



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **Geography 2030**

## *Specification A*

### **GEOG2      Geographical Skills**

# **Report on the Examination**

## *2009 examination - January series*

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## General

This was the first GEOG2 examination of the new AQA GCE Geography specification. The only comparative reference material which centres had access to (prior to this sitting of this paper) was the specimen paper. This report is therefore particularly important in highlighting the various strengths and weaknesses of responses to the different questions.

The paper was worth 50 marks in total; 25 marks were available for Geographical Skills (taken from page 16 of the Specification). The 'vehicle' through which the skills are examined is either the Core Physical Section (Rivers) or Core Human Section (Population Change). In this paper Population Change was the topic area. While it is not compulsory for candidates to have been taught the Population Change unit, there are 6 marks allocated to Assessment Objective One (Page 18 Specification) for this paper. This means that some content, concepts and processes have to be examined in each skills paper. Centres using the January module have to decide if they teach the core content before the examination. For the summer series, this is not an issue.

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 page 16 of the Specification and specifically the Investigative Skills section. It was very 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 AS Specification. Some responses showed at best only a very tenuous link to the Specification.

This year the theme for the first question was China's population change. Candidates generally engaged well with this question though question 1d did challenge many candidates perhaps a little more than expected, despite a similar style of question being used in the specimen materials for GEOG2. This is explored in greater detail later.

As the paper evolves over the next few years and as we examine the full range of skills, candidates will be expected to undertake more practical activities. It will be essential that all candidates bring appropriate equipment into the examination such as a sharp pencil, ruler, compass, protractor, calculator and so on. It is also important to note that over the lifetime of the specification, all AS skills in the specification will be examined. Clearly different skills come with different level of challenge and candidates will be required to meet the demands of all skills. It was disappointing note that many candidates failed to use a ruler and pencil in this paper. Allowances were made for this, but in future examinations candidates will be unable to gain full credit without the correct equipment.

In terms of the development of the fieldwork section of the paper, it is important to note that questions will vary in every series. 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 1

1(a)(i) The completion of the choropleth for Hunan was quite straight forward. Most responses scored credit here. The Shaanxi data was often misrepresented. Lines were often too narrow, wide or erratic. Candidates really must use a ruler to complete these techniques.

1(a)(ii) Most spotted the concentration of population in the east, with good references to clustering around coastal areas such as Jiangsu. Using data to support statements about distribution was less of a strength but some did do this. Many also referred to the decreasing density westwards. Opportunities were missed by some who failed to identify anomalies within the pattern. Some responses also missed the point about density and instead wrote about high and numbers of people i.e. population totals.

1(b) This question required candidates to interface with the Demographic Transition Model (a comparative line graph) and some recent data for China. Most candidates spotted that China was in either late stage 3 or early stage 4 as evidenced by the data. Other stages were not creditworthy. To support this, responses simply had to show that they could link the data to what the stage in the graph showed. Statements such as ‘...birth rates are falling in China and this is shown in stage three’ were creditworthy. Some misunderstood that reduced rate of growth and instead referred to population decline, arguing for Stage 5. Others pitfalls included those who argued that death rates rising was a characteristic of stage 4, when in fact this not a characteristic of the DTM at all.

1(c)(i) This posed no significant problems. Only a small minority failed to line up the female data in the correct place. Candidates must use a ruler for this sort of task.

1(c)(ii) This question produced an unusual set of responses. Many candidates did not really get to grips well with the ‘describe’ part of the question. They simply needed to refer to the changing shape. Others referred to falling birth rates and death rates as part of their description when actually this formed of part of reason. Many also missed the ‘change’ part of the question and instead referred heavily to Figure 3a which was not creditworthy. Simple comments relating to a narrowing base and a widening top where creditworthy. For the ‘suggest reasons’ part of the question most gave good general reasons and some gave quite specific reasons such as the One Child Policy.

1(d) This question was the least well answered in general. While it is accepted that social and economic problems are part of a continuum with overlap, many candidates failed to show that they understood the difference. Many lifted too heavily from the text and were trapped in Level One as a consequence. For ‘comment’ responses needed to elicit meaning from the data. This could have come through expression of values, attitudes or likely impacts of the changing structure of the Chinese population.

## **Question 2**

2(a) This was the least well answered question on the paper. It appears that many candidates expected an opening question about aim and hypotheses. Centres must realise that the fieldwork questions will not be formulaic and therefore predictable. The best preparation for this part of the paper is to experience all aspects of the enquiry. Responses should have shown a basic understanding the ideas underpinning their study. For example, in a human study a good response might explore the reasons for contrasts within their two contrasting areas of study. A river study might explore the Bradshaw model as a route to credit.

2(b) This question was probably the best answered on the paper. The only real pitfall was in writing too much about risks rather than the responses to the risks. This only affected a small minority of candidates. The other issue was some failed to identify a risk and instead wrote only about managing risk in a generalised fashion.

2(c) This question was not an evaluation of the method. Some misunderstood this and wrote at length about the weaknesses of the chosen methodology. Others forgot to justify their chosen method. This could have been achieved in many ways including references to efficiency, safety and accessibility. For this sort of question, the examiner should be able to replicate the method based only upon the information provided in the response.

2(d) This question was generally not well answered. Some pitfalls included: choosing an inappropriate presentation method; confusing presentation with analysis; failing to describe the technique. As with 2(c) the examiner should have been able to replicate the use of the technique from the information given. Those who scored well wrote about how they used techniques such as scatter graphs to present their findings. While drawing a line of best fit takes this technique into analysis it was accepted as part of the presentation of the graph and therefore credited in this paper.

2(e) Candidates generally engaged well with the improvements part of the question. Most referred to methodology issues and this was an entirely legitimate approach. The main area for improvement related to the use of the results. In many cases there were no results. Those who did add results often failed to link to the suggested improvements. In this regard, the results appeared and were not used in way. This confined candidates into Level One for this question.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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