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General Certificate of Secondary Education
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Geography B 40351H

(Specification 4035)

Unit 1: Managing places in the 21st century (Higher)

Report on the Examination

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Unit 1 – The Coastal Environment

Introduction

Candidates had to answer either Question 1 (The Coastal Environment) or Question 2 (the Urban Environment). A number of candidates attempted both questions. This was generally self-limiting and usually resulted in both questions being unfinished or not addressed with an appropriate level of detail. The Coastal Environment option was the more popular choice with approximately 60-65% of the candidate entry attempting it.

General points

- Very few candidates failed to complete the paper, suggesting that the timing of the paper was not an issue.

- Reports suggested that centres had found the examination a sound reflection of the specification and a good test of the knowledge and understanding embodied within the specification.

- It was evident that the majority of centres had prepared their candidates effectively. Teachers are to be congratulated on their efforts towards ensuring that candidates had a sound grasp of the concepts that underpin the course.

- The use of resources was generally good. A significant proportion of candidates used clearly and appropriately quoted evidence from resources in their answers. However, the use of the Ordnance Survey map extract in Question 1 was variable. It was evident that a number of candidates did not really understand the demands of map reading and interpretation skills. Consequently, what might be considered fairly easily gained marks were lost.

- The use of examples was variable. In many cases candidates brought in well-developed, appropriate case studies, while in others the instruction to include 'examples' or 'own knowledge' was largely ignored.

  (The instruction to include 'own knowledge' can be development of the ideas expressed in the question **or** locational knowledge (examples).

  Key point – remember the key instruction at the beginning of every examination paper. 'Use case studies to support your answers where appropriate.' Encourage candidates to do this – it is often one of the ways that the higher level marks can be accessed.

- The majority of candidates responded to the question comments effectively.

- The use of the mark allocations and writing spaces was generally good; the majority of candidates taking the opportunity of using the 'extra space'. A small number of candidates used a 'listing' approach to some of the longer questions. This was often self-limiting and should be discouraged unless time is an issue.

- It was evident that a small number of candidates were not properly equipped. The lack of a ruler can affect levels of accuracy when completing graphs or measuring distances. At this level, basic skills demand a high level of accuracy.

Focus for development

- **Addressing commands** – make sure that candidates are aware of the question commands and understand what they mean. The most common misunderstanding is between 'describe' and 'explain' commands. Responding to a 'describe' command by offering detailed explanation simply wastes time, while using description in response to an 'explain' command will restrict the possible marks for the question.

- **Addressing the full instruction** – question instructions which as for 'examples', 'own knowledge', 'using Figure …. and your own knowledge', are making the clear point that there are marks available for those candidates who address these instructions.

- **Use the resource effectively** – questions will often ask for use of a resource or use of a resource and own knowledge. Using a resource does not simply mean copying parts of it, for the higher marks it is about selecting appropriate evidence from the resource and bringing in linked ideas that have been studied. Practice for the examination by using a range of resources, especially visual resources. Simple exercises identifying and annotating key evidence from resources can help to develop understanding and interpretation skills.

- **Rehearse basic skills** – stress the need for high levels of accuracy when dealing with skill-based questions. Simple errors can lose marks and can make a difference of a whole grade.

- **Identify and define key words** – there are a number of key words which a fundamental to the specification. Make sure that candidates understand these words and are comfortable with them. Examples include: economic, environmental, environmental pressures, issues/conflicts, sustainability. The use of geographical terminology is often part of the trigger for higher level responses.

- **Selecting examples** – look for locational examples which cover a number of aspects of the specification unit, especially when building up revision sheets.

- **Use precise revision** – break the specification down into smaller key components and build up a revision sheet on each component.

- **Look for different types of revision** – adopt a 'fit for purpose' rather than a 'one size fits all' revision strategy. For example, the use of annotated sketches to revise physical processes and landforms or photographs to revise elements of the course that have strong visual possibilities (pressures in urban areas).

- **Examination training** – train candidates into adopting good practice in examinations. For example, identifying commands, marking up resources, checking all short answers at the end of the examination (they will invariably find an error or something they can add).

(a)(i)

The majority of candidates used Figure 1 effectively to describe the changes to visitor numbers in Dubai. In most cases, candidates went on to suggest appropriate reasons for the changes expressed.

A small number of candidates failed to respond to the comment 'suggest reasons', consequently limiting their mark to Level 1.

(a)(ii)

Candidates suggested a wide range of possibilities, many of which were appropriate and gained credit.

