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

General Studies B   GENB2

(Specification 2765)

Unit 2: Space

Report on the Examination

GENB2 Space

General Comments

As reported in January, time management seems to be less of an issue which suggests that candidates are now better prepared for the examination. However there were still instances of candidates simply omitting the calculation and instances of relatively short responses to Question 3. The majority of candidates used the spaces provided in the answer book to advantage as a guide as to how much is expected but that does not preclude a candidate having additional sheets. It is quite possible to achieve full marks on any question with a succinct and focused answer. It was again very pleasing to see answers achieve full marks with well-written responses.

Quality of English was generally good but there was still evidence of atrocious handwriting which made a number of scripts very difficult to read. Most questions and their constituent parts were well attempted and there was again evidence of the specification having been taught and candidates applying their knowledge. More candidates showed evidence of planning answers which undoubtedly helped. It was a shame that some did not stick to their plan and wrote significantly weaker answers than their plan suggested.

Fewer candidates than in previous years answered their own question rather than the one set, but far too many still offered a two-sided answer when only a one-sided response was required. Candidates should read the question first and identify the key words to help focus their response.

Question 1(a)

In general, this was poorly answered. Candidates who got the wrong answer and showed minimal or no working would inevitably score no marks. Too many did not notice that the change in household emissions was a negative figure, thereby throwing away at least one mark. It was depressing to observe that many candidates had forgotten how or simply failed to "round" figures properly. Even more depressing was the number of candidates who could not calculate a simple percentage at all. There is still evidence that candidates have not been prepared for this question as many claimed not to have a calculator, although having one is not essential.

In this unit, a requirement of the specification is 'to complete a simple calculation' from the data. Four marks are often too readily lost.

Candidates who used the data correctly would have been guided for Question 1(b), although some chose to ignore what they had just calculated and wrote about a decline in transport emissions in 1(b).

Question 1(b)

This question was done a lot better than in previous years. There was still a tendency for candidates to ignore 'referring specifically to the data'. Many wrote competent or good answers to explain the changes but made no acknowledgement of the data other than, for example, that emissions from households had decreased. Had the reason been supported by specific reference to the data, a simple calculation to show the difference in the decrease, further credit would have been awarded.

Many did not notice that the figures were in million tonnes, thereby displaying a lack of understanding of the source. Far too many failed to notice that transport emissions had increased and so wrote irrelevant material, often citing electric trains and hybrid cars as the reasons for the decrease. Too many confused CO_2 emissions with CFCs and holes in the ozone layer.

On the positive side, the question was generally well understood and suggested plausible reasons for the changes, taking each category in turn rather than writing in generalities. A wide range of suggestions was offered including reference to government initiatives (especially following from Kyoto), increased car ownership, energy efficiency and the move towards renewable energy sources.

Question 1(c)

There were some very clear and well focused answers to this question but many candidates did not interpret the key words "household" and "government" and simply wrote responses about saving energy in general. Recycling and transport were commonly mentioned but scored no marks as they were not household emissions. Similarly, those who omitted to reference government measures and wrote about what individuals could do without referencing the role of government were inevitably going to suffer. The best examples referred specifically to policies (local and/or national), advertising programmes, education, grants and initiatives. Candidates will help themselves if they paragraph each of their suggestions and limit the point and explanation to a maximum of four lines for each point.

Question 1(d)

The focus of this question was on individuals rather than government or other outside agencies. It was also broader and looked at global warming rather than just CO_2 emissions. The greatest sin of omission was any reference to the likely effectiveness of the proposed measures. Better answers discussed involvement in pressure groups, alternatives to the car, holidaying in the UK, recycling as a means of helping to reduce industrial emissions and food miles. Boris Johnson featured prominently with candidates who advocated cycling. Many of the better answers discussed the issue of individual action in the context of the global problem citing some nations as particularly bad offenders in terms of emissions. Weaker responses simply listed measures that could be taken.

Question 2(a)

Pleasingly, relatively few candidates incorrectly presented both sides of the argument for this question (and for Question 2(b)) compared with last year. Good use was made of the image with a lot of candidates noting the snow and how railways are often less likely to experience disruption than roads. Size and volume of loads, speed, effects on the environment and economic considerations featured prominently in this question. Some chose to answer the question by focusing on the problems associated with road transport to explain why rail was better and often referred effectively to source D and developing issues of road congestion. A surprisingly large number of candidates did not appear to know words like 'truck', 'wagon' or 'container' and used words like 'cart' and 'carriage'. Nor did they appear to have any idea how many tonnes could be hauled by one locomotive.

Question 2(b)

This question was generally well done with answers focusing on door-to-door deliveries, local traffic, size of load, personal service and companies that owned their own fleet with their own logo, something often picked up from the Source. Other answers focused on remote areas and the problems of accessing rail yards. A significant number assumed that rail freight went on passenger trains, forgetting what they had probably written about in the previous question.

In both Questions 2(a) and 2(b) candidates missed opportunities to give specific examples of the sort of freight that could be transported more appropriately by road or rail. References to perishables, bulk commodities like coal or steel, high-value items or food products using the company's own fleet could have lifted the marks of many.

Question 2(c)

Of the three questions in this section, this was the least well done. There was a lot of confusion over the amount of land that would be taken up during construction, the time-scale and the environmental impact. Too many ignored the thrust of the question which was about passenger transport problems and merely wrote about the environmental impact which was, of course, creditworthy. Most candidates favoured rail expansion but a significant number wrote well about the need for more motorways because people liked the flexibility that cars offered and their own space. The best answers often used personal experience to exemplify their points, often with reference to railways on mainland Europe.

Question 3(a)

There are still too many candidates who write two-sided answers for Questions 3(a) and 3(b), and as a consequence penalise themselves. The vast majority of candidates focused on issues surrounding criminal activities, child protection and pornography. Although there were fewer examples in the Source, many candidates still stayed too close to it and consequently restricted their move up the marks. Relatively few identified groups other than parents or teachers, and those often implicitly. The phrase "some people" in the question is deliberately general to allow candidates to identify interested and relevant parties but few do this. Credit is always given to identification of specific groups of people who support the argument.

Better answers raised issues around cyber-bullying, self-harm sites, political and religious fanaticism and racism. Fraud and music and film piracy were frequently identified and often well understood but the concerned parties usually had to be inferred.

More answers than in previous years reached the upper end of Level 2 and many could have reached Level 1 by making specific references.

Question 3(b)

Many candidates simply offered the indignant "freedom" argument and wrote extensively and very generally. Many did not read the wording of this question; this was about 'censoring'; not 'policing' as in Question 3(a). However, a significant number did attempt to unravel the different types of freedom; speech, choice, action, information and so on. The most common angle focused on basic human rights and the laissez faire approach. Many candidates were aware of censorship in North Korea and China. There were some good references to the

unrest in North Africa and the Middle East and these were often linked in to ideas of freedom and censorship being the start of a slippery slope.

Most candidates argued that people could self-censor and that censorship was tantamount to manipulation of free will and social engineering. Finally, super-injunctions did feature for many candidates and we seem to have moved on from the Beckham/Rooney answer to Giggs this time round.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion