AQA

**General Certificate of Secondary Education
January 2011**

Geography B   **40352F**

(Specification 4035)

Unit 2: Hostile world (Foundation)

Report on the Examination

General Comments

The paper proved to be an effective discriminator of geographical ability. It allowed candidates of all abilities at this tier to demonstrate positive achievement. The majority of candidates gave good responses to the range of data provided. Geographical skills such as interpreting bar graphs, pie charts, climate graphs, maps of various scales and diagrams were good. Opportunities for extended writing were given in one or more parts of each question and even the least able candidates offered a response which demonstrated some geographical understanding. The more able candidates offered developed responses, demonstrating good understanding of geographical issues, backed up with some correct use of geographical vocabulary and some use of case study examples. They applied their knowledge and understanding in unfamiliar contexts.

As in June 2010, there were differing numbers of candidates completing Section A and B. The majority of candidates opted for Section A - Living with Natural Hazards, the minority chose Section B - The Challenge of Extreme Environments.

The majority of candidates completed the paper and there were relatively few parts of the questions not attempted.

Section A - Living with Natural Hazards

Question 1

Part (a) did not prove problematic for a large majority of the candidates. Part (b) elicited a range of responses. The majority of candidates seldom gave more than a simple idea of plate movement and/or named the tectonic plates, with poor knowledge of physical process and use of geographical terminology. However, some candidates gained a Level 2 mark. These candidates referred to the processes taking place at a destructive plate boundary, with some referring to similar plate boundaries they had studied. There remained a significant number of candidates who did not focus on the demands of the question and described the effects of earthquakes or mitigation strategies. In part (c)(i) the majority of the candidates were able to interpret the map and in part (c)(ii) most were able to link weak shaking to distance from the epicentre, although a significant number of candidates did offer responses stating that a coastal location could affect the level of earthquake damage. In part (c)(iii) a third of the candidates gained the maximum mark. Marks were lost when candidates confused primary and secondary effects, or they ignored the command to use Figure 2.

Question 2

In part (a) half of the candidates were able to use the resources to good effect and gain the maximum mark. Part (b) was correctly answered by a majority of candidates. Part (c) elicited a range of responses. Those who developed responses from Figure 4 scored well but candidates who merely lifted information such as 'low-lying coastal plain' from the map without stating the significance of this, gained no credit. Part (d)(i) was not attempted by a third of the candidates. Many did not understand the instruction to Complete Figure 5' and this is an area for future development. Of those candidates who did attempt the question, most were able to accurately complete the graph. Part (d)(ii) was not always well answered with a large majority of candidates gaining only 1 or 2 marks out of the 4 available. Relatively few candidates cited figures from the graph in order support their description of the changes. A significant number of candidates gave reasons for the changes to the numbers of powerful tropical storms, when this was not required by the question. In part (e) most candidates were able to make at least one valid suggestion but only the more able candidates at this tier were able to sustain the development of the point and gain both marks. However, some of the candidates failed to score as they described the changes and there was confusion about earthquakes with references to moving plates affecting storm numbers.

Question 3

Part (a) (i) elicited a range of responses; a fifth of candidates gained the maximum mark, but use of direction is a problem for some candidates at this tier. Part (a) (ii) elicited a wide range of responses. Many candidates were able to offer only simple reasons for their chosen viewpoint; these were often taken directly from the data provided or were lists of either natural or human causes of wildfires, there were also some references to global warming. These were valid statements and many candidates were able to gain a top Level 1 and score 4 marks. Almost a fifth of the candidates did develop these ideas further to gain a Level 2 mark through good use of the resource along with the application of their own their own knowledge and understanding in constructing an argument for or against the issue. These tended to be clear descriptions of either natural or human causes of wildfires or a clear argument that the cause of many wildfires is a combination of both sets of factors. Part (c) was well done with over half able to develop responses to give a clear description of the effects of a wildfire, some with good use of case study examples and the most able at this tier were able to sustain this and reach the top of Level 2. Some candidates lost marks by describing the causes of wildfires.

Question 4

In part (a) over half of candidates gained both marks. Some candidates lost marks by simply restating the methods shown in the figure without suggesting how they helped to protect homes. In part (b) the majority of candidates were able to offer one simple suggestion as to how the method reduced wildfire damage, but only some were able to sustain the development of the point or offer a second point and gain both marks. It was pleasing to note that in part (c) relatively few candidates wrote about both hazards. This problem was far more widespread in June 2010 when a similar question with a choice of hazards was set. Many candidates were only able to offer vague, general responses such as 'listen to the radio' and did not elaborate on how this would help with preparations and were therefore limited to Level 1. There was a noticeable lack of specific schemes/methods or case study examples and under half of candidates gained a Level 2 mark. Some limited the scope of their answer by focusing their answer on earthquake preparation.

Section B - The Challenge of Extreme Environments

Question 5

In part (a)(i) most candidates were able to accurately complete the graph. It is clear that many did not understand the instruction to 'complete Figure 9' and this is an area for future development. Part (a)(ii) was not always well answered with a large majority of candidates identifying an increase and gaining only 1 mark out of the 2 available. Relatively few candidates cited figures from the graph in order support their description of the change. In part (b) (i) most candidates were able to respond well to the data and in part (b)(ii) a majority of candidates were able to offer at least one valid suggestion but only a small number were able to sustain the development of the point or offer a second point and gain both marks. Many candidates found part (b)(iii) challenging and could only identify one factor affecting temperature, almost half did not attempt the question. There were many responses that focused on non-climatic factors and this is an area for future development. In part (c) there was some confusion with the environment of Alaska and many candidates were only able to offer vague, general responses such as 'it will affect animals', or discussed possible effects on people. Where candidates did gain a Level 2 mark, they tended to focus their answer on overfishing and its effect on the food chain.

