

Version



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Geography A

40302H

(Specification 4030)

Unit 2: Human Geography (Higher)

Report on the Examination

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General

The paper discriminated well with a full range of marks showing that the most able, with good examination technique, could achieve at the very top end. There were a wide variety of questions types which gave students the confidence to answer the questions and gave them the opportunity to show what they knew, understood and could do. As would be expected on this tier, there were very few rubric infringements. The paper was well set out, although a few students appeared to miss the final part of the tourism question. The diagrams appeared to be clear and the lack of any complete misreading of questions suggests that the language and vocabulary were set at the correct level without any ambiguities.

As in previous years, questions 1,2 and 6 were by far the most popular, with very few schools not attempting question 6. It was pleasing, however, to note an improved standard in the answers to the tourism question compared with previous years. Students were less likely to rely on generalised knowledge in answering this question than before. Questions 4 and 5 were the next most popular, with question 3 on Rural Environments still the least popular by a long margin. The evidence from this cohort shows that there is a disappointing tendency for over reliance on a single textbook, even if it is endorsed by AQA. Centres should concentrate on making sure they follow the specification when designing their course, rather than just using one textbook to teach the human (and physical) topics.

Centres should also emphasise to students that case studies account for almost a third of the total marks on Unit 2. Too many students left the 8 mark questions blank or answered them in too generic a way. The case studies should be appropriate. Choosing a good sustainable urban example, a good tropical resort and a detailed TNC, for example, was critical for successful answers. Centres should choose examples that will allow students to answer the questions they are faced with. In the tourism topic, for example, the Butler model works better with a coastal resort than a National Park. It is appropriate when studying the model to deal with it in the context of a real world example rather than in a purely theoretical manner. Students should be encouraged to learn their case studies and then also be taught to be able to tailor them closely to the needs of the question. The specification is clear on where case studies are required and, whereas in some topics the case study is open ended, which means the examiner can only word the question in such a way that allows the student to write all they know about the place, in others the case studies are to be studied from a particular angle and these will form the basis of the wording of the question.

Centres should appreciate that there are two distinct parts to the specification. There is the content detail but equally important is the skills checklist. The major skills issue this year was the topographical map which few candidates seemed to grasp fully. Equally, describing distributions seems to present a great challenge although it is fundamental aspect of secondary geography. Students did not seem to be familiar with the general, specific, exemption approach to describing distributions, and there also appears to be a lack of understanding of the term 'pattern'. There still seem to be relatively few students who have been encouraged to break down questions by highlighting key words and phrases. The command words still remain an area of concern, especially the distinction between 'describe' and 'explain'. The use of stimulus material still remains a problem area. When a question includes the instruction 'use Figure X', students need to appreciate that there will be skills marks allocated for showing the use of the stimulus material and failure to do so will result in them being restricted to the lower levels available - Questions 1cii), 3cii), 4ai), 4ci), 5b) and 5dii) being particular cases to note. On the other hand, there are too many students who merely 'lift' information from the stimulus without making any attempt to develop it.

SECTION A

Question 1 Population Change

This question seemed to score highly, presumably because the students felt confident in dealing with China's One Child Policy. The weakest question was 1(a)(i) which was based on the quotes regarding the changes to the policy. Centres are reminded that the content detail is specific on the need to consider the policy since the 1990s. The quotes represented the most significant changes that have taken place. The most common choices were 1 and 2. In quote 1, the most common reason was the need for children in order to cope with the parents in old age. Few recognised the importance of the family in China and the lack of uncles and aunts could mean the family eventually dying out. Many students felt the reason for quote 2 was that the countryside is sparsely populated (which is very far from the truth) and so could cope with a higher birth rate, but many appreciated the continuing need for labour in the rural economy. The reasons given for quote 3 were invariably incorrect. The most common misconception was that China was encouraging the unlikely creation of a multi-cultural society. The policy was directed at the Han Chinese and the numbers of ethnic minorities are so small that they do not make much difference to the total Chinese population. There were many excellent answers to part 1(b) but there was still evidence, in some answers, of details of the impact of the policy earlier than the 1990s rather than the more recent situation. The use of Figure 3 in 1(b)(i) was sometimes rather tenuous but generally this question was answered well, although there were a number of basic answers around jobs and money. There was some pleasing use of case study material by some centres. Centres are reminded that this is an excellent way of achieving level 2 clarity and even detail if level 3 marks are available. Students answered 1(b)(ii) well. Many were able to give very thorough answers, with many making the link between migration and the benefits of multiculturalism, whilst others made links between labour gaps and filling with cheap labour or skilled work. The majority continued with the focus of migration from EU countries, such as Poland, to the UK. 1(c)(i) made clear that many students were unfamiliar with the term topological, although it is clearly listed in the skills section as one of the type of maps/diagrams to be studied. In the final section, most students could recognise the link between population growth and female literacy. There was some carelessness in referring to population totals rather than the growth rates. The question differentiated well because better answers recognised the need to go further than merely expressing what the link was by giving some exemplification, which was the trigger to accessing level 2. It was disappointing that few took the opportunity to comment on any exceptions, such as South America.

