

Version



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
January 2012**

Geography B

40351H

(Specification 4035)

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

Report on the Examination

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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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 2 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.

Question 1 (a)

This question presented few difficulties. The majority of candidates showed a sound understanding of latitude and longitude and were able to identify the correct answers. A limited number of candidates failed to attempt the question.

Question 1 (b)

There were mixed responses to this question. The majority of candidates showed a sound appreciation of the multi-use nature of coastal areas, often bringing in appropriate examples to develop their ideas. The general description of the different types of socio-economic and environmental activities found in these areas was often very impressive. However, the question required candidates to go beyond simply describing activities to offering some locational explanation and many candidates did not really pick this up effectively. Where candidates did offer some reasoning about the location of particular activities they generally produced impressive answers. A number of candidates are still seeing coastal areas as almost exclusively tourism related. This really does not fully consider the key idea in the specification about the “multi-use” nature of these areas and in terms of examination responses can be quite limiting.

Question 1 (c)(i)

The ideas of coastal environments “under threat” and “land use conflicts” are always challenging for students. In general terms most candidates showed a good level of awareness about issues of pollution and were able to describe the different types of pressure that these areas might face. However, while this showed some understanding of the question it did not fully address the idea about threats to the environment which demanded a certain level of explanation. Those candidates that used Figure 2 effectively and used their own examples were often able to suggest how pressures translate into threats by actually damaging fragile environments. Making this link was a significant factor and those candidates that were able to do this produced thoughtful and perceptive responses.

Question 1 (c)(ii)

A significant proportion of candidates used Figure 2 effectively to identify pressures that might be found in coastal areas. This often provided the basis for a good general understanding of the question. A number of candidates developed this idea further by expressing some understanding of how different demands in coastal areas might conflict, with the consequent need for management. At the highest level a small number of candidates developed their ideas further by expressing observations about the challenge of satisfying all of the different demands found in coastal areas. These candidates usually produced thoughtful and perceptive responses which showed a good general understanding of the concept of “sustainability”.

It was evident that a small number of candidates had very little understanding of the pressures and conflicts found in coastal areas and no real appreciation of what is meant by “sustainability”.

Question 1 (d)

This question presented few difficulties. The majority of candidates were able to name two types of coastal erosion and offer a sound description of each. A very small number of candidates offered incorrect descriptions or had clearly confused “erosion” with “weathering”.

Question 1 (e)(i)

This question presented few difficulties. Most candidates were able to identify the three coastal features highlighted on Figure 3. The feature that gave some difficulty to a small number of candidates was the wave-cut platform.

Question 1 (e)(ii)

The majority of candidates showed that they had a limited general appreciation of what was meant by “hard coastlines”, often using examples of rock types inappropriately. Consequently, many candidates found this question challenging and were not always able to express the link between rock type and structure and the resulting features of hard coastlines. In many cases candidates simply described the features of hard coastlines, at times referring back to Figure 3. While this gave some insight into the characteristics of hard coastlines, it did not fully address the question which clearly required some understanding of the link between the characteristics of the rocks and the resulting features. Those candidates that did develop this link often produced excellent answers, picking up points about the strength of rocks and how they are affected by physical processes, then linking this to points about cliff profiles, specific coastal features and the general shape of hard cliff coastlines.

Question 1 (e)(iii)

The majority of candidates showed that they had some general appreciation of what was meant by “soft coastlines”. In most cases candidates were able to offer some description of the characteristics of soft coastlines, often bringing in points about a lack of structure, general instability and the idea of slumping and landslides. An understanding of the processes involved was often the differentiating factor in the question. Some candidates showed only limited understanding of this, at times simply describing generic marine processes which may not be specifically related to “soft” coastlines or only tell part of the story. This approach was rather self-limiting since it did not fully address the question. At the other end of the spectrum a number of candidates described in detail the relationship between rainfall, water percolation, weathering and marine processes in producing the distinct landforms associated with soft coastlines. This type of response was sometimes accompanied by the use of an example or detailed annotated diagram, often to great effect.

