



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

General Studies B

GENB2

(Specification 2765)

Unit 2: Space

Report on the Examination

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GENB2 Space

General Comments

Generally, candidates appear to be much better prepared for the examination. Very few questions were left unanswered and, except where candidates clearly knew very little, answers were full and much more detailed than in the past. As a guide, the lined spaces on the question paper show how much is expected and candidates are taking heed of this and not writing vast amounts for the shorter answers. Candidates may, of course, have additional sheets; if this is the case the question number(s) must be clearly identified.

Additionally, it is important that a good quality black pen is used and that candidates with poor handwriting make every attempt to help the examiner so that marks are not in danger of being needlessly lost. Quality of English was generally good but spelling was, at times, very poor.

All questions and their constituent parts were well attempted and there was evidence of the specification having been taught with candidates applying their knowledge. A significant number of candidates who achieved high marks wrote succinct focused answers. An increasing number of candidates showed evidence of planning answers which undoubtedly helped with their response. It is almost always worthwhile leaving the plan and not crossing it out. Examiners do look at the plan and the odd extra mark might be accrued. In at least one case the plan scored more than the written response.

It seems obvious, but candidates must answer the question set. Far too many still offered a two-sided response when only a one-sided response was required or wrote from the wrong perspective.

Question 1

Nb. It is important to state that this structure of the question, as such, will not appear in future. In the June 2012 examination series, and thereafter, the first part of Question 1 has been re-structured to focus the candidate's responses specifically to the data in the Sources(s) and to use calculations to support their answers. Candidates will still be expected to perform a mathematical task to achieve full marks on two questions, so the ability to calculate differences and do basic addition/subtraction and calculate percentages will remain a requirement. The last part of Question 1 (10 marks) will remain the same.

An exemplar Question 1 and mark scheme was circulated to centres in February 2012. It is also available on the AQA website and can be accessed via [General Studies B Updates](#) .

Question 1(a) (i)

This was done woefully. It is disturbing that almost 70% of candidates could not perform a simple percentage calculation, especially when they have been asked to do this on every paper. The most common errors were selecting the wrong number to subtract and then doing the percentage calculation the wrong way round or using the wrong figures. That ignores the large number who did not even make an attempt. Sadly, a few ignored the instruction to round to one decimal place and gave a whole number or rounded incorrectly.

Question 1(a) (ii)

This was a straightforward question that should have been possible to answer from general knowledge, by watching/listening to the news, or reading the paper, if nothing else. Over half of the candidates scored one mark and would have gained the other with the briefest of development as most knew how to do for 1(c). Too many had no idea what 'invisible earnings' were, despite it being on the specification.

Question 1(b)

The data were a lot better used this time, although far too many candidates did not notice the figures were in £million. The fact that the figures were negatives proved to confuse some candidates; and many, for example, did not notice that the changes for travel between 2005 and 2009 showed an improvement. A large number simply described the data, without using the figures and did not make even the simplest of calculations. Reasons were generally poor with candidates failing to acknowledge that the data dealt with trade and not with internal UK business. Consequently, there were a lot of irrelevant suggestions including more people travelling by bus, increased use of social networking sites, home computers and mobile phones and the increased cost of car and home insurance. Those who did score generally blamed everything on the recession or showed some awareness of the increased cost of foreign travel. There were, however, some very good answers which reflected good teaching of quite a challenging part of the specification.

Question 1(c)

Most candidates showed some awareness of the data and handled the negative figures a little better than they had done in 1(b). Again, candidates did not equate the figures to trade and focused on sales, usually within the UK with erroneous reasons such as smoking bans, binge drinking, people buying fresh rather than processed food (raw materials), driving less, and better-insulated homes. There were some better responses where candidates understood why we imported manufactured goods and fuels for energy.

Question 1(d)

Far too many candidates missed the thrust of this question and treated it like 1(b), rewriting the data, doing calculations and offering suggestions for the changes. Some used the wrong data and went back to Source A. Others failed to notice it related to trade in consumer goods and did not include cars so references to food and the motor industry were not helpful. Apocalyptic answers were common, preaching gloom, despondency, rioting, homelessness and even starvation. On the positive side, some did comment on the changing nature of the economy and job market, potential for unemployment, over-reliance on imports and the possibility of a Greece like situation. Although there was some clear thinking, few candidates managed to come up with more than one good reason.

Question 2(a)

This question was generally well done and candidates had some awareness of the issues, often using the source to support points, particularly over the style and size of housing. Some confused 'greenfield' with 'green belt', and a larger number confused greenfield with rural village development. Relatively few offered examples based on local knowledge but many were aware of why this type of location might appeal to different groups of people.

A number insisted on presenting both sides of the argument and a small number argued the wrong way. Relevant points were credited but candidates who presented the downside of

greenfield development would have penalised themselves in terms of time to complete the question.

Question 2(b)

This was done a lot better than 2(a) with some very good responses and a lot of local and personal examples. The development of London for the Olympics was cited as were redevelopment schemes in many other towns and cities. Candidates clearly had a lot of personal knowledge to bring to this answer and many used the waterside image in the source to good advantage in terms of discussing the advantages of urban regeneration.

The same points on two-sided and opposing arguments that affected 2(a) applied here also.

Question 2(c)

There was a slight tendency for candidates to present a one-sided response but most did address both sides to some degree. Arguments as to why city-centre living might be better were much stronger than the reverse, but that may reflect the age profile of candidates. A lot of stereotypes emerged, particularly concerning all older people liking the quiet of the suburbs and all young people liking the hustle and bustle of city-centre living. As in 2(a), there was confusion over the difference between suburb and countryside and an assumption that all people who lived in the suburbs worked in city centres. The question was generally well done and the advantages and drawbacks of each location were often related back to age and life-cycle.

In all three parts of this question, candidates who scored high marks offered clear statements, made use of the data supported with calculations and then explained and amplified them. There was evidence of good preparation by teachers such that quite a significant number of candidates scored full marks for each point made. There are still too many who make several very general points without sufficient development and so throw marks away.

Question 3(a)

There was little evidence this time of candidates running out of time and both this and 3(b) were generally, at least attempted and often answered fully.

Candidates drew heavily on the source which was used with varying degrees of success. Inevitably, the less able ones re-wrote it or simply said that we should follow religious leaders because they took their ideas from God. Better ones looked at the global nature of religions and how their agenda was very different from that of scientists and politicians. Sadly, very few looked at the failure of politicians to look long-term but a number did question the decisions that had got the environment into its current state. A small number chose to argue the wrong way round.

Question 3(b)

As in question 3(a), the marking on this question is not the same as for question 2, by requiring three points with development; it is for the quality of argument. This question was done much better than 3(a) and candidates could use references to specific politicians (David Cameron and Boris Johnson being the most common) and to scientists. Not all scientists were working in the environmental field but the candidates often used the principle of research well so that credit could be given. Candidates seemed a lot happier with rationality than belief which may reflect teaching at KS4 in terms of understanding the environment.

There were useful references to international agreements (Kyoto usually) and to cooperation with other world leaders. Power and authority were often well discussed as were links between decision making and scientific research and knowledge.

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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