AQA
Questions matter

AS

Geography

7036/1 Physical geography and people and the environment

Report on the Examination

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General

Again the paper proved accessible to most students, with the same mean mark as last year, 47 out of 80. This suggests that most centres are now more familiar with the style of question setting and expectations on this paper.

Similarly to last year, the majority of students were comfortable with what the AO1, AO2 and AO3 Assessment Objectives asked of them. The number of those who appeared unfamiliar with, or unprepared for the paper was again relatively low. Most students continued to produce reasonably well-balanced responses for the 9- and 20-mark questions. The average mark was in Level-2 on all 9-mark questions and in Level-3 on all 20-mark questions. On these questions the available marks are distributed evenly between AO1 and AO2. It appears that like last year, more students are aware that only half of the marks on these extended prose questions are for repeating learnt material from class (AO1). Most knew that the remaining marks are for applying this knowledge and understanding to the context of the question (AO2).

AO1 and AO2 both account for 40% of the marks available on this paper, with the remaining 20% allocated to AO3. Gaining many of these AO3 marks still proved challenging for many students. In summary:

AO3 – Use a variety of relevant methods and techniques to:

- *investigate questions and issues*
- *interpret, analyse, and evaluate data and resources*
- *communicate findings*

These skills were tested whenever a stimulus resource was used, or numerical data was to be engaged with. On this paper this was the 6-mark *skills* question on each option, ie 1.4, 2.4, 3.4, 4.4 and 5.4. The main issue here was that many students demonstrated AO2 type answers by applying their knowledge, offering reasons for patterns for example, or too simply lifted data directly from the resource. This was not the question. The command 'analyse' in this context, simply required students to interface with the data, manipulate and deconstruct the information.

There were far fewer students making rubric errors. This suggests that most students were well-prepared and were familiar with the structure of the paper.

Question 1

About 55% of the students attempted this question, making this the most popular physical option by a significant margin. This is an increase on last year, where 49% chose this option.

1.1

This proved very straightforward with 87% of students correctly identifying Option C as the correct answer.

1.2

This was also relatively straightforward with 71% correctly selecting B as the correct option.

1.3

This question differentiated quite well. Just under 60% of responses gained 2 or more marks, and less than 4% scored no marks. Most were able to accurately identify specific major stores of carbon, as stated in the specification, and suggest how wildfires affected them. Clearly over 1/3 of students struggled to do this. A significant number continued to refer to CO_2, when simply stating carbon would have been more accurate.

1.4

Despite the mean mark being 3.69/6, this AO3 skills question proved very challenging for many students. Less than ¼ of responses achieved 5 or 6 marks. Very few went beyond lifting individual numbers from the figure. Such responses struggled to reach the top of Level 1. It was envisaged that by having relatively straightforward data for 3 variables for 10 countries that students would find it easy to make straightforward comparisons, which few did.

Due to the amount of data, responses could access and move through Level 2 with clear comparison, or more detailed/sophisticated description of patterns within the data.

The best answers supported their points with clear use and manipulation of data, whilst weaker responses simply lifted values from the figure. Few went beyond basic description of the data, with very few using or manipulating the data in a more sophisticated manner. Other responses did not score well as they quickly drifted into explanation or possible reasons for the number, extent, and volume of the lakes, this is AO2 and not valid in this AO3 question.

1.5

This question combined both AO1 and AO2 elements. This required students to make links within the Water and Carbon Cycles specification, with specific reference to the local river catchment they had studied. The majority of students were able to identify an appropriate scale example. The wording of the specification does indicate that students should be able to address the catchment as a whole, so a smaller, “local” scale, example was more appropriate. Initial sampling of scripts prior to the main marking period indicated that very few students understood “potential” as relating to the future, to things that could or will happen. Many responses were therefore limited due to poor quality of written communication in terms of accurate reference to the past, present, or future tense.

Whilst the highest level of the mark scheme was reserved for answers that explicitly referenced possible future impacts, credit was awarded for evaluation of accurate and specific impacts that may have recently happened, or be happening in the present, with the implication that they will continue to have an impact in the immediate future.

Following the approach to marking outlined above, the average mark of 5.2 showed that most students did have some good knowledge and understanding of a range of impacts of climate change on the named catchment. With less than 1/4 of responses reaching Level 3, most students struggled to give specific detail of predicted climate change, for example reference to possible 1-3 °C of warming and details of possible specific changes to weather or human use of the catchment that would result from this, with some detailed support. As has been the case in previous series some weaker students do not score well as they have clearly studied case studies which are completely unfamiliar to them. This led to many unconvincing responses where geographical and place detail did not “ring true.” For example

many responses referring to the River Eden flowing through the Lake District fall into this camp. The wording of the specification suggests students study a catchment local to them and gain some familiarity with it.