Question 2 Changing Urban Environments

This was another popular question but did not appear to be as high scoring as question 1. Question 2(a)(i) was illustrative of the lack of understanding of what was meant by a pattern. Many were merely content to quote opposites. There were many who tried to explain the pattern by reference to CBD and inner city urban zones. Question 2(a)(ii) was generally well done, although a significant number went into great detail about air pollution in its different forms and hence gained no credit. When answering 2(b), many students were unable to provide linked statements showing how the need for more housing is being met. There was frequent confusion between the inner city and the CBD and many wrote about past events rather than modern developments. In 2(c)(i), there was perhaps too much information given in Figure 6 which led to many students merely writing straight lifts without any development. The answers to 2(c)(ii) were often just the opposite of what had been written in 2(c)(i) and were frequently idealistic, such as install sewage treatment, move people, tell people not to drop rubbish. The term 'waste' seemed to mean 'rubbish' to many students and comments about providing a safe place for people to put waste so it didn't pollute the water implied the provision of a rubbish dump. There were too many basic answers without any indication of clear management. Where students used case study evidence, such as site and service schemes or, more specifically, the Greater Cairo Wastewater Project, there were some good answers. This reinforces the advice that case studies can be used very productively in questions even where there is no requirement to use one. Students were able to define sustainable urban living, normally by reference to the need to

preserve the environment or resources for future generations. The final case study question 2(d)(iii) produced some excellent answers. The case study for this section of the specification is not specifically geared in any direction so it gave students the opportunity to 'write all they know about'. Most of them could name an example, even if some then gave a generic description that could apply to any example. There were excellent detailed answers on Curitiba, BedZed, Islington Millennium Village, Greenwich and Bo01 Malmo where students were able to pick out detail specific to the case study chosen. There was some confusion with inner city redevelopments, such as Hulme in Manchester and Byker in Newcastle, but if these included some aspects of sustainability they gained credit. Centres should recognise their examples could be of any scale, so a localised housing development would be appropriate for use in this question.

Question 3 Changing Rural Environments

This was by far the least popular question on the whole paper. Atlas skills are specifically mentioned in the skills checklist. Most students could identify the river forming the boundary between Brazil and Bolivia but part 3(a)(ii) was very poorly answered. Questions asking students to work with two different forms of stimulus are a legitimate geographical skill. At most, they were able to recognise that the deforested area was in Brazil but there was little evidence of detailed examination of the atlas extract to see its relationship to the roads or named rivers. The opportunity was also missed to make use of precise geographical jargon, such as compass directions. Many of the answers to question 3(a)(iii) were very simplistic, largely consisting of descriptions of forestry and/or mining in the rainforests or of the traditional farming practices, without any attempt to link the two and consequently restricting students to the lower levels. Some interpreted forestry as the practice of planting trees rather than cutting them down. Organic farming is an aspect of the topic which is well understood and students could answer all parts of section 3(b) well. Part 3(c)(i) was very poorly answered, with many woolly non-specific answers. Centres are encouraged to study at least two recent government initiatives in detail as there was a distinct lack of named policies in the answers seen. Where there was some evidence of named policies, the most common were the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, National Parks, Green Belts and SSSIs. Many candidates used the photos on Figure 9 to outline schemes to support the rural economy but few had details of schemes such as the Rural Transport Challenge, the Village Shop development scheme or the Rural Challenge. Some students were able to use the same material they had used to answer the previous question, such as the Environmental Stewardship Scheme.

SECTION B

Question 4 The Development Gap

Part 4(a)(i) was a question which identified students weakness in the effective use of stimulus material. Many merely ignored the information given in Figure 10 or tried to give direct lifts with little development or elaboration. There was also some confusion over what was a physical factor with some human factors also quoted. Centres are reminded when devising their schemes of work to take full recognition of the overarching key idea of a particular topic section and not concentrate wholly on the content detail. While the impact of natural hazards is the physical factor affecting development that should be studied in detail, the 'exacerbated by physical and human factors' aspect of the key idea means that reference to the generalised effect of climate, soils, and other physical features, such as altitude, can form the basis of a question. A wide range of human factors were acceptable in part 4(a)(ii) so that most students achieved at least one mark. Part 4(a)(iii) was very poorly answered. It is appreciated that there are large numbers of different policies coming out of Brussels but centres should study at least one in detail. CAP was the most common but other examples could include the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Urban II Fund and the European Central Bank. Due to its topicality, reference to the Euro crisis was thought to be likely to feature in answers but little evidence was seen of the attempts to solve the problems of Greece and Spain. Trading Groups were not known and many students assumed that 4(b)(ii) was about Free

Trade and so failed to score. Trade is given limited coverage in some of the textbooks used, although clearly present in the specification, and so this may explain why students, often from whole centres, failed to attempt these questions. In 4(c)(i), weaker students took the opportunity to write all they knew about aid instead of answering the question. However, better answers made use of Figure 11 showing how a small scale scheme supported by NGOs, which employs many local people using traditional tools, can bring sustainable developments in a way that large bi-lateral projects do not. Question 4(c)(ii) produced some excellent answers on development projects. The majority were small and medium scale, including Farm Africa and the Grameen Bank, although there were some good examples of large scale projects, such as the Cahora Bassa Dam. Some students chose disaster relief which was not creditworthy since it was unplanned and reactionary rather than a planned development project. Others tried to fit case studies from population e.g. transmigration or Kerala and, whilst scoring some credit, they tended to be self-penalising in that the development aspect was not clear. Development projects from outside the Poor World, such as inner city renovation, were also acceptable.

