Version

AQA

General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011

Geography A   **40302F**

(Specification 4030)

Unit 2: Human Geography (Foundation)

Report on the Examination

General

This was the first year of the examination that had candidates from years 11 and 10 (and even 9) yet many of the weaknesses identified as being common among last year's candidates are still present. Examination technique is still poor among some candidates and this, plus the weaker literary skills common among foundation tier candidates, means their geographical knowledge and understanding often does not come through in their answers. Candidates should be encouraged at an early stage of the course to practise deconstructing a question by highlighting or underlining keywords and phrases. Chief among these will be the command instructions particularly 'describe' and 'explain'. It was disappointing to see how few candidates highlight or underline these command words and key words or phrases. It is not possible for a candidate to access the highest level available in a particular question if they have not answered all parts of the question. The generic descriptions of the two levels should be made clear to candidates, and the fact that they do not have to go through each level to get to the highest. It is perhaps useful for centres to know the descriptions used by examiners when marking levels of response questions. The following are shown in the published mark schemes.

Levels Marking - General Criteria
Where answers are assessed using a level of response marking system the following general criteria should be used.
Level 1: Basic
Knowledge of basic information
Simple understanding
Little organisation; few links; little or no detail; uses a limited range of specialist terms
Reasonable accuracy in the use of spelling, punctuation and grammar
Text is legible.
Level 2: Clear
Knowledge of accurate information
Clear understanding
Organised answers, with some linkages; occasional detail/exemplar; uses a good range of specialist terms where appropriate
Considerable accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar
Text is legible.

Candidates should be encouraged to write in linked statements. Frequently they give a number of correct basic statements that with the addition of some form of connective word would show some kind of development or elaboration and so gain access to Level 2. The use of the 'so what' scenario is useful here. The evidence of this year's cohort is that few appeared to be able to get to level 2 successfully. There was evidence that it was not always their geographical understanding and knowledge which was letting them down. At the C boundary at the top of this tier it is important that they answer the question set. Too many candidates answer the question that they think has been asked and so there is an obvious need for centres to concentrate hard on examination technique. The need to read the question carefully is fundamental here. Candidates should also be reminded of the need to use geographical terminology, i.e. North and South rather than top or bottom. There are also still issues relating to the understanding of key geographical terms. Not only are these tested directly but failure to respond correctly to these terms can result in a significant loss of marks in the longer questions. Case studies are explicit in this new specification, and it is important that candidates are prepared thoroughly in this aspect as many questions will undoubtedly require one. Centres should make a point of choosing case studies that cover a variety of topics (both physical and human). Candidates should then be made fully aware of which case study exemplar is relevant to which topic. A successful approach to the choice of case study is to choose as many as possible from one country. Not only does this avoid a scatter gun approach which confuses many candidates on this tier but it will contribute to a greater 'sense of place', something which is undoubtedly missing among many students of geography. A case study should show the reader that it represents a particular scheme or location on the earth's surface. This means it should show precise statistics, place names and other details. The mere name of a place is not sufficient, especially if the details that follow are largely generic and therefore could refer to anywhere. As Ordnance Survey maps are no longer a guaranteed part of Paper 1, it is hoped that this skill will not be undervalued as a map could appear in any part of this paper. Candidates should be familiar with a variety of scales and also be introduced to the map types specified in the geographical skills section of the specification. Photographs are still not used well and centres would be advised to give as much time to their use in their schemes of work as

they do to other forms of graphicacy. There are always skills based questions on this paper. The
expectation is that the skills will be carried out with a degree of accuracy. They are often
straightforward marks but can be easily lost because of inaccuracy. The effective use of stimulus
material is a problem noted by examiners. Candidates should appreciate that they gain very little
credit by merely lifting information from a figure. Most questions based on stimulus material are now
worded to show that candidates are required to 'use your own knowledge' in addition to using the
figure.   Centres should warn candidates that no credit will be given for simply re-using words in the
stem of a question.