(b)(i)

Virtually all candidates showed some understanding of the question; a significant proportion was able to both define and give an example of weathering and erosion. In many cases, there was considerable detail and appropriate use of technical language.

(b)(ii)

It was encouraging to see that the majority of candidates showed good awareness of differential erosion shown on Figure 2. In most cases, candidates used the example of Lulworth Cove to express what might happen to Stair Hole. The use of technical detail in relation to physical processes marked out the higher level responses.

(c)(i)

The majority of candidates used Figure 3 effectively to describe the process of erosion on soft coastlines. A number went on to offer more detailed explanation of the relationship between rainfall, rock structure and mass movement.

(c)(ii)

The majority of candidates were able to identify methods of coastal engineering. A significant number mentioned a range of different hard engineering methods, including sea walls, gabions and rock armour. Those candidates that went to describe how these methods work and linked this to the area shown on the photograph often produced impressive answers.

A small number of candidates suggested that cliff drainage, alongside other types of hard engineering would be a viable management option. This showed great awareness and an intelligent understanding of the vulnerability of the cliffs in the photograph.

(d)(i), (ii) and (iii)

These questions presented few problems for most candidates. Use of the Ordnance Survey map extract was generally sound.

(d)(iv)

The majority of candidates were able to identify a number of physical features from the Ordnance Survey map extract. Those candidates that used both the map **and** the key generally achieve high marks.

A small number of candidates failed to respond to the command 'physical features' or used an incorrect square.

(d)(v)

There was some confusion about the basic idea of protecting coastal areas. A number of candidates considered 'protection' in terms of shoreline management and went on to consider methods of hard engineering. Centres need to make it very clear that there is a distinction between shoreline management which is usually about protecting areas from physical processes and environmental management which is about conserving valuable environments.

Those candidates who did answer the question appropriately were generally able to identify management ideas such as nature reserves, National Trust, etc., as bodies who look after the environment. More developed responses went on to consider how these actually work, using specific examples of management techniques. A small number of candidates brought in additional case studies, often with considerable success. The use of appropriate case studies usually helps to develop an answer and it is to be encouraged.

(e)

A significant number of candidates failed to show any understanding of 'managed retreat', often instead writing at length about hard engineering. A case study of each of hard and soft engineering, and managed retreat, should be seen as a fundamental part of any revision programme for this unit.

Those candidates who did understand 'managed retreat' often produce sound, well-documented responses.

Question 2 – The Urban Environment

(a)(i)

The majority of candidates used the data effectively to identify an increase, both in terms of rural and urban populations. In most cases this basic idea was further developed by use of the data or identifying changes in the rate of change.

(a)(ii)

This question presented few problems, virtually all candidates identifying the correct answer.

(b)(i)

The distinction here was between those candidates who simply considered the idea of 'risks from natural hazards' and those that considered the idea in relation to urban areas, as expressed in the question. Those candidates who used Figure 7 and had a clear focus on urban areas generally produced effective responses, often scoring full marks.

(b)(ii)

The most effective responses were based around specific examples. These were often very impressive, showing considerable understanding and using considerable levels of detail. Where examples were not used, or were simply named, the ideas often appeared to be quite generic and lacked detail. The key to success here was to build the response around a well-chosen example.

(b)(iii)

There were some excellent responses to this question with a significant number of candidates identifying prediction, preparation and planning as key elements to reducing the risks posed by natural hazards. The most frequently used ideas were based around preparation and planning, with points about safety and emergency kits, and raising awareness was a common theme. A significant number of candidates used specific examples (often in great depth) to show how buildings can be developed or changed to reduce the risks posed by hazards.

(c)(i)

This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates were able to show an understanding, of both 'commercial land use' and 'pedestrianisation.

(c)(ii)

Candidates used Figure 8 effectively to identify how the Canning Town project might improve socio-economic and environmental conditions. The ideas of new jobs, money, landscaping and pedestrianisation were commonly used. Those candidates who only used the resource tended to achieve about half marks. Where additional knowledge was brought in, especially when based on a case study, candidates often produced far more detailed responses.

(d)(i) and (ii)

These questions presented few problems. The majority of candidates used Figure 9 effectively to work out the correct answer.

(d)(iii)

There were a number of thoughtful responses to this question. Candidates saw the importance of transport links in two ways: allowing local residents the scope to enjoy a wider area, or as an advantage for people or business coming into the area.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results statistics page of the AQA Website.