Version

General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011

Geography **GEOG1**

(Specification 2030)

Unit 1: Physical and Human Geography

Report on the Examination

General

Following the path set out in January 2011, this June some further progress was made in extending the range of marks awarded to candidates taking the Geog1 examination so that the marks required for the relevant grades would be higher than in the June 2010 examination with a similarly large candidature.

In this examination, it appeared that the core physical geography question in Section A was better answered than the human geography counterpart in Section B.

In general where questions in Section B contained resource material that involved text, this was often not well used. Candidates tended to repeat the content, rather than process the information and use it to answer the question. This was clearly apparent in question 5(b) where there was a dual command to 'describe and comment on'. Comment was relatively rare as candidates selected the causes, but did not analyse them and their links and relative importance. Candidates must also realise what is meant by 'describe the pattern' – for many see pattern as location and simply identify places at random, rather than organising their analysis with regard to level - of swine flu cases – or distance - with regard to food imports. With regard to the use of photographs in Section A, candidates should be reminded that features they write about or label must be visible on the photograph, and comments must be targeted to the question asked. Thus, in 1(a)(i), labels had to relate to landforms and what was visible – hard rock was not permissible on both criteria.

Precise knowledge is needed to ensure marks are obtained for definitions. Where terms such as periglacial, mass movement and desertification were known, candidates comfortably obtained the marks. Otherwise, statements were partly correct or vague. Once again, clear success comes when candidates address the question asked on the paper – not one that has appeared previously. Thus, candidates must know the meanings of command words and comply with them. The same is true of case studies. Candidates should have a list of case studies that relate at least to different areas of the specification to avoid making incorrect choices. For example, Antarctica featured significantly in question 2(c) on tundra where northern Canada and Alaska were appropriate locations. Having made an informed choice, candidates must then target their response to the question – the Three Gorges Dam represented appropriate exemplar material for question 1(c). However, the content had to be manipulated to answer the question – either to indicate that this hard engineering strategy had advantages and therefore hard engineering was better than soft engineering – or, conversely that it had many disadvantages and the reverse was true.   A resumé of all that is known on the Three Gorges Dam does not equate to a (good) answer to the question asked. The best candidates supported their answers with reference to examples. Many questions have a discursive element and candidates should be encouraged to engage with this. Common command words that invite discussion are 'to what extent', 'comment on' as well as the more explicit instruction to 'discuss'.

Section A

Question 1 Rivers, floods and management

A small percentage of candidates did not attempt part 1(a)(i) Some still did not arrow features so that these connect with the label, and others labelled features that were not visible (such as potholes) or features that did not relate to the landform, such as the presence of vegetation. Those that answered this question well usually identified two landforms such as waterfall and gorge and then added further qualification or separate labels that did describe, rather than merely identify. Over a third of candidates reached level 2 on 1(a)(ii), with a further 23% obtaining the top of level 1. The key reason for this was that they addressed only the waterfall and disregarded the gorge. As stated in January, knowing what is needed to progress through the levels is crucial, and a recognition of the plural landforms in the question was required. Often, candidates had a clear sequence relating to hard and soft rocks and their relative position, as well as referring to specific erosion processes. Better responses explained what abrasion and hydraulic action were and linked the collapsing overhang to the retreat of the valley and the formation of the gorge. Some referred to rejuvenation – only the better candidates clearly understand how this led to waterfalls and gorges.

Part 1(b) was well done with the majority of candidates obtaining three or four marks.   Those who selected either urbanisation or deforestation were able to see a clear sequence of events set in motion

by building on land or chopping trees down that related to impermeable surfaces or reduced interception and the impact on surface runoff and lag time. Some candidates drifted into a second cause, whilst others ignored the command word to explain.

The extended writing question here was the best answered on the paper. Level 3 answers were seen where candidates were discursive and used case studies to make points either in favour of soft or hard engineering.   Some noted their complementary nature or referred to their appropriateness in different settings. Many less successful answers noted advantages and disadvantages of different strategies, without properly targeting the question. There was some confusion with regard to what constituted soft engineering – dredging and levees being two common ones. Candidates should consider the scale of examples being used – the River Quaggy with soft engineering techniques is not easy to contrast with the Three Gorges Dam, but this appeared frequently. Some candidates wrongly referred to coastal flooding.