Question 5 Globalisation

This question's popularity seems to be similar to that of Question 4. Part 5(a) did not cause any difficulties. In 5(b), the emphasis was on the real world example of the Tigris-Euphrates River Water Control System so if the students wrote in general terms without the use of any names or locations from Figure 12, they gained no credit. Students who did not appreciate that rivers tend to flow towards the sea, and gave the source of the rivers in the Persian Gulf, had obvious difficulty with this question. Those that did make use of the map tended to repeat themselves when giving a second reason. Part 5(c) was generally well answered with references being made to such effects as eutrophication, food miles and the farming of marginal lands with the resultant soil erosion or exhaustion. Misused irrigation and salinisation also featured. A significant improvement was seen this year in the interpretation of stacked bar graphs which have proved problematic in the past. Once again, poor use of the stimulus material was a feature of 5(d)(ii), with either straight lifts and no elaboration, or no indication of the map being used at all. On the other hand, there were some excellent answers where students had learnt a great deal about the industrial development of China and were anxious to show it, resulting in them writing far more than the four marks demanded. Centres should encourage students to take note of the number of lines available for a question and also the mark allocation. The weaker ones relied on the time honoured generic references to cheap labour, longer working hours etc., and failed to relate these points to lower production costs and hence higher profits for companies. Part 5(e) produced the full range of answers, from those left completely blank to detailed level 3 responses. Wal-Mart, Dyson, Nike and Toyota were common examples of TNCs used although, particularly when Toyota was used, some students failed to emphasise the global nature of these companies by concentrating wholly on the Burslem Derby branch. Weaker students used Starbucks or McDonalds but often failed to move beyond level 1 due to being very generic and lacking specific detail. Centres need to emphasise that students use information that is unique to the case study they are writing about.

Question 6 Tourism

This was by far the most popular question on the paper. Most students were able to read the pie chart correctly. 6(a)(ii) was generally well answered although some thought that tourists go to cities because of their climate which seems unlikely. Question 6(b) indicated quite a degree of carelessness. Many did not read the question carefully enough and labelled features on both photos instead of choosing one. Examiners were required to be strict when marking the position of the labelled feature and students gained no credit if the head of the arrow or line did not touch the feature being identified. There was also evidence that students had not looked at the colour photo since the green roof of the building on the left of the photo was often labelled as the beach. This was perfectly obvious on the colour photo but not so clear on the black and white reproduction within the examination booklet. There were some students who simply wrote labels stating 'physical' or 'human'. There were some surprising answers to the question on the Butler model in 6(c)(i). Many could write correctly about the

development stage, either from knowledge or by some interpretation of the graph. However, a significant number ignored the development stage altogether and wrote about other stages, such as the stagnation and rejuvenation. Students who had studied National Parks found question 6(c)(ii) trickier than those who had chosen coastal resorts. Students who had chosen a coastal resort usually took Blackpool as their example and were able to apply the case study successfully, making a good attempt at the question. Some started writing about one stage but digressed into another. On the other hand, there were some excellent examples of the use of the Lake District to illustrate the consolidation or rejuvenation stages. The specification requires students to study their chosen case study from three different viewpoints: the reasons for growth, managing the impact of large numbers of visitors and strategies for ensuring the future prosperity of the tourist industry. It was hoped that the Butler model had not been taught in isolation but if this was the case, students should have been able to relate one of the approaches listed to a stage of the Butler model, for example, the strategies for ensuring the continuing appeal of the area relates well to the rejuvenation stage. Students who took this approach produced some good answers on footpath erosion management in the Lakes or the speed limits on Lake Windermere as illustrations. Most were able to gain at least one mark when describing the pattern of tourist visitors in the Caribbean by equating the larger number of tourists to the larger islands. The second mark proved more difficult but some saw the relationship of proximity to the USA or exceptions, like the Bahamas. The command word 'explain' was often not well used in 6(d)(ii). This is where answers included lots of details about attractions but did not go on to explain why they were significant. Examples taken from outside the tropics, such as the Antarctic or Benidorm, were limited to level 1 but eco tourist locations, such as the Galapagos Islands, were accepted on the grounds that, although in absolute terms the numbers are not large, they are relative to the carrying capacity of the tourist area. However, although students were able to use eco-tourism on this occasion, they would be well advised to read the question more carefully when choosing their case study exemplification. There were still too many references to nice beaches and hot weather without any attempt to give representative climatic statistics. The best case study details came from the use of Kenya and Jamaica. A surprising number confined their answer for 6(e) to environmental factors but many of those who read the question properly accessed level 2 by discussing the effects of leakage.

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