Overall the standard appeared to have improved over last year's, presumably reflecting change in the
pattern of entry with the greater maturity of some of the candidates which has been already referred
to. There were fewer spoiled or one word answers, and so the impression was that the majority of
candidates had really tried to answer the questions to the best of their abilities. The paper proved to
be a genuine test of candidates'' geographical knowledge, understanding and skills application. It was
accessible to candidates of all abilities who were able to show positive achievement.

Tourism was the single most popular question answered but was often the weakest. The other
popular options were Population and Changing Urban Environments. The least popular option was
Changing Rural Environments. Globalisation and The Development Gap seemed approximately equal
in popularity.

Question 1 Population Change

There was a mixed response to the graph in 1(a)(i). There were lots of correct plots and some which
were way out.   A number of candidates did not complete the graph by drawing in the line joining up
the final two points.   Disappointingly a large number did not attempt this question, probably as a result
of not reading the initial question, then going straight to the question with the lines provided for the
answer.   Part 1(a)(ii) did not cause too much difficulty and the majority appeared to be able to put the
population pyramids in the correct order. 1(a)(iv) on the other hand was not well answered. There
were lots of comments on birth rate rather than the shape of the pyramid. Those who had got the
answer to 1(a)(iii) wrong were still unable to describe the shape of the pyramid they had chosen for
1980. However the wide base was the most common characteristic recognised. Many answers to
1(a)(v) seemed to concentrate on the death rate rather than the birth rate, perhaps as a result of
misreading the question as 'why is the infant mortality falling'?   Nevertheless there were some good
answers recognising the role of education and the changing role of women and not limiting the
importance of the introduction of contraception. The influence of the Nelson Thornes textbook was
apparent with some good use of the case study of Kerala. Even where a case study is not required by
the question, information candidates have learned from it can be used to clarify points. Despite the
presence of the key to Figure 3, many candidates could not define population density, failing to
recognise the significance of the figure being related to a unit area rather than just an area. While
some candidates thought that Java had a population of 600, part 1bii) was generally well done –
showing an ability to make meaningful suggestions based on stimulus material. There were good
references to family, jobs, language problems and culture in the answers to 1(b)(ii). Lack of precision
was the main problem in the definition of 'refugee', but the nature of the forced movement came out in
a significant number of answers. Some candidates used the picture too much in their answers to
1(c)(ii) and literally described the scene or the problem of boats sinking. Of the correct answers, the
most popular response was taking jobs away from the locals, accommodation of food supply issues.
The key word here was 'describe', so simple statements such as 'not enough jobs or houses' were not
sufficient. Too many answers to 1(d) were too concerned with the problems of an ageing population,
and failed to recognise that the question was on the strategies for increasing the birth rate as a
response to the ageing population. Those responses that did recognise the question tended to remain
in level 1, with basic statements about child allowances, benefits and tax credits, not even
appreciating that the increasing of these financial incentives was the critical part of such a policy.
There were some who made good use of information they had learned in a case study on France.

Question 2 Changing Urban Environments

Part 2(a)(i) did not cause any problems but the majority of candidates appeared not to understand the
meaning of the term location in 2(a)(ii). Many ignored location and described groups of people. There
was evidence of a lack of the use of compass directions in the answers to this question. Many
candidates had difficulty in understanding the East Los Angeles was a district. There were some good

answers to 2(a)(iii) with good understanding shown by the candidates when discussing the avoidance of racism.   Having the same religion, moving to where there were friends or family, language or cultural identity were the most popular answers. In 2(a)(iv) most candidates were able to give simple explanations of two of the strategies. They should be encouraged to develop their answers in more detail however, so as to access the four marks available. Giving an identical (and often vague) answer in the context of both strategies is unlikely to be credited twice. The best answers came from answering strategies 1 and 3.   Most candidates got one mark for saying learning English will help them to communicate; those who got the second mark extended their answer to include a better chance of getting a job. For strategy 3, a common answer was to 'learn about other cultures and religions' which earned them one mark. The better candidates linked this to the possibility of reducing racism. Those who tried strategy 2 wrongly suggested that tourism could help them make friends with other cultures. Those who did understand the idea showed a clear understanding that they could earn money from their traditions and culture. Answers to strategy 4 were poor and rarely got beyond the idea of money and jobs. Most candidates recognised the photograph as being part of an inner city but there is still a failure among many candidates to recognise when a question is only testing photograph interpretation, because there were many answers which described features that could not be seen on Figure 6.