Question 2 Cold environments

Approximately one third of candidates scored three or four marks on 2(a)(i).   The most common mark was two. Some drifted to Zone B, whilst others wrongly perceived the presence of medial moraine. Many recognised lateral moraine, and better answers went on to describe the characteristics of the moraine that was visible. Many disregarded the moraine that was clearly present on the surface of the glacier. In 2(a)(ii), less than a fifth accessed three or four marks. There was significant drift to medial and terminal moraine, and many disregarded the need to identify where the moraine came from and how it got to be on the ice. Where this was addressed and there was reference to processes such as freeze-thaw and plucking, the question was well answered.

Responses to 2(b)(i) varied. Candidates with precise knowledge scored two marks. Here, there was often recognition of periglacial areas being on the edges of ice sheets and glaciers and of the presence of permafrost. However, a significant minority scored 0 for this knowledge based question, and there was drift into glacial and some confusion with post glacial. To access level 2 on 2(b)(ii) there had to be reference to two processes and some precision in the summary. Common processes were solifluction, freeze-thaw, nivation and permafrost. The critical aspects of a good answer were precision and sequence. Weaker candidates drifted to glacial and fluvioglacial processes.

Too many candidates wrongly referred to Antarctica which is not a tundra area; some applied The Antarctica Treaty to Canada.   Such responses were limited to level 1. Level 3 responses sought to consider developments and link them to sustainability. There were different viewpoints but these were permissible as long as they reflected the content, and some argued convincingly that careful management had reduced conflict, whilst others noted great changes from traditional lifestyles to the detriment of the balance.

Question 3 Coastal environments

The definition question here, 3(a)(i), was less successfully answered than its periglacial counterpart in question 2.   Yet, this is knowledge based and necessitates revision with some care and precision. There was much confusion with weathering and erosion. Often, candidates scored a mark by identifying two examples of mass movement. The best responses were more precise and recognised the shifting of material down slope, relative speeds and the role of gravity. Part 3(a)(ii) was better done with approximately a quarter of candidates obtaining three or four marks.   Here, candidates observed the photograph closely to note what was clearly visible and the evidence of the mass movement that had occurred. Thus, there was reference to the material at the foot of the cliff, the lack of vegetation in places or its presence part way down, having once 'fitted' at the top. At the lower end, there was much drift to cause – despite the fact that there was no command to explain, or say why it happened.

In 3(b)(i), there was a focus on processes of coastal erosion, rather than the underlying factors that are responsible for it. This was a level 1 response. Geology was the most common underlying cause referred to, whilst some did recognise fetch, wind strength and wave characteristics. The best realised the connections between the different factors. In contrast, 3(b)(ii) was much better done with many candidates accessing three or four marks. There was a recognition that beach nourishment was the addition of material and a step by step sequence explaining the effect of this on the base of the cliffs. There was some confusion with vegetation being planted and succession, at times, as well as reference to longshore drift.

Part 3(c) had a similar number of level 3 responses as its counterpart in question 2. The mean mark was also very similar.   Often, candidates wrote quite generically, without fully engaging with the question. There were two command words to be addressed here. Often, candidates only addressed one in detail – disregarding the need to explain how the hard engineering strategies actually did protect the coast. There was also a need to refer to a specific case study. Holderness was a popular choice and this was appropriate as were smaller scale examples such as Barton. The best noted how rock armour and rock groynes at Mappleton, for example, worked, and the effect these had on Mappleton itself as well as further down the coast.

Question 4 Hot desert environments and their margins

The photograph question in 4(a)(i) was the best answered, with many candidates getting three or four marks.   These candidates clearly looked carefully at the photograph to identify the barchans but also to notice their alignment in the same direction, the steeper and gentler slope. There were many competent answers. Some drifted into drumlins, or coastal dunes or described arid environments, including climate, without any reference to the photograph. Often, answers were quite vague with an idea of the role of the wind and accumulation of sand, with limited reference to any specific process. The best noted the role of processes such as saltation and sought to explain the asymmetrical profile or the narrowing of the barchans at the sides of the crescent shape. Sequence and process were critical in reaching level 2.