Question 6

Part (a) did not prove problematic for a large majority of the candidates with most being able to interpret the bar graph. Parts (b)(i) and (ii) were also well answered, with most candidates being able to read the pie chart. In part (b)(iii) a majority of candidates were able to give one or two ways in which deforestation damages the natural environment, but only the most able at this tier were able to sustain the development of these points and gain higher marks. A significant number of candidates simply restated some of the causes of deforestation from Figure 13 and failed to score, as they did not go on to state any points that directly linked into the effects of deforestation. Part (d) (iv) was not well answered with most candidates failing to show a good understanding of the economic opportunities provided by use of the tropical rainforest environment. A majority of candidates seldom gave more than lists of simple benefits such as 'sell the wood', 'provides jobs' of 'can grow crops' and nearly half of candidates did not attempt the question. A small minority of candidates gained a Level 2 mark by

developing answers further. These tended to focus on case study examples or how logging raised capital for governments.

Question 7

Part (a) (i) did not prove problematic for a majority of the candidates, but some lost the mark by naming only one of the Tropics or by incorrectly stating that the Equator passed through the world's hot deserts. In part (a) (ii) half of the candidates were able to identify three true statements and gain the maximum three marks and part (a) (iii) was correctly answered by nearly all of the candidates. Many candidates found part (b) challenging and a majority could not identify one factor affecting temperature. There were many responses that focused on rainfall or non-climatic factors and this is an area for future development. Part (e) (ii) elicited a wide range of responses. Many candidates were able to offer only simple reasons for their chosen viewpoint; these were often taken directly from the data provided or were lists of either natural or human causes of desertification, there were also some references to global warming. These were valid statements and many candidates were able to gain a top Level 1 and score 4 marks. However, some candidates did develop these ideas further to gain a Level 2 mark through good use of the resource along with the application of their own knowledge and understanding in constructing an argument for or against the issue. These tended to be clear descriptions of either natural or human causes of desertification or a clear argument that the cause of much desertification is a combination of both sets of factors.

Question 8

In part (a) the resource was not always well used with many candidates simply restating the information in the figure without saying how it helped to protect a cold environment. The question was not always well done with the vast majority of candidates gaining a Level 1 mark. Most listed general, simplistic ideas without referring to examples of actual schemes. Very few candidates were able to develop responses to give a clear description of schemes and there was very little good use of case study examples. Where this was the case, candidates showed some understanding of developments in oil drilling/pipelines, the role of fishing quotas, limiting tourist activity and the role of the ANWR (going beyond the figure) and some of the candidates who sat Section B were able to sustain the development of points and reach a Level 2 mark. Some candidates failed to score, often as they described problems found in a cold environment; this was also the case in part (b). Part (b) elicited a wide range of responses. Many candidates were able to offer some simple references to conservation, reafforestation, animal husbandry, crop rotation and other schemes and gained a Level 1 mark. However, some of the candidates did develop these ideas further to gain a Level 2 mark. This was often through the clear description of the scheme or method, but a small number of candidates did use a case study example of a scheme in a named location in an area of tropical rainforest or on the fringe of a hot desert. It was pleasing to note that in part (b) relatively few candidates wrote about both environments. This problem was far more widespread in June 2010 when a similar question with a choice of environments was set.

Some general points for development

The resources used in the January 2011 examination papers for Unit 2 act as a stimulus for candidates to help them respond to questions and to be of value for teachers in centres to help prepare candidates for future examinations. They are provided as prompts for candidates to enable them to apply their knowledge and understanding to unfamiliar contexts and also to assess their understanding of geographical skills. Centres should encourage candidates to become comfortable with using a range of resources such as maps, photographs, tables of figures, graphs, diagrams and text etc. They should encourage candidates to be able to explain patterns, trends, relationships, causes, opinions etc by applying their own knowledge and understanding to these contexts.

The Assessment Objectives for Specification B are weighted so that 30% of the total marks are awarded for candidates being able to recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of places environments and concepts (AO1). 30% of the total marks are for candidates being able to apply their knowledge and understanding in familiar and unfamiliar contexts (AO2). 40% are for candidates being able to select and use a variety of geographical skills (AO3). In Unit 2, only 5% of the 50 marks available are for AO1, whereas 10% are for AO2 and 10% are for AO3. Given this weighting, only 10 marks can be allocated to test knowledge and understanding, whereas 20 marks are allocated to test the application of knowledge and understanding and 20 marks are

allocated to test the understanding of geographical skills. In other Units, e.g. Unit 1, there is a much greater emphasis on the assessment of knowledge and understanding (20 marks out of the 50 marks available).

In terms of AO1, there are questions on both sections of the examination papers that directly test knowledge and understanding e.g. 4 (c) and 8 (b). These test candidates's recall without the use of a resource as a prompt. Some use of case study examples would also be a good strategy in responding to this style of question.

In terms of AO3, there is a need for accuracy when answering skills questions e.g. reading graphs and pie charts. Where appropriate, figures should be cited and units should always be given.

Some use of case study examples would also be a good strategy in responding to the Decision Making question (questions 3 (a) (ii) and 7 (c). The instruction 'Use your case studies to support your answers where appropriate' appears at the beginning of each section of the examination paper.

Candidates should use an answer plan and try to develop points by giving as much depth as possible on one point before moving on to the next point.

The best answers directly address the demands of the question. A well focused, planned answer helps to avoid the inclusion of peripheral information, or giving causes when effects are required by the question. A long preamble is not necessary e.g. the causes of an earthquake do not have to be described before the candidate goes on to describe the effects, or the effects do not have to be described before the candidate goes on to explain how damage can be reduced.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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