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General Certificate of Secondary Education
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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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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)

This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates were able to use Figure 1 effectively to identify the Pacific Ocean.

Question 1 (a)(ii)

The majority of candidates completed the graph accurately. It was evident that a number of candidates did not have a ruler and this resulted in some unclear or inaccurate graphs. Consequently, what might be considered quite easy marks were sometimes lost.

Question 1 (a)(iii)

Virtually all candidates identified an increase in the 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)(iv)

A significant number of candidates showed a good general understanding of this question, often considering the idea of coastal areas as multi-functional areas which attract people for a variety of reasons. Not all candidates made good use of Figure 1, but those that did often picked up the ideas of industrial growth and economic opportunities as a major attraction for people. A number developed this idea further by considering how the physical geography of coastal areas can also help to attract people, both for employment and retirement. A number of candidates simply focused on tourism. While this provided a potentially useful avenue into the question, it was often rather self-limiting.

A small number of candidates totally ignored Figure 1 and addressed the question in generic terms with no reference to the idea of coastal areas. Given that there was a clear command to use Figure 1, or at least the ideas expressed in Figure 1, this meant that marks were lost.

Question 1(b)

This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates were able to identify the correct words from the list given. There was some slight confusion between the different processes, suggesting that a number of candidates had clearly not learned the specific terminology effectively. A small number of candidates failed to attempt this question.

Question 1 (c)

Candidates mostly showed a good general awareness of longshore drift and were able to use the stated terms to identify the correct processes. A small number of candidates put more than one term in each box or did not attempt this question.

Question 1(d)(i)(ii)(iii)

While a significant number of candidates were able to score most of the marks on these questions, it was evident that a number of candidates had very poor basic map reading skills, or simply did not understand what was required. Consequently, a number of candidates lost what might be considered to be quite straightforward marks. The use of Ordnance Survey map extracts is a common feature in geography examinations and they provide excellent teaching resources when looking at physical environments, so they should play a part both in teaching the unit and in any revision programme. A number of candidates failed to attempt this question.

Question 1 (d)(iv)

The majority of candidates showed some understanding of the formation of coastal spits. In most 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. 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 how….', 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 marks were limited.

Question 1(d)(v)

A number of candidates did not attempt this question, clearly suggesting that they had no real understanding of six figure grid references. Those candidates who did attempt the question were generally able to identify the correct answers.

Question 1 (d)(vi)

A significant proportion of candidates were able to identify one of the nature reserves shown on the Ordnance Survey map extract. Having identified the nature reserve, a number went on to develop the idea by suggesting how a nature reserve might help to protect/conserve the area. Some candidates simply identified the nature reserve and offered no additional development, suggesting that they had not been made aware of the need to offer some development for a two mark response. A small

number of candidates clearly had no understanding of the term 'environmental conservation', often mentioning recreational facilities or simply not attempting the question.

Question 1 (d)(vii)

It was clear that a number of candidates found the idea of 'conflict' challenging. In many cases it was translated into 'problems', with general ideas about pollution or environmental pressures being considered. While this offered some insight into the general idea, it did not fully address the key idea that different demands on coastal areas do not always fit comfortably together. A number of candidates used examples to express their ideas. When appropriate examples were chosen they provided an excellent vehicle to address the question; ideas about general economic/environmental conflicts in an area such as Southampton Water or the conflicts resulting from multi demands in tourism areas such as St Lucia provided the opportunity for excellent responses.

It was evident that a small number of candidates did not fully understand the term 'human activity'. An appreciation of the basic Specification terminology is vital and should form a part of any revision strategy.

Question 1 (e)

There were three approaches to this question. The first showed that candidates had clearly learnt and fully understood the idea of 'soft engineering' and were comfortable with the terminology expressed in the question. These candidates generally scored full marks. The second approach was where candidates had some understanding of the processes of soft engineering and were able to use Figure 3 effectively to express some appropriate ideas. These candidates did not always fully address the question but were generally able to score two or three marks. The third approach was where it was evident that candidates had very little understanding of the key idea (soft engineering) and showed virtually no familiarity with the terminology expressed in the question. In this instance candidates sometimes managed to gain some credit through appropriate use of Figure 3, but often responses were very marginal in relation to the question. Knowing the terminology was the key to addressing this question effectively.