A third of candidates obtained two marks on the definition of desertification in 4(b)(i) and a half gained one mark – making this the best definition question. Often, definitions were precise with reference to the expanding deserts and associated features, such as not being able to support plant life. Some candidates described deserts or drifted to the cause of desertification. Candidates generally understood the requirements of the question. However, the precision was variable and this was the main discriminator. The best noted the importance of the desert fringes, with reference to the largest area adjacent to the Sahara and exceptions away from desert areas, such as in southern Spain. A significant number described the location of hot deserts rather than the distribution of areas at risk from desertification.

Responses to 4(c) varied in quality. The Sahel is a prescribed area of study in the specification. However, there was not the precision that might have been expected as a result. Many candidates drifted to causes of desertification and their relative importance and to responses, instead of focussing on the difficulties people living in the Sahel face – and the extent to which these result from desertification. The best responses gave a full account of difficulties people faced and then went on to consider other reasons for such difficulties like political instability, population pressure.

Section B

Question 5 Population change

The first part of this question based on the table was generally well done. Many candidates obtained three or four marks. The best obeyed the command to contrast and used the figures in the table to draw out differences between two areas.   Thus, statements that were accurate in offering data in support could easily pick up marks. Recognising that there were 36% more households claiming council benefit in Richmond Hill and Burmantofts and Harehills (inner city) than Harewood (rural settlement) was worth two marks. Some lifted data and rewrote the table in paragraph form, without using it. Some drifted into reasons for contrasts which was not relevant here. In contrast, responses achieving level 2 on part 5(a)(ii) were seen less often. There seemed to be some confusion as to what constitutes a service. Some referred to benefits or described a variety of socio-economic characteristics, such as %A* - C at GCSE. Neither of these aspects was relevant. Most used one of the four settlement areas listed in the specification (though not always and a wide variety of exemplars was permissible). However, even here, there were many generalisations with reference to shops, leisure and transport with an inadequate level of precision. At times, there was too much stereotyping with regard to the need for care homes and associated support services where there was a significant proportion of elderly people. The best selected areas that they had clearly studied and included detail with regard to services – e.g. for inner city areas with a student population there was reference to student services for accommodation, but also a variety of bars, eating places and takeaways and often a variety of ethnic shops as well as frequent bus services. Contrasts were then subsequently drawn

with similar precision on a different area. There was on the part of a significant number of candidates a clear and irrelevant drift to reasons.

In part 5(b), marks of three or four were the most common. There were two key reasons for this. Firstly, the fact that candidates regurgitated the information present in the text given, instead of using it as a stimulus. Secondly, candidates did not obey the second command word which was to 'comment on'. There needs to be a greater awareness of the meaning of this, where candidates are being asked to cast an analytical eye over the information they are given or concepts/ideas being considered, and make some judgement. Here, comment could have related to the relative importance of the causes of growth, the changing significance over time or the links between the causes.

The extended question on this core human section was the best answered within section B. Although relatively few reached level 3, many candidates obtained two thirds or more of the marks. Good level 2 answers considered both strengths and weaknesses, although often with a clear imbalance. The best supported with examples which were used to make points. Thus, the Chinese one family one child policy was not merely included *per se*, but used to indicate how government policy had an impact on progression through the model. The impact of migration was effectively used, as was infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. At this end of the spectrum, there was informed discussion. At the lower end, candidates displayed their knowledge of the model, but noted only simple strengths or weaknesses.

Question 6 Food supply issues

The article provided in 6(a) was **used** by candidates who engaged with the question. However, a significant number did not appear to know the concept of land reform. Thus, answers were vague, often guesses relating to creating new land, mechanisation, Green Revolution, diversification. Where it was known, some candidates gave a clear definition. The best perceived the sequence resulting from land ownership/consolidation with regard to increasing intensity and caring for the land and increased production.

A limited amount of data was displayed in Figure 8 for part 6(b)(i), yet there were clear patterns. However, many candidates struggled to engage with this. A minority of candidates accessed three or four marks, yet this should be a well rehearsed skill. Too many stated a product and a location – seemingly perceiving that this constituted a pattern. The presence of key latitude lines to help with description was often disregarded. There is also a need for accuracy – i.e. what is written should be verified in the figure. The best responses noted the zoning of different items, the relative distances travelled and clearly had an overview of the map. There were many issues considered in the context of part 6(b)(ii). These included environmental issues linked to food miles, economic aspects linked to ghost acres and issues regarding trade. Too many candidates failed to observe the 'comment on' as the command word and believed, wrongly, that description was adequate.

