General Certificate of Secondary Education
January 2012

Geography B   **40352H**

(Specification 4035)

Unit 2: Hostile world (Higher)

Report on the Examination

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Introduction

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, line graphs, climate graphs, pie charts, maps of various scales, tables of figures, articles and diagrams were good. Opportunities for extended writing were given in one or more parts of each question, and even the lesser ability candidates at this tier were able to offer a response, which demonstrated some good geographical understanding. The more able of the candidates were able to offer high quality, well developed responses, demonstrating excellent understanding of geographical issues, backed up with the correct of geographical vocabulary and good use of case study examples in some instances. They were able to apply their knowledge and understanding well in unfamiliar contexts.

As with previous series, there was an imbalance between the numbers of candidates completing Sections A and B of the examination paper. A vast majority of candidates opted for Section A - Living with Natural Hazards, whilst few chose Section B - The Challenge of Extreme Environments.

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

Section A - Living with Natural Hazards

Question 1 was the most effectively answered question, the subject matter appearing to be the most familiar to the majority of candidates

Question 1 (a)(i)
Part (a)(i) was answered effectively by the majority of candidates, with many gaining the maximum mark. Where marks were lost, this was often due to candidates merely stating that active volcanoes were found on plate boundaries, without specifying a type and therefore getting only one of the two marks available.

Question 1 (a)(ii)
Part (a)(ii) was also answered effectively by many candidates with good knowledge of physical process and use of geographical terminology. Many candidates did link together the constructive plate boundary with divergence and were also able to show clear knowledge of the processes that lead to magma rising at this type of plate boundary and therefore gained a Level 2 mark. However, even at this tier, a significant number of candidates described processes such as convergence and subduction, which occur at a destructive plate boundary and as a result gained few marks.

Question 1 (b)(i)
Part (b)(i) did not prove problematic for most of the candidates, but there are still those on the higher tier who are unable to use scale and direction with sufficient accuracy.

Question 1 (b)(ii)
In part (b)(ii) the resource was used effectively with a majority of the candidates able to select relevant evidence from Figure 2 and then develop points to show how this affected the economy of Chile. There were many Level 2 responses on this question part and relatively few did not understand the term 'economy'.

Question 1 (c)
Part (c) did not prove problematic for the majority of the candidates with 65% gaining the maximum mark. Where errors did occur, it was often as a result of the term 'building codes' not being fully understood.

Question 1 (d)

In part (d) the terms 'planning' and 'preparing' were often overlooked and the responses of many candidates focused upon methods that were not really preparation for an earthquake, but were responses to the event. In addition, some of the methods described were more appropriate for a developed country. The majority of candidates gained one or two marks from the four available by developing one method fully, or stating two correct methods without development of these. Only 8% of candidates gained the maximum mark.

Question 2 (a)(i)

In part (a)(i) most candidates were able to correctly give the direction of the path of Hurricane Ike, although even at this tier there were a significant number of candidates who could not describe the direction with sufficient accuracy. The majority of the candidates did not use two points of reference in when describing the start and end points of the path of the hurricane and use of latitude/longitude or named locations was limited. Many candidates also described the path of the hurricane after 13 September even though this was not required by the question.

Question 2 (a)(ii)

Part (a)(ii) elicited a wide range of responses. Many candidates were only able to offer simple reasons for their chosen viewpoint; these were often taken directly from the forecast map provided. These were valid statements and candidates were able to gain a top Level 1 and score 4 marks by simply using these statements. Many 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 knowledge and understanding in constructing an argument for or against the issue. There was some good use of case study examples to develop points, notably Hurricane Hannah, Hurricane Katrina and Cyclone Nargis. The level 3 responses combined very good use of the resource with learned knowledge to back points up, along with sustained development through the use of one or more examples. Once again, use of direction was not always good, with some candidates stating that the eastern part of Louisiana was within the cone of uncertainty.