Question 1 (e)(ii)

Many candidates found this question quite challenging and few scored both marks by identifying changes to beach slope and width. In many cases candidates considered that there had been changes to sea level or that the buildings had been moved further away from the sea! These observations tended to reflect a lack of understanding of the process of beach nourishment and how it can widen the beach.

Question 1(e)(iii)

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 (f)

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 of sustainability unless it was seen in the context of a wider planning strategy such as a Shoreline Management Plan. Those candidates who focused on broader 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. Most candidates used Figure 4 effectively to identify the correct answer.

Question 2 (a)(ii)

The majority of candidates were clearly familiar with the terminology and were able to work out the correct answers. The only term that created any real problems was 'social improvement scheme'.

Question 2(a)(iii)

The majority of candidates completed the graph accurately. It was evident that a number of candidates did not have a ruler and this resulted in some unclear or inaccurate graphs. Consequently, what might be considered quite easy marks were sometimes lost.

Question 2 (a)(iv)

This question presented few problems. Most candidates were able to work out the correct answer. A small number of candidates who had made errors with the graph appeared to have then used the graph to address this question, consequently selecting an incorrect answer. Graph-based questions often have a follow-on question so it is important to check that the graph is correct and also check the answer to the follow-on question against the original data.

Question 2 (a)(v)

The majority of candidates answered this question very effectively, many bringing in detailed ideas about the problems of disease created by poor living conditions. Those candidates who used Figure 4 effectively and expressed clear 'cause and effect' generally scored full marks. Although not specifically requested, a number of candidates used appropriate examples very effectively to enhance their understanding of the question. In the correct context the use of an appropriate example can help to show understanding and consequently help to score marks.

Question 2 (a)(vi)

The majority of candidates showed a sound understanding of this question and were able to effectively describe different ways in which urban conditions were being improved in less developed countries. In most cases the focus was on the development or improvement of housing, however a number of candidates considered water/sanitation schemes, often to great effect. The quality of the response was almost totally dictated by the level of detail expressed, both in terms of the example and the improvement scheme. Those candidates who used an effectively located and named example and then went on to describe the specific urban improvements generally scored high marks.

Question 2 (b)(i)(ii)

These questions presented few problems. The majority of candidates used Figure 5 effectively to work out the correct answers.

Question 2 (b)(iii)

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)(iv)

A number of candidates found this question challenging, often quoting types of air pollution (smog) rather than identifying causes of air pollution. Those candidates who understood the distinction between types and causes generally scored full marks.

Question 2 (b)(v)

A number of candidates simply repeated the basic ideas about 'affecting people and environments' expressed in Figure 5. This did not really offer any real understanding of the idea of 'problems'. When candidates developed their ideas and began to link them to points about causing illness or damaging

buildings, responses became increasingly creditworthy. Some candidates produced some excellent responses with clear links between air pollution and specific lung and breathing problems and points about acidification attacking plants and damaging the built environment.

Question 2 (b)(vi)

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 and specific locational examples such as the guided busway in Cambridge.

Question 2 (c)(i)

The majority of candidates used Figure 6 effectively to identify the two correct answers. A small number of candidates failed to attempt this question.

Question 2 (c)(ii)

A number of candidates found this question quite challenging, often resorting to virtually restating the question or making very generalised observations such as 'because there are no jobs'. While this approach offered a basic insight into the question, it did not really offer any development and was consequently rather self-limiting. A number of candidates took a slightly broader view, bringing in ideas about a lack of opportunities because of the closure of industry or because an area was finding it difficult to attract industry. A small number of candidates offered quite sophisticated ideas including a lack of government investment and funding or poor educational attainment and skills making it difficult for local people to find employment.

Question 2 (c)(iii)

A number of candidates appeared to not fully understand the term 'quality of life'. Consequently, responses to this question were variable and in a number of cases candidates failed to attempt the question. Those candidates who did understand the terminology expressed in the question or were able to work out the idea from the question stem generally gave reasonable answers, many of which tended to focus on a less developed world context.

Question 2 (d)

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 (e)(i)

This question presented few problems. The majority of candidates were either familiar with the terminology or were able to use Figure 7 to work out appropriate responses.

Question 2 (e)(ii)

The majority of candidates were able to offer an appropriate definition or offer some clear understanding of what is meant by 'recycling'.

Question 2 (e)(iii)

A 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 would be appropriate. Whilst giving

the correct choices, this approach offered some insight into the question, but it clearly did not address the 'Explain how…' command and consequently was 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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