In 6(c), a significant number used the content of the January exam – so local and organic produce featured frequently, and these were clearly strategies that relate to more sustainable food supplies. There was a need to make the link between food supplies and sustainability to progress to level 2, which proved to be a stumbling block for almost half of the candidates. The question did not prescribe a scale, so any level was permissible. Common examples referred to local sourcing, including Booths supermarkets and Kukri Mukri and appropriate technology. The case for organic produce revolved around environmental aspects, as did the local sourcing – with some discussion about imports versus home production.

Question 7 Energy Issues

There was greater evidence of using the text in part 7(a)(i) here than in 6(a). Many candidates accessed three or four marks on this question. Candidates were able to recognise the characteristics of biomass with regard to its cheapness and availability, and many used the information in the article as evidence of a clear reliability on it for basics, without any affordable alternatives. There was a small minority who copied out parts of the article, without any clear meaning, rather than process the information to answer the question. Whilst there was some drift to global warming – not a consequence of fuel wood gathering – 7(a)(ii) was well answered with many candidates obtaining three or four marks. Common responses reflected on the impact on habitats and diversity, whilst others described a clear sequence linked to the hydrological cycle and/or soil erosion.

To access level 2 in part 7(b), there had to be a global dimension to the response. Some candidates drifted into generic TNCs without a focus on energy production, and many relied on the article, without fully engaging with the question. The best responses used candidates' own knowledge of companies such as Esso or BP to relate to exploration and production worldwide and recognised the resources of capital and technology available to facilitate this.

Typical level 1 responses to 7(c) identified a variety of strategies without development and did not establish links to sustainability. Here, answers were very general and some believed that cars could run on HEP and wind power. Level 2 responses tended to look at a limited range – often focussing on technology for 'cleaner' cars or congestion charging and bikes in London. The best engaged in a clear discussion and supported their strategies with a variety of exemplars (not of the 'as in' variety) and made points linked to sustainability – or its limited sustainability.

Question 8 Health Issues

Approximately one third of candidates accessed three or four marks on 8(a)(i). This was therefore better done than 6(b)(i), perhaps reflecting description of pattern being a generic skill. More candidates referred to the key lines of latitude here, but a continental approach was more effective. Too many perceived USA and North America to be the same. It was true that the highest rates were in USA, but Canada had the median category. Many recognised lowest rates in Africa. The best noted exceptions to general levels in areas – such as China in Asia. There needs to be an overview of the worldwide situation – and it is this that is then described. Too many have a piecemeal approach that picks out countries at random. A better, but incomplete development is to consider – with some accuracy – the highest and lowest occurrences. Most recognised the pandemic status equating with the spread to two regions. Common responses referred to concern that spread was occurring in the richest areas and the implications of this, the speed of transmission due to mobility. At the lower end, there was a failure to consistently focus on the global thrust of the question.

There was a wide range of responses to part 8(b). Some clearly knew contrasting healthcare approaches and used terminology they had learnt to categorise their selections. Cuba featured frequently, often contrasted with UK, USA and France. Other countries used included India, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. The best responses often used more than two countries – although it was not necessary to do so. However, there was a need to contrast two countries at different levels of development and therefore, USA and UK were inappropriate. Weak responses were very general and referred to MEDC and LEDC contrasts, and there was minimal focus on healthcare approaches, rather than diseases and differences in treatment.

Coronary heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes and obesity were frequent choices of non-communicable diseases. Some candidates selected an inappropriate example of a non-communicable disease – notably HIV/AIDS but not exclusively so and then went on to explain how it was spread. Even where a suitable example was chosen, there was significant drift to cause which is not actually a part of the specification. A substantial proportion described impacts of any (non-communicable) disease and such generic responses, where there was no specific reference to the chosen disease remained in level 1. Better responses engaged with a variety of responses often focussing on lifestyle, health and economic impact. Strategies to reduce the impact could have been made relevant by considering costs involved or changing awareness, but the strategies were not automatically relevant (unlike in a previous question). The best were discursive as to the severity of the impacts or their implications and offered support to back up the points that were being made.

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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