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General Certificate of Secondary Education
January 2012

Geography B   40352F

(Specification 4035)

Unit 2: Hostile world (Foundation)

Report on the Examination

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, 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 least able candidates were able to offer a response which demonstrated some geographical understanding. The more able of the candidates were able to offer more developed responses, demonstrating good understanding of geographical issues, backed up with some correct use of geographical vocabulary and some use of case study examples. They were able to apply their knowledge and understanding 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) did not prove problematic for the majority of candidates. Where errors did occur, it was often as the third box "All active volcanoes are on plate boundaries" was ticked. Some candidates ignored the instruction to tick two boxes and ticked more than two.

Question 1 (a)(ii)
Part (a)(ii) elicited a range of responses. Many candidates seldom gave more than a simple idea of divergent movement and/or named the tectonic plates with poor knowledge of physical process and use of geographical terminology. The better candidates at this tier did link together the constructive plate boundary with divergence and were also able to show some knowledge of the processes that lead to magma rising at this type of plate boundary. Such responses gained a Level 2 mark. 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 the vast majority of the candidates.

Question 1 (b)(ii)
In part (b)(ii) a large majority of the candidates were able to interpret the map and some did attempt to link strength to distance from the national boundary.

Question 1 (b)(iii)
In part (b)(iii) some candidates did not follow the command to use Figure 2 and gave general effects of earthquakes, but the majority of candidates were able to use the resource effectively and gain maximum marks.

Question 1 (c)(i)
In part (c)(i) there were some well developed descriptions of a range of methods used to try to make buildings earthquake proof in the context of both developed and less developed countries. References to cross bracing, base isolators and use of flexible building materials such as bamboo were common

along with some development as to the effect of these methods. However, a significant number of candidates gave very general statements such as 'build stronger houses' or 'make houses out of concrete'. In addition there were descriptions of methods that would have been more appropriate for a tropical storm or a wildfire. Responses should be tailored to the specific needs of a particular hazard.

Question 1 (c)(ii)

A similar situation existed with (c)(ii) and there were some very vague responses given, along with methods that were not about preparation for an earthquake, but were more about responses to the event.

Question 2 (a)(i)

In part (a)(i) most candidates were able to use latitude, but use of direction was not always good.

Question 2 (a)(ii)

Part (a)(ii) 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 forecast map provided. These were valid statements and many candidates were able to gain a top Level 1 and score 4 marks. Use of the resource was generally good. 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. Once again, use of direction was not always good, with many candidates stating that the eastern part of Louisiana was within the cone of uncertainty.

Question 2 (a)(iii)

Part (a)(iii) was not well answered by many candidates as they focused solely on the formation of a hurricane rather than the cost of damage.

Question 2 (b)

In part (b) there were many vague responses, similar to those seen in question 1(c), although the majority of the candidates were able to offer two valid methods.

Question 3 (a)(i)

In part (a)(i) it was more challenging for many candidates to name a city than would be expected. The map key was not always well used and Sicily and Sardinia were common incorrect answers.

Question 3 (a)(ii) and (a)(iii)

The natural causes of wildfires in part (a)(ii) was often better done than the human causes in (a)(iii). The weather data given in Figure 4 was generally well used and candidates' own knowledge of factors such as spontaneous heating was evident. The resource was not so well used in suggesting human factors as many candidates gave only straight lifts from the Figure without suggesting how pylon repairs or army gunfire led to wildfires. The better responses at this tier gave well developed points referring to sunlight being magnified by glass bottles, and arson. Those candidates who used examples were better able to develop points.

Question 3 (b)

Part (b) was well answered with 38% 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, but these were rare at this tier. Almost 50% of candidates were only able to offer effects on people and the environment which were straight from the resource and which therefore gained a Level 1 mark.

Question 3 (c)

Part (c) was well answered with 26% 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 effectively.

Question 4 (a)(ii)

Part (a)(ii) did not prove problematic for the majority of the candidates.

Question 4 (a)(iii)

Part (a)(iii) was not always well done with many vague and/or incorrect statements. For many candidates, their knowledge and understanding of climatic reasons for the formation of extreme environments is very limited and this is an area for future development.

Question 4 (b)(i), (b)(ii) and (b)(iii)

In part (b)(i), a significant number of candidates were unable to interpret the rainfall graph. There were similarities with question 3(a), in that the natural causes of desertification in part (b)(ii) was often better done than the human causes in (b)(iii). The resource was not so well used in suggesting human factors as many candidates gave only straight lifts from the Figure without suggestion as to how overcultivation or overgrazing led to desertification. The better candidates at this tier suggested the links between population pressure and the demand for increased food production to overcultivation or overgrazing and/or suggested the effects of one or both factors, by linking them to soil erosion.

Question 4(c)

Part (c) elicited a range of responses, with the majority of the candidates able to offer two or three valid suggestions as to how desertification can be reduced. Almost 22% of candidates were able to sustain their responses and gain the maximum mark.

Question 5 (a)(i)

A significant number of candidates failed to attempt Part (a)(i). Of those candidates who did attempt the question, most were able to accurately complete the graph.

Question 5 (a)(ii)

Part (a)(ii) did not prove problematic for the majority of the candidates.

Question 5 (b)

Part (b) elicited a range of responses. Some candidates failed to score as they merely cited the data without attempting to link it to increased deforestation. However, most candidates were able to give simple reasons to gain a Level 1 mark, with over 25% of candidates being able to give clear reasons and gain a Level 2 mark.

Question 5 (c)

Part (c) was well answered with 47% of candidates being able to give two effects of deforestation.

Question 5 (d)

Part (d) 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 many candidates were able to gain a top Level 1 and score 4 marks. Use of the resource was generally good. Over 16% 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 occasional good use of case study examples to develop points. 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 being able to interpret the map effectively.

Question 6 (a)(ii)
Performance on part (a)(ii) was variable with some candidates demonstrating a good understanding of the effects of latitude on climate, the albedo effect and the effects of atmospheric pressure systems and katabatic winds. This tended to be centre-specific and for many candidates, once again their knowledge and understanding of climatic reasons for the formation of extreme environments was often limited to basic statements with little real explanation. Many candidates simply described the climatic conditions or made very general statement such as 'because it is at the bottom of the earth'. This is an area for future development.

Question 6 (b)(i)
Part (b)(i) was well answered, with many candidates being able to give one correct change, but with most being able to identify two distinct phases from the graph and gain both marks.

Question 6 (b)(ii)
Part (b)(ii) was also well answered, although some candidates did not follow the command to use Figure 12 and gave general problems/benefits for Antarctica. The majority of candidates were able to use the resource to good effect and gain maximum marks.

Question 6 (c)
Part (c) elicited a range of responses. Over 22% of candidates 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. However, many candidates were able to name the Antarctic Treaty and/or offer simple suggestions such as agreement over stopping mineral exploitation or an international quota system for fishing in Antarctic waters. Over 21% of candidates developed the description of aspects of international agreements and were able to gain a Level 2 mark. Again, this tended to be centre-specific.

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 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 question (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 question 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.