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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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General

- 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.

Question 1(a)(i)

Virtually all candidates identified the increase in population of San Francisco between 1940 and 2010. A significant proportion of candidates used specific data to illustrate the increase or to make points about the changing rates of increase between 1940 and 2010, comfortably allowing them to earn both marks.

Question 1 (a)(ii)

The majority of candidates showed a good understanding about the range of economic activities found in coastal areas, with many describing a wide range of economic activities and opportunities. Social, residential and environmental opportunities were also considered, and when linked to economic activities they provided a useful avenue into the question. In many cases candidates linked some of these points together, building up a sound holistic understanding of the idea of the coast as a 'multi-functional' economic area. However, while offering a detailed description of the range of opportunities found in coastal areas provided a useful insight into the question, it did not fully address the command which demanded some understanding of why particular opportunities are found in coastal areas. Without some level of explanation it was difficult to get much beyond half marks. The most successful

responses tended to focus on a particular located example, offering a description of the range of economic activities with sound locational reasons for their development.

A number of candidates failed to pick up the idea of 'economic activities' and drifted into broader discussion about residential and environmental factors with only limited reference to economic factors. This approach clearly failed to fully address the question.

Some candidates are still seeing coastal areas in a very narrow way (usually tourism-related). While tourism is clearly an important economic activity in many coastal areas, simply referencing direct tourism related opportunities with no reference to any multiplier opportunities or other types of economic activities does not really fully address the Specification key idea of the coast as a 'multi-functional area'.

Question 1 (b)

The majority of candidates were able to describe what is meant by weathering and erosion effectively. Many used an example of each to develop their ideas. In a small number of cases candidates confused the two terms or named a type of weathering/erosion and offered an incorrect description.

Question 1 (c)(i)

This question presented few problems; the majority of candidates offered the correct answer. A small number of candidates failed to identify the command 'to the nearest kilometre' and offered a more precise measurement. Unfortunately, in the context of the question this did not give the correct answer.

Question 1 (c)(ii)

This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates used the Ordnance Survey map effectively to identify and describe the physical characteristics of the spit. The length, width and general shape were common descriptive characteristics, as were observations about the material that the spit is made of. A small number of candidates either did not understand or failed to pick up the term 'physical characteristics' in the question. These candidates usually drifted into a description of human features which were clearly not appropriate.

Question 1 (c)(iii)

The general idea of 'collecting' sediment or slowing down drift was considered by the majority of candidates. A number of candidates developed this theme further by suggesting that this would develop a wider beach and protect the spit from erosion during storms.

Question 1(c)(iv)

The majority of candidates showed some understanding of the formation of coastal spits. In many cases candidates tended to focus on one element of the process, usually longshore drift or, to a lesser extent, the deposition of sediment. While this showed some appreciation of the question it did not fully address the question which required a more complete appreciation of the process of spit formation and some understanding of the part played by the orientation of the coastline. Those candidates who were able to use appropriate technical language generally gave a stronger impression that they had learned and understood the process of spit formation and consequently achieved higher marks. A number of candidates failed to respond to the command 'Explain ….', instead simply describing the features of a coastal spit, often in considerable detail. While this showed some appreciation of the question, it clearly did not address the command and consequently limited the number of marks scored.

Question 1(c)(v)

The majority of candidates used the Ordnance Survey map effectively to identify a number of recreation and leisure activities found in the area shown on the map. A significant proportion of candidates developed this theme by suggesting how the physical landscape provided opportunities for leisure activities or applied their understanding to express links between the characteristics of the area and particular types of recreation and leisure activities.

Question 1(c)(vi)

Many candidates did not find the idea of 'conflict' particularly easy to express. A significant number of candidates considered the question in terms of pressures or problems rather than conflicts. While this approach gave an insight into the question and was often worthy of credit, it generally did not fully address the key idea of economic/environmental conflict. Those candidates who did address the idea of conflict often used examples where there were clear development issues, such as Dibden Bay in Southampton Water. The use of an appropriate example usually provided an excellent opportunity to develop a very sound answer.

Question 1(d)(i)

The majority of candidates showed a good understanding of soft engineering and used Figure 3 effectively to help them describe the processes of beach replenishment and beach reprofiling. The candidates who got beyond a basic description and offered some explanation of how soft engineering actually works generally scored full marks. A number of candidates brought in useful examples of where soft engineering methods have been used.

A small number of candidates appeared to be unsure of what is meant by soft engineering and brought in examples of hard engineering techniques or discussions about managed retreat. This was clearly inappropriate in relation to Figure 3.

Question 1(d)(ii)

This question was clearly quite challenging for a number of candidates. A significant proportion of candidates showed a good level of awareness about the distinction between soft and hard engineering, some developing this theme by considering the possibilities of each. While this showed a useful general understanding of the question and was worthy of credit, it did not always fully develop the idea of why different methods are chosen in different places. Those candidates who did develop this type of discussion, even superficially, generally produced sound answers to the question.

Question 1(e)

Interpretation of 'coastal zones' was often quite broad, at times drifting into discussion which was more appropriate for questions about small-scale shoreline management. A number of candidates focused on hard or soft engineering schemes and while this gained some credit if it was shown as being sustainable it did not usually show a good understanding of the key idea which was about the broader coastal zone unless it was seen in the context of a wider planning strategy such as a Shoreline Management Plan. Those candidates who focused on Integrated Coastal Management strategies or used an example of Managed Retreat (Realignment) and considered how this might be considered as sustainable, generally produced thoughtful and well considered responses. The use of examples was variable. When candidates built their response around a suitable example it generally gave them a better opportunity to develop a successful answer.