Question 1 (f)(i)

This question presented few problems for candidates, the majority using the traditional longshore drift diagram to describe the process. In the majority of cases candidates were able to describe all of the elements of the process effectively and use the appropriate geographical language, consequently scoring full marks. In some cases candidates did not have a complete technical understanding or got parts of the process the wrong way around (swash-backwash), resulting in a loss of marks. A very small number of candidates appeared to be unclear about what was actually meant by “longshore drift”.

Question 1 (f)(ii)

This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates were able to name a feature created by longshore drift, the overwhelming majority using a spit as an example.

Question 1 (g)(i)

Few candidates were able to offer a real understanding of “Shoreline Management Plan” in relation to dividing the coast up into smaller units where decisions about management might be made. In a number of cases it was clear that candidates were not familiar with the terminology and simply resorted to repeating the phrase with no real development.

Question 1 (g)(ii)

It was evident that the majority of candidates had a sound understanding of what is meant by “hard engineering”. Many candidates gave a detailed description of hard engineering methods, often linked to well documented and appropriate examples. In some cases annotated diagrams were used, at times very effectively. However, describing the methods did not fully address the question which demanded an understanding of “how” the methods actually reduce wave energy and protect areas from erosion or flooding. Those candidates that did fully address this idea generally produced excellent answers using detailed knowledge and appropriate geographical language.

Question 2 (a)(i)

This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates used Figure 4 to describe the change to urban population in more developed countries, often using the data effectively to help them make points.

Question 2 (a)(ii)

It was clear that candidates generally had a good understanding of this topic. The majority of candidates used Figure 4 effectively to describe changes to the urban population in less developed countries. In most cases candidates went on to suggest a number of reasons for these changes, including a range of both “push” and “pull” migration factors. The general discussion was developed in some instances by the use of examples, often to great effect. A small number of candidates failed to fully appreciate the dual command in the question, “describe” and “suggest reasons”, either focusing mainly on describing the changes or virtually ignoring the describe element and moving directly into a discussion about the reasons for urban growth in less developed countries. In either case these approaches failed to fully address the question commands, and were consequently self-limiting.

Question 2 (b)(i)

This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates used Figure 5 effectively to identify the correct direction of the spread of shaking.

Question 2 (b)(ii)

This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates used Figure 5 effectively to identify secondary hazards highlighted in the resource.

Question 2 (b)(iii)

The majority of candidates used Figure 5 effectively to describe the problems caused by the earthquake shown in the resource. A significant proportion of candidates developed their responses further by introducing other examples, often in considerable detail. The idea of “problems” was considered in different ways. In some cases candidates simply offered descriptive observations, at times largely based on Figure 5. While this showed a good general understanding of the key idea it did not always fully address the question. In other cases candidates used both Figure 5 and their own example(s) and identified both immediate and long term problems, showing a sound awareness of how the effects of natural hazards actually cause problems. This type of response often produced very impressive answers.

Question 2 (b)(iv)

The majority of candidates showed a good understanding of the question and clearly related their responses to appropriate urban areas. Ideas included general points about prediction, preparation and planning or in some cases more detailed observations about one of these aspects of hazard management. Either of these approaches enabled candidates to reach full marks when they were clearly related to the idea of reducing the effects of a hazard. The quality of the response was effectively determined by the level of detail. At the lower mark levels candidates often made generic and vague observations, sometimes with the name of an example tacked on at the end of the answer. Where candidates built their answer around a specific example, the level of detail was greater and consequently this presented the opportunity to access the higher mark levels.

Question 2 (c)(i) (ii)

These questions presented problems for some candidates. A number of candidates made elementary errors and some failed to respond to the command “to the nearest km” in question (c)(ii). Consequently, a number of candidates lost what might be considered to be fairly simple marks. Poor use of the Ordnance Survey map extract and a lack of basic skills were evident and may have influenced the final grade for a number of candidates.