Question 2 (a)(iii)

Part (a)(iii) was not always well answered as some candidates focused their answers solely on the formation of a hurricane rather than the cost of damage.

Question 3 (a)(i)

Part (a)(i) did not prove problematic for the vast majority of the candidates with most able to interpret the weather data well.

Question 3 (a)(ii)

In part (a)(ii) a significant number of candidates ignored the command to explain how **either** natural factors **or** human factors cause wildfires and covered both elements in their answer. Some candidates gave only straight lifts from Figure 4 without suggestion as to how pylon repairs or army gunfire led to wildfires, but most were able to identify causes and develop their responses sufficiently to gain a Level 2 mark. Relatively few were able to sustain the development of points and gain a Level 3 mark. The best responses were often built around case studies of the causes of wildfires in Australia or California. There were also detailed explanations of the reasons for arson and of sunlight being magnified by glass bottles along with the resulting effect.

Question 3 (b)

Part (b) was very well answered with 60% of candidates being able to develop responses beyond the resource and gain a Level 2 mark. Case study examples helped some candidates give clarity to their response. Relatively few candidates were only able to offer effects on people and the environment which were straight from the resource and therefore gain a Level 1 mark.

Question 3 (c)

Part (c) was well answered with 21% of candidates gaining three marks and 16% of candidates being able to sustain their responses and gain the maximum mark. Case study examples such as Smokey the bear enabled the development of points.

Section B - The Challenge of Extreme Environments

Question 5 was the most effectively answered question, the subject matter appearing to be the most familiar to the majority of candidates.

Question 4 (a)(i)

Part (a)(i) was well answered with most candidates being able to interpret the map. However, some candidates made a simple point about the distribution and then went on to explain why, gaining no further credit. This was not required by the question.

Question 4 (a)(ii)

Part (a)(ii) was not always well done with some candidates offering only very vague statements or incorrect statements. For some candidates at this tier, their knowledge and understanding of climatic reasons for the formation of extreme environments is very limited and this is an area for future development. However, most candidates were able to give simple explanatory points whilst some gave very detailed explanations of the effects of offshore winds, high pressure systems and latitude. These were often centre-specific.

Question 4 (b)(i)

In part (b)(i), most candidates were able to interpret the rainfall graph.

Question 4 (b)(ii)

Part (b)(ii) elicited a range of responses. Some candidates gave only straight lifts from Figure 7 without suggestion as to how overcultivation or overgrazing led to desertification. However, most were able to identify causes and develop their responses sufficiently to gain a Level 2 mark. Relatively few were able to sustain the development of points and gain a Level 3 mark. The best responses were often built around case studies of the causes of desertification. There were also detailed explanations of the links between population pressure and the increased demand for food production with clear links to an explanation of the effects of overcultivation and/or overgrazing, linking them to the processes leading to soil erosion. A significant number of candidates ignored the command to explain how **either** natural factors **or** human factors cause desertification and covered both elements in their answer.

Question 4 (c)

Part (c) also elicited a range of responses, but 23% of candidates were able to sustain their responses and gain the maximum mark. Case study examples of appropriate technology schemes such as stone lines or wood burning stoves enabled the development of points.

Question 5 (a)

Part (a) was not attempted by 3% of candidates, a lower figure than for similar questions in previous series, but still a significant number of candidates who are missing straightforward marks. Of those candidates who did attempt the question, 85% were able to accurately complete the pie chart.

Question 5 (b)

Part (b) was well answered by the majority of the candidates with 63% gaining a Level 2 mark. The resource was used effectively with candidates able to select relevant evidence from Figure 9 and then develop points to show how this affected the increased rate of deforestation. Some candidates failed to score as they merely cited the data without attempting to link it to increased deforestation.