Question 2(a)(i)

This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates appeared to have a good understanding of the terminology expressed in the question or were able to use Figure 4 effectively to show some awareness of the way in which natural increase and migration created population growth. A small number of candidates simply defined the terminology without offering any development. While this provided some insight into the idea of population growth, it did not fully address the question and was consequently rather self- limiting.

Question 2(a)(ii)

Many candidates interpreted 'challenges' as problems and tended to drift into descriptions of slum areas and issues of poor housing, lack of facilities and general points about pollution. While this gave an insight into the question, it did not fully address the idea of 'challenge'. This approach did not always pick up the command 'explain' which was clearly expressed in the question. Those candidates who did consider the idea of challenge generally produced excellent answers. A range of challenges were considered, including, housing an increasingly large urban poor population, supplying basic services, dealing with environmental issues etc. A number of candidates based their answers around an example, often to great effect.

Question 2(a)(iii)

The quality of responses to this question was almost wholly related to the strength of the chosen example. Those candidates who had clearly learned a detailed example of a water management project or an example of an urban improvement scheme which included elements of water/sanitation management usually produced sound answers, often with considerable detail. Those candidates who did not have an appropriate example at their command often wrote in generic terms and produced vague answers which showed some understanding but lacked sufficient detail to reach the higher marks.

A number of candidates simply described a water management project and did not consider how it might improve living conditions or failed to use any locational detail, simply writing in general terms. Both of these approaches were worthy of some credit but failed to fully answer the question and were consequently rather self-limiting.

Question 2(b)(i)

Virtually all candidates identified a general increase in vehicle numbers in Los Angeles between 1980 and 2005. A significant proportion of candidates went on to develop this theme by using specific data or identified the slight fall in vehicle numbers between 2005 and 2010.

Question 2(b)(ii)

The majority of candidates used Figure 5 effectively to identify the sources of potential environmental pressures such as traffic and industry. A significant proportion of candidates developed this basic idea by suggesting the types of environmental problems that might be caused by industrial and vehicle pollution or bringing in locational examples to express a clear cause-effect link.

Question 2(b)(iii)

There were some excellent responses to this question. It was evident that the majority of candidates had a good understanding about how traffic congestion is being reduced or managed in urban areas and a significant number of candidates brought in examples of both type of management and place-related management strategies. The most commonly used options were park and ride schemes, bus or metro systems and congestion charging. Other ideas included car sharing schemes, encouraging cycling by using cycle lanes and specific locational examples such as the guided busway in Cambridge.

Question 2(c)

In general terms candidates appeared to find the idea of 'inequalities' quite challenging and it was clear that a number of candidates did not really fully understand the basic concept. In most cases candidates used Figure 6 effectively to identify differences in unemployment rates, but they were not always able to develop this theme further by offering a clear understanding about the idea of inequalities or bringing in other data that could be used to identify inequalities.

A small number of candidates used examples to help them show an understanding of the key idea of 'inequality', often with considerable success.

A small number of candidates appeared to find Figure 6 somewhat confusing, in some cases seeing each of the four areas as separate countries.

Question 2(d)(i)

Responses to this question were mixed. In general it was evident that many candidates had some understanding about urban redevelopment projects/regeneration projects or eco-projects which included aspects of regeneration. In some cases, candidates were able to use quite detailed examples of projects that they had studied. However, while worthy of some credit, simply describing a project did not fully address the question. Those candidates who were able to describe a project and suggest how it might improve conditions for people generally scored quite high marks. When a well located and appropriate example was used with clear reference to socio-economic and environmental improvements, very impressive answers were produced. Perhaps, rather surprisingly, relatively few candidates used the Olympic site as an example.

Question 2(d)(ii)

The majority of candidates showed some awareness of the question, many developing ideas expressed in the previous question. A range of possibilities was considered, in most cases these were based on the evidence of economic or environmental improvements. A number of candidates failed to pick up the idea of 'one way' expressed in the question and tended to list a number of possibilities without offering any development. Those candidates who did consider one way of measuring success and offered some reasoning generally scored both marks.

Question 2(e)(i)

The majority of candidates showed some understanding of both of the terms expressed in the question. Many candidates were able to offer a detailed definition or a basic understanding with sufficient development or exemplification from Figure 7 in order to score both marks.

A small number of candidates were clearly not familiar with the terminology, often identifying 'greening' as general environmental change and 'carbon neutral' as producing no carbon.

Question 2(e)(ii)

A small number of candidates clearly did not understand the concept of 'sustainability' in relation to urban planning and management. They resorted to simply considering that any reference point on Figure 7 might be an example of sustainability so therefore copying it out with some expansion would be appropriate. Whilst given the correct choices this approach offered some insight into the question, it clearly did not address the 'Explain how….' command and consequently was very self-limiting. Those candidates who identified particular aspects of the urban area shown on Figure 7 and showed a clear understanding of why they might be considered sustainable or defined sustainability and related the concept to the complete package of factors shown on Figure 7 generally produced sound answers, some of which showed a very sophisticated and impressive appreciation of the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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