1.6
Over 2/3 of students engaged well with this question, providing clear responses achieving marks in Level 3 or higher. These students generally scored well with respect to AO1, with clear and detailed knowledge of carbon sequestration and human activity that has, and does, contribute to climate change. The key to scoring well with respect to AO2 was the quality and clarity of the judgements made about the extent to which natural carbon sequestration has, can and will reduce the impacts of human activity on climate change. Some of the best responses supported points with details about natural sequestration that occurs at different spatial and temporal scales.

Some students struggled as they had very limited understanding of what carbon sequestration was. However, where appropriate, credit was given for accurate knowledge and understanding of human activities that impact climate change.

Question 2

About 36% of the students attempted Coastal Systems and Landscapes.

2.1
This proved very accessible with 85% of students correctly identifying Option A as the correct answer.

2.2
This was also relatively straightforward with 78% correctly selecting C as the correct option.

2.3
This question differentiated well and proved challenging for some students. 27% achieved full marks, whilst 18% scored zero and the mean was only 1.54/3. The best responses clearly understood that estuarine mudflats rely on the interaction of both tidal and river flows, and the subsequent deposition of fine sediment. Weaker responses ignored this crucial stage, instead solely focusing on the subsequent colonisation of mudflats by vegetation and the development of saltmarshes. Where appropriate some credit was given to the role of vegetation in stabilising mudflats once they had formed. Some responses were limited by an unhelpful focus on the formation of spits leading to a basic statement that sometimes mudflats are found "behind spits." This did not constitute processes leading to the formation of the mudflats themselves.

2.4
Like the other AO3 skills questions on the paper, this proved very challenging for most students. The mean mark was 3.5/6. Less than ¼ of responses achieved 5 or 6 marks. Very few went beyond lifting individual numbers from the figure. Responses like this struggled to reach the top of Level 1. It was envisaged that having relatively straightforward data for 3 scenarios for the cities shown, that students would find it easy to make straightforward comparisons, which few did.

Due to the amount of data, responses could access and move through Level 2 with clear comparison, or more detailed/sophisticated description of patterns within the data. The majority of students also

struggled in this regard. It appeared that most were unfamiliar with dealing with data presented as percentages, and very few students could express percentage differences accurately.

The best answers supported their points with clear use and manipulation of data, whilst weaker responses simply lifted values from the map. Few went beyond basic description of the data, with very few using or manipulating the data in a more sophisticated manner. Other responses did not score well as they quickly drifted into explanation or possible reasons for proportions of people at risk in different scenarios, this is AO2 and not valid in this AO3 question.

2.5

This question combined both AO1 and AO2 elements. This expected students to make links within the Coastal Environments specification, with specific reference to a local coastal environment they had studied. A very significant number of responses limited themselves due to a lack of focus on examples from appropriate scale coastal environments. Many simply referred to "The Holderness Coast." This approach made it extremely difficult to identify specific physical landforms. For example reference to "cliffs on the Holderness Coast" could refer to hard resistant chalk cliffs at Flamborough, or any number of areas of less-resistant boulder clay cliffs, for example at Mappleton. As in previous series, it is hard to justify the entire length of the Holderness Coast as one distinct uniform local-scale coastal environment as envisaged in the specification, so unless students did name specific places and specific named landforms, such responses failed to score well. The wording of the specification does indicate that students could refer to local scale environments, so reference to different (appropriate scale) coastal environments was credit worth.

Many responses were also limited due to poor quality written communication in terms of accurate reference to the past, present, or future tense. This was important as the question explicitly asked for focus on potential impacts. Whilst the highest marks were reserved for answers that explicitly referenced possible future impacts, credit was awarded for evaluation of accurate and specific impacts that may have recently happened, or be happening in the present, with the implication that they will continue to have an impact in the immediate future.

Following the approach to marking outlined above, the average mark of 4.8 showed that most students did have fair knowledge and understanding of a range of impacts of climate change on the named coasts. About 1/3 of responses reached Level 3, showing that these students were able to give specific detail of predicted climate change, for example reference to possible 1-3 °C of warming and details of possible specific changes to sea levels and weather patterns that would result from this, with some detailed support.