Question 2 (c)(iii)

Most candidates were able to offer some observations about why relatively few people live alongside the River Clyde. The quality of answers was generally linked to how well candidates used the map extract. Some candidates used the map extract in detail to suggest points about the area being industrial, perhaps run down and not a very attractive environment for people to live in, also identifying the fact that there appeared to be relatively few residential areas. Observations about potential flood risks were frequently considered. This approach of using the map and developing ideas related to the question produced excellent answers. A small number of candidates completely misread the question, making suggestions about why many people might actually live in the area.

Question 2 (c)(iv)

Responses to this question were variable. In general there were three main types of approach to the question. A number of candidates had a sound appreciation of how management can reduce traffic congestion and combined this with good use of the Ordnance Survey map extract to show how the identified transport developments might reduce congestion in the city centre. This approach usually scored full marks. The second approach either simply described the identified transport developments with limited reference as to how they might reduce congestion in the city centre or considered how public transport and infrastructure developments might reduce congestion in general terms with no real reference to the information on the map. In most cases this approach showed some understanding but failed to fully address the question. The final approach was where candidates had limited understanding of the question, often making isolated simple points on the first part of the question, such as “more people would use buses” with no development or explanation, and in a number of cases not attempting an answer to the second part of the question.

Question 2 (d)(i)

The majority of candidates were able to identify evidence of environmental problems from Figure 7. A number of candidates simply restated those problems with only marginal attempts to develop the idea about how redevelopment might help to resolve them. While this showed some awareness it did not fully answer the question. Those candidates that both identified the environmental issues and then offered clear reasoning about how the Govan Action Plan might help to resolve them generally produced excellent answers that were thoughtful and well documented. Use of Figure 7 was generally good, though reference back to the Ordnance Survey map was rather patchy. A small number of candidates simply wrote about any aspect of the Redevelopment Project, suggesting that they did not really understand what was meant by “environment”.

Question 2 (d)(ii)

Candidates generally found this question quite challenging. A number of candidates referred to ideas expressed in Figure 7. Where these were clearly linked to socio-economic opportunities, thoughtful and clearly appropriate points were expressed. However, points were often simply copied observations with no real development or clear link to the idea of improving socio-economic opportunities. Those candidates that did not refer to the ideas expressed in Figure 7 (they did not have to) or use another example, generally produced rather vague and unsubstantiated answers. The responses to this question raised two main issues. Firstly, it was evident that a number of candidates did not fully appreciate what is meant by “urban redevelopment” or understand the idea of “socio-economic”. Secondly, the use of an “example” was generally poor or non-existent. A number of candidates used eco-settlements as an example. Where these were clearly seen as part of an urban redevelopment scheme they often provided a useful avenue to address the question. However, often the chosen examples of eco-settlements were not really appropriate in relation to “urban redevelopment”.

Question 2 (e)

The majority of candidates were able to identify a range of features associated with eco-settlements and offer some suggestions about why they might be described as sustainable. The most popular ideas appeared to be observations about energy conservation, water harvesting and more sustainable building techniques. The examples most commonly used were BedZed and Dongtan, at times with considerable detail, which showed a clear appreciation about why these examples were considered to have elements of sustainable management. A number of candidates focused on more localised examples, in some cases very effectively while in others it was not always totally clear why the identified features might be considered as part of a sustainable management strategy (a lot of new developments are sold as “eco-friendly” today and this can clearly be confusing for candidates). In some cases individual buildings or parts of settlements were considered. While this offered some insight into the idea of sustainable building it did not fully address the idea of sustainable settlements. A small number of candidates took a broader view by using an example of a self-contained settlement to consider a wide range of points, including socio-economic and environmental observations. This approach often brought in ideas about managing waste, local transport, growing local food and community facilities. Where this type of approach clearly expressed links to the idea of sustainability it produced some excellent responses which were well documented and showed an impressive understanding of the key idea expressed in the question.