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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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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.

Questions

1(a)(i) This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates used the data in Figure 1 effectively to identify the increase in resident population in Florida. A small number of candidates failed to get to the second mark because they did not use the actual figures or used them inaccurately.

1(a)(ii) This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates used the data in Figure 1 effectively to identify two reasons why the resident population in Florida may have increased. In some cases candidates did not recognise or understand the word “resident” and discussed tourist numbers. This was clearly inappropriate.

1(a)(iii) Those candidates who based their response around a detailed and well located example generally produced sound answers which showed a good general understanding of the question and brought in some interesting ideas. However, at the lower end of the mark range a number of candidates tended to consider the question in generic terms, often identifying the idea of “environment” in relation to “pollution” and giving largely unqualified responses. This was generally self -limiting. At the higher mark levels points about habitat destruction linked to building development or damage to the marine environment (often coral reefs) due to waste being pumped into the sea or tourist pressures often produced useful responses. A small number of candidates considered “coastal environments” in a broad sense, using examples of community based pressures. Where this more holistic interpretation included clear observations about the physical environment the answers were very thoughtful and showed an impressive level of understanding.

1(a)(iv) Virtually all candidates were able to identify one measure of environmental management shown on Figure 1. A small number of candidates did not attempt this question.

1(b)(i) This question had two clear commands, “Describe” and “Suggest reasons”. A small number of candidates failed to recognise this, generally concentrating their answers on the “describe” element of the question. This restricted the marks that were able to be scored on the question. Those candidates who did address both elements of the question generally achieved high marks. At the highest level candidates used Figure 2 in detail to describe the pattern of wind energy while also expressing detailed observations about how factors such as wind direction/shelter and the orientation of the coastline might play a part in the variation of wave energy at the coast.

1(b)(ii) This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates were able to express the potential link between wave energy and erosion. A number developed this theme by considering the variations in the rate of erosion or number of landslide events in relation to winter storms where wave energy may be greater.

1(c)(i) This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates were able to identify the correct names of the landforms shown on Figure 3. The landform that caused the most difficulty was the wave-cut platform.

1(c)(ii) The majority of candidates had a good general understanding of the processes of erosion and were able to describe how the sea had affected the headland shown on Figure 3. The general sequence of erosion was appreciated by a significant proportion of candidates. At the higher mark levels candidates increasingly used more specific geographical terminology and were able to explain in some detail how particular types of erosion had been significant in producing the headland features. A small number of candidates identified Figure 3 as a “headland and bay” situation and considered the question in terms of hard and softer coastal erosion. When done effectively this approach was creditworthy, although it was generally slightly limiting.

1(d)(i) This question had two clear commands, “Describe” and “Explain”. A small number of candidates failed to recognise this, generally concentrating their answers on the “describe” element of the question. This was clearly self-limiting. Those candidates that did address both parts of the question command often produced thoughtful answers that showed a good level of understanding. At the highest mark level candidates used Figure 4 to offer a detailed description, some using the scale line to offer precise comparisons in the width of the beach at Zone A and Zone B. They then went on to suggest clear reasons for the differences which included points about the impact of longshore drift and the groynes.

1(d)(ii) Some candidates found this question challenging and did not fully address the command. The key idea was an understanding of “why” some areas are protected rather than “how” they are protected. A significant number of candidates drifted into the idea of “how” coastal

areas are protected from the effects of coastal processes. This was clearly inappropriate and resulted in a loss of marks. Those candidates who did consider why some areas are protected tended to draw on ideas from Figure 4, picking up points about protecting buildings and places where people live. This was generally a successful approach to the question. A small number of candidates took a broader view, not only identifying economic reasons for protection but also considering that some areas are not vulnerable to coastal processes and therefore don't need protection, or bringing in environmental reasons why some areas might be protected.

1(e) The majority of candidates showed a good understanding of "soft coastal engineering" and were able to offer a detailed description of soft engineering techniques. The use of Figure 5 was generally sound, providing either the basis for the answer or a stimulus for further detail. A number of candidates drifted into a discussion about how the soft engineering methods work to protect coastal environments. This was clearly not a requirement of the question. In a number of cases specific examples were used, often to great effect.

1(f) Many candidates found this question quite challenging. There was a reasonable understanding about how rising sea levels might create problems such as flooding and erosion but the idea of management was not always well considered. A small number of candidates saw this question as a shoreline management question, and talked about hard engineering rather than seeing the broader picture and considering future coastal zone management. Some candidates did consider coastal retreat as a long term planning strategy in relation to rising sea levels, often producing very effective and well documented responses. A number of candidates used the "Response Project", identified in the dedicated textbook, as an example of long term planning, often to great effect.

2(a)(i) Virtually all candidates used Figure 6 effectively to identify the correct answer to this question.

2(a)(ii) The majority of candidates used Figure 6 effectively to address this question. The highest marks were achieved by those candidates who used the data most effectively to draw out comparative points.