Question 2(c) was a typical example of candidates failing to deconstruct the question and hence not answering the question set. Far too many candidates described the problems of a squatter settlement with little attempt to discuss the strategies that could have been introduced to try and overcome them. Those that did understand the question produced some good answers, often with case study exemplification, including pleasing examples of up to date information such as the 'peepoo' scheme in Kibera Kenya.   Question 2(d)(i) was answered with respect to the growth of squatter settlements and lack of houses, with some reference to the strain on resources. Question 2(d)(ii) provided to be a good discriminator. There were many vague ideas but the better candidates were able to develop their answers by recognising that the poorly developed infrastructure of these countries due to lack of finances and the sheer amount of waste to be disposed of were important factors to consider

Question 3 Changing Rural Environments

Part 3(a)(i) proved very straightforward. Part 3(a)(ii) was generally well answered with candidates recognising that the decline in houses and population indicated rural depopulation, although a number of candidates referred to the changes in employment. In 3(a)(iii) the most frequent error was the failure to recognise that the closeness together of the contours indicated steep slopes, so statement 2 was often ticked as correct. Is this an indication that O.S. map interpretation is being less emphasised with the removal of the guaranteed map question? Most candidates were able to define what is meant by a second home. Part 3(a)(v) proved to be quite challenging to a number of candidates. Some were able to consider the impact of holiday homes on local house prices and local house buyers in a negative way. Beyond those ideas, development was often limited. Some candidates often saw the rise of holiday home ownership as damaging to community facilities, services and community spirit. This broader approach showed a clear understanding and offered a more balanced appraisal of the issue.

The best answers in 3(b)(i) were based on choices 1 and 5 and went on to discuss better food supply and increased profit for the farmer. 3(b)(ii) was not answered as well as the previous question. The concept of the growing season is not appreciated with many seeing it as a disadvantage, because the crops have to stay in the ground longer. There was however some recognition of the disadvantage of the process of salinisation – previous evidence of effective use of a previous legacy question!

Question 3(c) was not well answered, candidates getting confused between amount produced and area being cultivated. Part 3(c) was another example of a failure of many candidates to pay precise attention to the wording of the question. The weaker candidates listed and sometimes explained the negative effects of intensive farming rather than discussing ways being adopted to reduce the negative effects. There were many level 1 answers along the lines of use fewer chemicals/more organic farming etc.

Question 4 The Development Gap

Most candidates were able to complete the table in 4(a)(i). In part 4(a)(ii) many had an idea for an answer but found difficulty in expressing it, which tended to mean only one of the two marks available was achieved. Part 4(b) worked very well as a discriminator. The best candidates were able to answer all parts quite well. They showed a good understanding of the differences between the standard of living and quality of life. In 4(b)(i) many could elaborate on the stimulus material and show how lives could be improved in the future. On the other hand some candidates gave elaborate case

study exemplification and ignored Figure 12. There was some confusion between standard of living and quality of life in 4(b)(ii). Part 4(b)(iii) proved to be the most testing, and often the candidates' weak literacy skills did not allow themselves to express themselves sufficiently clearly to gain full credit. In 4(c) the graph was well answered, and a number of candidates were able to recognise the negative correlation; fewer were confident in expressing why GNP was not a good way of expressing development.

In 4(d)(i) some non European countries were mentioned, some candidates simply choosing their answer from the list of countries in the table for 4(a)(i). Some mixed up x and y, incorrectly interpreting the data and suggesting that the more advanced EU countries like Germany had a high percentage employed in agriculture. Part 4(d)(i) was very poorly answered. There were very few answers on EU policies, such as Urban II or the Structural Fund. Many wrote about Poor World countries and the idea of freedom to work anywhere in the EU, or even Free Trade.

