Version

AQA

General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012

Geography   **GEOG2**

(Specification 2030)

Unit 2: Geographical Skills

Report on the Examination

General

This was the seventh series of this examination. The standard and expectations have been well established over a number of years now. There are plenty of resources available to centres to support the teaching and preparation for this unit. Consequently many students come to this examination very well prepared. The only danger in using past paper material remains in producing model answers to questions which may not appear, especially on Question 2. This is still a feature of some responses. Those candidates who do not respond to the previously unseen material in front of them in the examination, generally score badly against the tariff of the question. Those who adapt their revision materials to the exact nature of the question, especially on the fieldwork section, often score very well.

On Question 1, the skills which formed the main focus of the examination were OS mapping, completing and interpreting triangular graphs, completing and interpreting compound bar graphs. Those who had practiced well (and ensured they understood how to use and interpret the skills found on page 16 of the specification) generally performed well on this section. As ever, it was important to bring an appropriate range of equipment into the examination. On this occasion, a calculator, a sharp pencil and a ruler were all that was needed.

On Question 2, the key to success has always been found in undertaking a small local study which addresses all of the elements of Investigative Skills on page 16 of the specification. Some candidates were not well prepared for Question 2 (c) which required an understanding of the use of data from secondary sources.

Question 1 (a)

The 1:25000 OS map was generally used well by many students. The triggers for Level 2 were found in using accurate map evidence via grid referencing, the key, place names and / or compass points. Responses also had to show they understood that housing in Wavertree was generally terraced compared to mainly semi-detached and detached housing in Childwall. As long as other land uses where briefly contrasted (such as the presence of woodland in Childwall compared to Wavertree), such answers comfortably accessed Level 2. Weaker responses could not identify the terraced housing in Wavertree and some did not locate the zones in question.

Question 1 (b)(i)

Many students had prepared well for the possibility of triangular graphs and plotted the two points accurately. This was a skill which students either knew how to perform or they did not. Some marks were clearly lost through carelessness and lack of attention to detail.

Question 1 (b)(ii)

In comparing the pattern, the most striking feature in the data presented was the increased proportion of elderly people in most of the super output areas compared to national average data. Most areas also had a lower proportion of people aged 0-15 years. Within this data there were some anomalies. Use of data to support comparison statements added good detail in many cases. It was difficult to score credit if candidates did not know how to interpret triangular graphs. Some got around this by using the table only, but still scored minimal credit as they failed to compare with national average data. In terms of implications, many good responses wrote about the differing needs of over 65's such as the need for increased medical care and public transport. Others wrote in terms of school closure and loss of park space where there was a lower proportion of 0 – 15 year olds. Such responses comfortably accessed Level 2.

Question 1 (c)(i)

This question caused a problem for a number of candidates. Candidates had to plot 12% for Disability Living Allowance, then add 23% for Income Support / Job Seekers Allowance (plotting at 35%), then add 36% for Pension Credit (plotting at 71%). Many candidates did not do this and instead plotted 12% for Disability Living Allowance, added 11% for Income Support / Jobseekers Allowance and then 13% for Pension Credit. Some may have been confused having prepared by looking at an earlier series which used the compound bar skill in a different way.

Question 1 (c)(ii)

The mean percentage of 8.5% was relatively straightforward to calculate provided candidates accurately read the data from the graph. In terms of the usefulness of the technique for this data, this was less well done. Candidates could have written about the ease of comparison with other data sets, the ease of calculation or the fact that the range of data was small making the mean a reliable tool for analysing the data.

Question 1 (c)(iii)

The description was relatively well done. Most candidates spotted the considerable disparity between the inner city and the other three areas in terms of benefits claimed. The use of data to support this, especially when manipulated, added good detail. Some also pointed out minor anomalies which went against the trend. The comment was generally less forthcoming. Some wrote in terms of unemployment and social housing in the inner city, linking this to more people claiming benefits, and living there. More sophisticated responses referred to industrial decline leading to high levels of unemployment and increased benefit claimants. In some responses there was no discernible comment, and such responses were held to Level 1.

Question 2 (a)

The simplest way to score 4 marks was to consider four simple advantages of the location such as: proximity to school; easy access to site; permission to use the river; safety and risk assessed site and so on. This was a straight forward question. The main issue appears to have been that many candidates could not think of four advantages or develop two or three advantages. For instance up to three marks were available for risk assessment.

Question 2 (b)

This sort of question has appeared before. The main problem is that too many students misunderstood it and did little more than describe the method of primary data collection. This is not evaluation and it was often only by chance that such responses scored any credit. If there was no evidence of evaluation, even implicit, no credit was awarded. Another differentiator was the depth of evaluative comment. Many wrote in terms of quick, easy and simple methods, which is evaluative but on its own would have constituted a low Level 1 response. The best answers offered detailed strengths, weaknesses and even offered improvements.

Question 2 (c)

This question posed a significant issue for some students. In terms of how the data was obtained, there were references to: accessing previous data from an old study; obtaining a relevant OS map; researching a particular website, such as the Met Office. Such responses comfortably addressed this part of the question but the 'why' part was less well done in general. Responses had to show, in reasonable detail, how the secondary data contributed to the understanding or assisted in some other aspect of the study. There were many ways of achieving this. The weakest responses did not have a clear understanding of what secondary meant or wrote only in the vaguest terms about its usefulness to the enquiry.

Question 2 (d)

In terms of advantages, candidates' responses had to show how the technique aided analysis. For example, a scatter graph allows for the extent of a correlation to be investigated. The line of best fit, if accurately plotted, can be used to indicate the direction of correlation and nature of relationship between two data sets. Anomalies can be easy identified and further investigated. Also large amounts of data can be quickly plotted to help analyse the correlation. Those who drifted into description of a technique or focused on the advantages from a presentational perspective scored little or no credit.

Question 2 (e)

The main issue here was that students failed to use their own results to support their answer so that the conclusions themselves became vague and unsupported. Other limited responses merely described the results and did not link to firm conclusions arising out of the data. Those who offered conclusions which linked back to the original aim of the enquiry, using data in a meaningful and supportive way, scored well and easily accessed Level 2. This was often accompanied by an explanation of unexpected findings.