2(a)(iii) The idea of urbanisation was clearly understood by the majority of candidates. Most were able to give two appropriate reasons why people might be attracted to urban areas in less developed countries. A wide range of reasons were given, many of them focusing on economic and social opportunities.

2(b)(i) The use of Figure 7 was variable. Those candidates who were able to use the resource effectively and develop their ideas by bringing in other examples often produced very thoughtful and well documented answers. Those candidates that did not use the resource effectively usually identified generic problems such as "pollution" or focused on describing urban slums. While this provided a useful backdrop to the question it did not really address the idea of "challenge" expressed in the question. Slum areas were seen by most candidates as a problem or challenge, at times very effectively when they got beyond the purely descriptive and began to consider why they might be considered a problem or challenge. A small number of candidates brought in broader ideas such as the challenge of managing water supply or the growing demand for sanitation systems or issues related to air pollution. The problem of a lack of services was a common theme, often linked to problems of disease. When fully developed to include ideas about the challenges of managing or improving services this provided a useful avenue for candidates to show a clear understanding of the question. Managing increasing levels of waste and traffic were also considered by a small number of candidates. Those responses that clearly focused on the idea of "challenge" often produced sound answers which showed a good level of understanding, at times backed up by some excellent locational knowledge.

2(b)(ii) The majority of candidates were able to offer some ideas about how conditions in urban areas in less developed countries are being improved. Responses ranged from general observations such as "improving houses" or "putting in clean water", to more detailed descriptions of self- help schemes or government improvement schemes. At the higher mark levels candidates based their responses around specific case studies, usually housing

or infrastructure improvement schemes. Where candidates offered a detailed description of urban improvements and linked this to general increases in living standards answers were able to show a thoughtful awareness of the question.

2(c)(i)(ii)(iii) The majority of candidates used the Ordnance Survey map effectively to identify the correct answers to these questions, although measuring the distance (question(c)(ii)) was a challenge for a number of candidates. In a small number of cases there were simple errors and there was some evidence to suggest that a few candidates were not familiar with the skills required to answer the questions.

2(c)(iv) The majority of candidates were able to identify the fact that there were a number of water features in grid square 8002 and that this might make building difficult or that there might be a potential flood risk. Identifying a second reason appeared to be a challenge for a number of candidates. A number picked up ideas about being close to a prison or power station, often without fully developing the reasons why this might be a factor that would restrict building in the area. Ideas about slope were mentioned by a number of candidates. However, it was evident that some candidates did not fully appreciate the relationship between contour patterns and slope shown on the map. Other ideas expressed included points about environmental restrictions, nearness to the sewage works and observations about the burial ground.

2(c)(v) Most of the candidates used the map as a stimulus to generate ideas for their answer. The majority of candidates showed some appreciation of what is meant by "environmental hazard", although many were not clear why particular factors were a hazard. Responses varied from basic, unqualified references to "pollution" through to detailed points about specific types of pollution linked to particular activities, often identified from the map. A relatively small proportion of candidates developed this theme by expressing why this might constitute a "hazard". A number of candidates drifted into ideas about natural hazards. In some cases this allowed candidates to make tentative links to the idea of environmental hazards and gain some credit but often this approach was self- limiting. A number of candidates used specific examples to help them develop ideas, often very effectively.

2(d) The majority of candidates showed an excellent understanding of this question and were able to explain different methods that might be used to reduce traffic congestion in urban areas. In many cases particular examples were identified, frequently being used very effectively to develop particular points. It was clear that most candidates had a sound understanding of this topic.

2(e) Responses to this question were mixed. In general it was evident that most candidates had some understanding about urban redevelopment/regeneration and in many cases were able to use examples of regeneration schemes that they had studied. However, while worthy of some credit, simply describing a regeneration scheme did not fully address the question. Those candidates who were able to describe a redevelopment/regeneration project and suggest how it might improve general quality of life scored quite high marks. A significant number of candidates developed this theme further by identifying the problems faced by Area A in Figure 9 and then going on to describe how a redevelopment/regeneration scheme might help to resolve those particular problems. When done effectively this produced very impressive answers to what proved quite a challenging question.

2(f) A number of candidates clearly did not really understand the concept of "sustainability" in relation to urban management. In general there were three approaches to this question. The most basic approach identified one or two simple generic ideas, often about energy (production or conservation) or resource management. These responses showed some awareness of conservation techniques but did not show any real appreciation of why these techniques might be considered to be part of a sustainable management strategy in urban areas. The second approach used specific examples and identified a wider range of factors which might be considered part of a sustainable management strategy in urban areas. In adopting this approach candidates often showed some awareness of the concept of sustainability. The third approach used detailed examples such as Bedzed or Eco-towns/cities and made clear observations about how socio-economic and environmental

management was being used in order to ensure long term community sustainability. This approach enabled candidates to produce thoughtful, often impressive responses which brought in a wide range of ideas and showed a detailed 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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