Question 5 (c)

Part (c) also elicited a wide range of responses. Many candidates were able to offer simple reasons for their chosen viewpoint; these were often taken directly from the plan of the management scheme

provided. Simple references to reafforestation, income from ecotourism, employment in craft industries were valid statements and these candidates were often able to gain a top Level 1 and score 4 marks. However, 36% 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 knowledge and understanding in constructing an argument for or against the issue. There was some limited use of case study examples to develop points, notably reforestation schemes in Borneo (Kalimantan) and other parts of Indonesia. The 6% of candidates who gained level 3 responses combined very good use of the resource with learned knowledge to back these points up, along with sustained development through the use of one or more examples. As with tier F, some candidates lost marks as they tended to describe the location of different elements of the scheme and not link these to management of the tropical rainforest environment, or they misunderstood the scheme and claimed it would cause deforestation.

Question 6 (a)(i)

Part (a)(i) was well answered with most candidates able to interpret the map.

Question 6 (a)(ii)

In part (a)(ii) there were some very good responses which demonstrated a good understanding of the effects of latitude on climate, the albedo effect and the effects of atmospheric pressure systems and katabatic winds, but as with tier F, these tended to be centre-specific.

Question 6 (b)

Part (b) was well answered, with many candidates able to give one correct change and 55% about able to identify two or three distinct phases from the graph and/or cite figures to gain all three marks.

Question 6 (c)

Part (c) was also well answered with the vast majority of candidates able to identify at least one problem caused by visitors in a cold environment, and 43% gaining both marks.

Question 6 (d)

Part (d) elicited a range of responses. Many candidates were able to name the Antarctic Treaty and/or offer simple suggestions such as agreements over stopping mineral exploitation or international quota system for fishing in Antarctic waters to gain a Level 1 mark. However, over 50% of candidates developed the description of aspects of international agreements and were able to gain a Level 2 mark. Almost 6% of candidates at this tier failed to score as they did not focus on the demands of the question. They simply stated the effects of overfishing or tourism without reference to the role of international agreements.

General points for development

Candidates must only answer questions from **either** Section A **or** Section B.

Candidates should not give more points than they are asked for e.g. when asked to give one point, candidates should not list a number of discrete points. If the question asks for description of one point, but has a tariff of two marks, then the first mark will be for identification of the point and the second will be for description. If asked to tick two boxes in a multiple choice question, candidates should not tick more than two boxes.

The resources used in the January 2012 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, effects, opinions etc by applying their own knowledge and understanding to these contexts.

Candidates should be reminded that there are often questions that require the completion of a graph (5 (a)(i) on the Foundation Tier and 5 (a) on the Higher Tier)and that they should be equipped with a pencil and a ruler. Candidates should read these questions carefully and follow the command to complete the figure so as not to lose marks unnecessarily.

Candidates should try to be more specific when stating or describing methods used in the management of natural hazards. Responses should be tailored to the specific needs of a particular hazard.

In questions where candidates are required to describe the path of a tropical storm from a map, they should be encouraged to use directions accurately to aid their response. Candidates should be encouraged to use lines of latitude or named locations as points of reference on maps.

There is a need for accuracy when answering skills questions e.g. reading graphs, giving compass directions etc.

Questions that demand knowledge of physical process are still often not well done and candidates should be encouraged to give a detailed sequential development of the process. This should be supported by case study exemplars where appropriate.

Some use of case study examples is a good strategy in responding to the Decision Making questions (questions 2 (a)(ii) and 5 (d) on the Foundation Tier and 2 (a)(ii) and 5 (c) on the Higher Tier). 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 be aware that case studies help to exemplify and contextualise their responses. The best Level 3 answers on the Decision Making questions make use of knowledge of accurate information to exemplify issues and develop a clear line of argument. A summative or reflective statement often improves the quality of the response. Responses to questions which demand a viewpoint or opinion to be expressed in a clear line of argument may be improved by centres allowing candidates to practise their reasoning skills, by, for example, using scaffolding techniques including key words such as 'because', 'so that', 'as a consequence' etc.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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