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Geography B 40351F

(Specification 4035)

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

Report on the Examination

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Unit 1 – Managing Places in the 21st Century

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).

Question 1 – The Coastal Environment

(a)(i)

This question presented few problems; the majority of candidates achieving the correct answer.

(a)(ii)

Basic skills were variable. The majority of candidates achieved full marks but there were a number who lost marks because of carelessness or minor inaccuracy. A small number of candidates either failed to attempt this question, or had clearly not looked at the resource to identify the data.

(a)(iii)

This question was generally well-done, with virtually all candidates identifying an increase and the majority using the data effectively to develop the idea.

(a)(iv)

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

(a)(v)

In general, responses to this question were poor. A significant proportion of candidates simply used Figure 1 and offered very little development. The command 'and your own knowledge' was largely ignored or simply dropped in by mentioning a place name.

The candidates who did get beyond Figure 1, often listed the types of economic activity that might be found in coastal areas, but failed to offer any explanation for their location. This is key element of the coastal unit (the idea of coasts being multi-functional) so there is a need for the detailed revision of a case study which both identifies the range of economic opportunities and offers clear reasoning for their location. This theme can then be developed further by considering the relative importance of coastal economic activities to the local economy.

A useful avenue might be to consider the economic impact of decline and then regeneration of a coastal area (a tourist resort or broader industrial area such as Cardiff Docks might be useful).

(b)

The majority of candidates identified the correct words or were able to use their knowledge of physical processes to work out the correct sequence.

(c)(i)

Most candidates used Figure 2 effectively to identify the differential rates or erosion and consider how this related to rock structure. This can be quite a challenging idea but it was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates had a sound understanding.

(c)(ii)

The majority of candidates showed some understanding of the dynamic nature of erosion and consider how this related to rock structure. This can be quite a challenging idea but it was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates had a sound understanding.

(c)(ii)

The majority of candidates showed some understanding of the dynamic nature of erosion. Those that continue the theme of differential erosion in part (i), generally achieved full marks.

(d)(i)

The majority of candidates clearly identified the terms and were able to relate them to Figure 3 effectively. Candidates are often quite comfortable with this approach to describing and explaining processes and features. This makes it a useful potential revision tool.

(d)(ii)

Use of the photograph (Figure 4) was generally sound, with many candidates identifying the slumping of the cliff and evidence of retreat (buildings near the top of the cliff).

A number of candidates considered that the very fact that defences were in place was evidence of vulnerability. This level of thinking was an impressive testament to some effective teaching.

(d)(iii)

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 on 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.

(e)(i)

The majority of candidates were able to give the appropriate four-figure grid reference.

(e)(ii)

A significant number of candidates made elementary errors with this question. The idea of height on an Ordnance Survey map is fundamental, especially in relation to physical landscapes. The use of map extracts to identify and describe particular coastal landscapes such as headlands, landslips and spits, demands that candidates have a second range of map reading skills at their command.

(e)(iii)

The majority of candidates were able to identify the two correct features marked on the Ordnance Survey map extract.

(e)(iv)

The majority of candidates shows a good understanding of scale and were able to calculate the length of Rhossili beach accurately.

(e)(v)

A number of candidates were clearly not aware of the term ‘sediment’. This made the question more challenging (although not impossible with clever use of the key). Identification of features by using the key on the map is a basic skill and it was pleasing to see that most candidates were able to do this successfully.

(e)(vi)

Most candidates were able to identify features from the map that suggested the area attracted visitors. These were often based around services such as camping sites/caravan sites. While this showed some awareness of the question, it did not fully consider why people are attracted to the area in the first place. Those candidates who went on to make observations about beach holidays, outdoor activities, or general points about the scenery or villages attracting people often produced excellent answers.

(f)

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.

Question 2 – The Urban Environment

(a)(i)

Completion of the graph presented few problems, the majority of candidates scoring full marks.

(a)(ii)

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)(iii)

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

(a)(iv)

The majority of candidates answered this question effectively, often making a number of detailed points about the impact of migration on urban growth. The part natural increase plays was less well considered in most cases.

(b)(i)

The majority of candidates identified the correct words/numbers in order to score full marks.

(b)(ii)

The key to this question was the word 'problem'. Those candidates who identified different types of environmental pressures on urban areas and then looked at why these might be considered problems often produced excellent answers. Examples of this included vehicle/industrial pollution damaging habitats and causing health problems; continued urban development creating waste, damaging both water and land-based environments.

A small number of candidates simply used the idea of 'pollution' in an unqualified and undeveloped way. This did not fully address the idea of 'environmental problems'.

(c)(i)

The use of Figure 8 was generally sound with most candidates identifying a reason why people might be vulnerable to natural hazards in urban areas. In most cases, the idea expressed was about poor quality housing. When developed with simple reasoning this provided a useful response.

(c)(ii)

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.

(d)(i)

The majority of candidates identified the correct words or were able to use their knowledge and understanding to work out correct sequence.

(d)(ii) and (iii)

These questions presented few problems, the majority of candidates used Figure 9 effectively to identify the correct answers.

(d)(iv)

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.

(d)(v)

It was encouraging to note that the majority of candidates responded correctly to the term 'urban environments'. Many considered the idea of 'urban greening' or developed points about improvements to air and water quality. Those candidates who used Figure 9 effectively and brought in additional case studied material, generally produced excellent answers.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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