Question 5 Globalisation

The main mistake on the cloze exercise was candidates putting factory rather than farm in the first blank. There was a high percentage of correct answers to 5(a)(ii), the most common error being the idea of getting food to the supermarket.   Some candidates failed to appreciate the significance of the word 'recently' in 5(a)(iii). Out of season foods was the most popular response. Several said 'lots more food imported' but failed to say why. People wanting exotic food was also a popular response. Photographic interpretation was quite well answered in 5(a)(iv), although there were a number of references to machinery without any qualification, which did not gain any credit. In 5(a)(v) candidates didn't always make the link between the increased use of intensive production techniques and the production of greenhouse gases. Many candidates missed the key word 'economic' when answering 5(a(vi). The most common correct answer was increasing prices which only gained one mark. The meaning of the letters TNC was well known and most candidates could give a correct example of a TNC. Part 5(b)(iii) was not particularly well answered. Most candidates slipped into explanation mode, once they had stated that TNCs had branches all over the world. There was some confusion with call centres. This was perhaps a case where candidates had a prepared answer on TNCs that did not match the question. Many responses focused on the reasons why many TNCs have factories in the poor world rather than describing the distribution of manufacturing plants and headquarters of major companies. Several wrote about environmental issues and pollution, and there were several answers on trade. 5(c)(i) was generally well answered. The popular responses were increasing population, developing technology and (incorrectly) fossil fuels running out. The stimulus material in 5(c)(ii) was well used, and many candidates used their own knowledge to write a clear answer taking them into level 2. Those who did not refer to the map or photograph at all remained in level 1. There were some wasted words on why there is a need for more energy.

Question 6 Tourism

Part 6(a) did not prove to be difficult, with the majority of candidates getting full marks. In the case of 6(b) candidates choosing a coastal resort performed much better than those who chose a National Park for some reason. The Lake District was the most popular choice of National Park, but frequently resulted in vague generalisations, often without sufficient clarity to reach level 2. The descriptions were frequently generic, and the candidates were less likely to be able to name particular attractions of the National Park. Some of the newer National Parks were referred to, but on the other hand USA National Parks such as Yellowstone (as a result of their supervolcano study?) or local AONBs such as Cannock Chase (result of controlled assessment study?) were named. Some failed to relate the attractions of the area to the visitor. The answers on Blackpool, which was the most popular coastal resort chosen, were much better. Responses which showed thorough knowledge of the Pleasure Beach, the Tower and the illuminations easily picked up full marks. 6(b)(ii) was generally well answered with many recognising the significance of foreign competition and the vagaries of the British climate. Too many, however felt that boredom was a justifiable explanation for a decline in the popularity of a holiday destination. There were some candidates who failed to read 6(b)(iii) sufficiently carefully and chose strategies both from those relating to a National Park and to a coastal resort. Many who obeyed the rubric misunderstood the question. They did not seem to have much idea what the strategies meant. The best answers referred to strategies 2 and 6 and even these rarely went beyond level 1.   Generally there was a better understanding of the strategies for coastal resorts than those relevant to a National Park. Too many of the answers relating to footpath erosion discussed good footpaths as a good way to ensure you did not get lost. The better footpath answers discussed repaired footpaths as being safer and therefore there was less chance of accidents occurring. The

idea of zoning into honeypots and remote areas, in order to protect the more isolated areas was not understood. The creation of indoor facilities and the growth of conference facilities were often answered well. There were too many straight lifts from Figure 16 without the necessary development that was required in order to gain the second mark. The stimulus material was used well in 6(c)(ii) producing some good answers. Stewardship was more often correctly defined in 6(d)i) than conservation although a number of candidates felt that it referred to stewards on a plane or boat. This question showed either complete lack of knowledge or correct precise definitions. The final question was not well answered. Some candidates discussed future development and attractions that could be built with the money made from ecotourism, others that locals could live in the houses. Some described the material the houses were made from but did not relate this to the surroundings. Words like sustainability were used without any real understanding. Reference to locals often was restricted to money and jobs. The reference to future generations seemed to confuse many candidates.

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