Version

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course)
June 2011

Geography A 40304F

(Specification 4031)

Unit SC1: Physical and Human Geography

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on the Examination are available from: aqa.org.uk

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

SECTION A

Question 1

1(a) This was well answered, with the majority of candidates scoring at least two out of a possible three marks.

1(b)((i) This question was poorly answered with few candidates scoring more than one out of a possible three marks. Some candidates identified X as a 'crater' but few identified Y as a 'crater rim' or Z as 'ash' or the 'steep sides' of the volcano. A common error was to include labels more usually linked to a cross sectional diagram of a volcano, such as 'vent', rather than referring specifically to the photograph as required.

1(b)(ii) Whilst many candidates correctly identified the volcano as a composite one, an equal number identified it as a shield volcano.

1(b)(iii) Most candidates correctly identified the diagrams as a constructive plate boundary and recognised that the plates were moving apart, with a few referring to convection currents driving this movement. Many candidates also noted the formation of a volcano built up from hot molten material reaching the surface. Common errors included confusion between the terms 'magma' and 'lava' with some candidates even referring to the mantle being pushed up and reaching the surface.

1(c)(i) Whilst, most candidates accurately described the size of a supervolcano, many candidates failed to correctly describe its shape, for example referring to its crater rather than its caldera. With regard to its size, a common error was to describe the feature in vague terms using single words such as 'big' or 'large'.

1(c)(ii) This question was answered well by a few candidates, with references to an ash cloud over Europe and subsequent impacts on global temperatures, farming and international flights. However, many candidates failed to convey these global effects, focusing rather on the impact of a supervolcano eruption on a single country, for example the USA with reference to Yellowstone.

1(d)(i) Most candidates referred to a land use from one of the photographs, but many then failed to include more specific detail. For example, with regard to the scene shown in photograph A, many candidates identified farming as the main land use but then referred to fertile soils for crops rather than cattle grazing grass which was visible in the picture. Similarly, when describing photograph D many candidates referred to skiing and snowboarding yet neither activity was evident in the picture shown.

1(d)(ii) Most candidates referred to a single problem, but frequently offered little detail when describing how people coped with these problems. The most common correct answers referred to tunnels through mountains, cable cars and terracing.

Question 2

2(a) This question was well answered, with a large majority of candidates scoring at least three out of a possible four marks.

2(b)(i) Most candidates achieved one or two marks, identifying correctly a meander and either an oxbow lake/ floodplain. Sometimes the lack of precision in placing the arrow point led to marks being lost.

2(b)(ii) This question was poorly answered. Whilst a small number of candidates drew a cross section as required most drew a plan instead. A significant number of candidates also failed to label the inside/outside part of the bend, whilst others confused the processes and features, showing them on the opposite side of the bend to where they should have been located.

2(b)(iii) This was well answered, with a large majority of candidates scoring at least three out of a possible four marks.

2(c)(i) This question was well answered, with most candidates scoring at least one, and many both, marks. The most common error was to refer to causes not referred to in the newspaper cuttings. A small number of candidates confused the terms physical and human.

2(c)(ii) Most candidates scored at least one mark with references made to melting snow and deforestation, but fewer fully explained how this resulted in increased overland flow and increased river discharge.

2(d) The majority of candidates scored at least one or two marks making reference to strategies such as dams and levees. However, there were fewer Level 2 responses due to the inability of many candidates to clearly explain how these strategies were used to effectively manage flooding. In contrast, the very best responses included much more detail and some linked their responses to their case study such as the Three Gorges Dam.

Question 3

3(a)(i) Many candidates correctly labelled X and Y as swash and backwash respectively but many fewer were able to correctly identify Z as the direction of longshore drift.

3(a)(ii) This was well answered, with the majority of candidates gaining both marks, most commonly by listing two from spits, bars or beaches. A few candidates incorrectly listed headlands, bays and salt marsh.

3(b)(i) Many candidates were correctly able to identify one or two landforms, most commonly headlands, bays and cliffs. A significant number of candidates described a coastal scene in general rather than specifically the features shown in the photograph, and very few candidates located the features in relationship to the actual photograph.

3(b)(ii) This question was rather poorly answered. The majority of correct responses referred to soft rocks being eroded more quickly than hard rocks to form bays and headlands respectively, but few referred to the importance of bands of rock at right angles to the sea in this formation. A common error by candidates was to simply re-write the prompts without adding much more description or explanation. In a number of cases the candidate failed to identify a correct sequence of events.

3(c)(i) In contrast, this was well answered with the majority of candidates scoring at least two out of a possible three marks.

