issues raised by Source E.

As on previous occasions, far too many candidates were over-reliant on the source and had no awareness of other species that might be introduced. There was some confusion over what animals were here, for example assuming that red squirrels had been completely eradicated. Interest groups were rarely addressed; it is generally not helpful to candidates if they begin with "Some people ..". It ought not to be too difficult to make reference to environmental groups, ornithologists, even tourists. Few candidates scored high marks, failing to get beyond general statements on biodiversity and general Britishness of the countryside. Better candidates used local knowledge, referred to regeneration and putting right earlier mistakes. A number of quite interesting moral arguments were put forward.

Question 3(b)

As with Question 3(a), most gave a one-sided response but, like the previous question, exemplification was weak. The grey squirrel/red squirrel debate was common with some even being aware of the even more voracious American black squirrel. Sadly, one-candidate thought the British red had been eradicated by grey rabbits. Other good examples were crayfish, wolves and red fern trees. There was sound awareness of food webs and food chains, sometimes confusing the two, and disturbance of the current eco-balance. Other common themes were the risk of disease, invasiveness and the survival of the newly-integrated species. Again there was confusion over what had actually disappeared from the landscape. The fear of history repeating itself and the idea that we may have learned nothing were common.

Like Question 3(a), the weakest merely selected from the source whilst the best used it and added knowledge of their own.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.