3(c)(ii) The majority of candidates were able to identify reasons why some areas of coast collapse into the sea, most commonly through reference to a combination of destructive waves impacting on soft rocks and/or reference to failing coastal management strategies. However, references to case studies were often absent or very weak. Broad areas were identified such as Holderness, but followed by descriptions/explanations which might have been applied almost anywhere around our coasts.

3(d) Mostly Level 1 response were seen here. Whilst most candidates recognised that continuing erosion was predicted for the future, few used Figure 18 to identify that this coast would become one of headlands and bays or to identify specific areas of erosion such as between Mappleton and Withernsea. In contrast, many candidates did recognise that where sea defences had been built to protect settlements less erosion was expected in the future, and some recognised that these defences can also have an adverse effect further along the coast.

SECTION B

Question 4

4(a)(i) This question was well answered, with a large majority of candidates scoring at least two out of a possible three marks.

4(a)(ii) This question was well answered, with a large number of candidates scoring at least three out of a possible four marks.

4(b)(i) This question was well answered, with a large number of candidates scoring at least three out of a possible four marks.

4(b)(ii) Most candidates correctly identified one or two features of a sustainable city, but very few descriptions were fully developed, and most lacked elaboration/detail.

4(c)(i) This question was poorly answered. The vast majority of candidates defined urbanisation in terms of rural-urban migration, rather than the increasing percentage of people living in urban areas.

4(c)(ii) Few candidates moved beyond the inclusion of simple Level 1, generic points such as reference to push/pull factors linked to rural-urban migration and/or failed to clearly compare rates in different parts of the world. Most candidates focussed on the process of rural-urban migration in the LEDW, and some noted the high rates of natural increase in LEDC cities. Less well explained was the rate of urbanisation in the MEDW, with few candidates referring to counter urbanisation. Some candidates incorrectly suggested that rates of urbanisation in the MEDW were high due to the large number of jobs in the city.

4(d) The vast majority of candidates were able to describe a number of characteristics of a squatter settlement with some reference to its effects on the lives of the people living there. Fewer candidates showed an ability to move beyond the inclusion of simple, generic points to link these statements or to provide more detailed information. The very best responses achieved this with exemplification using information learned through case studies.

Question 5

5(a)(i) Half the candidature responded correctly to this question.

5(a)(ii) Most candidates answered correctly.

5(a)(iii) Surprisingly, this question was poorly answered. Few candidates moved beyond the inclusion of simple Level 1 points, and most commonly and almost exclusively these were linked to accessibility and cheaper land. Candidates failed to give specific details regarding the availability of large areas of land on the edge of the city, and why this was required, or to provide details regarding the nature of the road network.

5(a)(iv) A significant number of candidates failed to provide an alternative development to retailing in an edge of city location.

5(b)(i) Most candidates were able to identify at least one cause of rural depopulation with a number identifying two.

5(b)(ii) Many candidates identified one, and some two, effects of rural depopulation, most commonly a decline in facilities. Few candidates however developed their answer beyond a simple statement.

5(b)(iii) This question was poorly answered, with few candidates responding correctly.

5(c) This was well answered, with a large majority of candidates scoring at least three out of a possible four marks.

5(d) Most candidates were able to describe at a basic level the advantages of irrigation, most commonly in terms of higher yields/more profits. Few candidates developed their answer further to establish a clear link between the advantages of irrigation for tropical agriculture.

Question 6

6(a)(i) This question was generally well answered, with a large majority of candidates scoring at least two out of a possible four marks. A common error was to list attractions rather than to describe.

6(a)(ii) This was well answered with a large majority of candidates responding correctly.

6(b)(i) Most candidates were able to identify at least one reason why tourists visit extreme environments, with a number identifying two. Most commonly these reasons included 'adrenelin rush' or 'once in a lifetime opportunity'. However, few candidates failed to develop their answer beyond very simple statements.

6(b)(ii) Whilst many candidates identified one negative effect on the environment, it was noticeable that candidates were frequently answering the question based on learnt information rather than with specific reference to the photograph. Few candidates as a result were credited with both marks.

6(b)(iii) Most candidates responded correctly.

6(b)(iv) Examiners saw a wide range of responses here, with the outcomes often determined by the choice of named area chosen. The best responses referred to extreme environments such as Antarctica, which included for example details of the quotas allowed; whilst the weakest responses referred to named areas such as Blackpool.

6(c)(i) A large number of candidates responded correctly, though in total there were slightly more incorrect answers.

6(c)(ii) Most candidates were able to identify one feature of the Reserve, most commonly food and drink brought in from outside the area; fewer identified two features. A common error was to identify features outside of the Reserve such as air flights and the impact of this on the atmosphere.

6(c)(iii) Most candidates were able to identify one or two negative impacts of mass tourism and, whilst many responses included simple statements, a significant number of answers included sufficient detail and/or links to move them into Level 2.

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