2.6

Around 2/3 of students were able to access this question well and produce good answers and reached Level 3 or better. The mean mark was 12.22, meaning only a smaller proportion featured the clarity or detail required to reach the highest levels of the mark scheme. The best students focused on specific details about possible predicted climate change meaning they were able to give clear specific details about the possible issues people would have to adapt to or mitigate against. Many answers showed little clear knowledge and understanding of the above, but more significantly most did not differentiate between adaptation and mitigation as different responses. The best answers engaged with this concept well and often referred to specific examples that clearly illustrated understanding of the difference

between adaptation and mitigation. Although, not strictly prescribed by the question, the best responses were often supported with good clear case study detail.

Question 3

Less than 9% of the students attempted Glacial Systems and Landscapes. It remains the least popular physical option by far and the proportion of students choosing this option again decreased from 2023.

3.1
Around 4/5 of students found this accessible and correctly identified B as the correct option.

3.2
This proved very straightforward with 92% of students correctly identifying Option A as the correct answer.

3.3
This question proved reasonably accessible, with about 1/3 of students scoring 3/3. Less than 4% of responses scored zero and the mean was 2.03/6. For those who were clearly familiar with erratic's the question proved straightforward and prompted clear and succinct responses, with specific processes and a clear sequence identified and described.

3.4
This AO3 skills question proved challenging for some students. However, 3/4 were able to score in Level 2. The mean mark was 4.05/6. Nevertheless many students struggled to go beyond making very basic descriptive points about individual numbers or bars on the graph. The best answers supported their points with clear use and manipulation of data. These also showed clear understanding of the data, ie that one showed area of ice cover and the other mass of ice loss. Many responses scored less well as they quickly drifted into explanation or possible reasons for the distribution of ice or changes in ice mass which is not valid in this AO3 question.

3.5
With a mean of 5.26/9 and almost 3/4 of students reaching the top of Level 2, this question proved accessible to many. Most were able to accurately identify specific features and relationships between climate, vegetation, and soil in periglacial environments. Some responses remained in lower levels as they did not go beyond describing the features. Many good responses gave examples to illustrate their points. Although not prescribed by the question, it did add to the quality of the answer.

3.6
This question differentiated reasonably well but was accessible to all. Over 1/5 of students reached Level 4, just under 2/3 reached Level 3 and only 2% remained in Level 1, with over 98% gaining at least 5 marks. The mean mark was 12.02. The best students focused on specific and appropriate named places. This meant that they were able to give clear specific details about the possible future challenges for sustainably managing human activity in fragile cold environments. Some responses were limited by generic sweeping statements about very large geographical areas or focused on impacts on the environment without reference to specific activities. The best answers had a clear understanding of specific details of possible future climate change and specific implications of this.

Some responses were limited by use of exemplification and illustration from examples that were potentially decades out of date or were lacking in awareness of what the lives of people living in cold environments are like in the 21st Century. Many made sweeping statements about whole groups of people or geographical areas that were inappropriate and would be offensive to the people living in those areas. The specification encourages the empathetic study of different places, with a clear focus on developing an awareness of the lives of other people. This is especially true with the concepts of "sense of place" and "lived experience" from the Changing Places unit.

Question 4

As in 2022 and 2023, about 80% of the students attempted Hazards.

4.1
This question differentiated quite well. 61% correctly identified C as the correct option.

4.2
This question performed similarly to 4.1, with 66% accurately choosing option B.

4.3
Performance on this question was a little disappointing. Fold mountains appeared to be unfamiliar to most students as the average score was only 1.03/3. Over ¼ of responses scored zero and only 10% achieved 3/3.

4.4
As in other series this AO3 skills question proved quite challenging for many students. The mean mark was 3.36, but only 15% scored 5 or 6 marks. Those scoring well confidently used and manipulated the data from the graph. Many struggled with the data being presented as percentages/proportions and found it very difficult to make comparisons or manipulate the data. The best responses were able to make succinct clear points that showed a good grasp of the nature of the data. The weakest answers rarely went beyond lifting values from the figure and seemed unable to make comparisons between hazards, or address changes over time. Inevitably a number of students appeared unprepared for these AO3 skills questions and sought to explain and give reasons for the data, which would be AO2 content and so therefore could not gain credit.

4.5
This question differentiated well, with a mean mark of 5.12 and over 80% of students getting into Level 2 or higher, and over 1/3 managing to score in Level 3. The best responses had clear knowledge and understanding of an appropriate recent volcanic event, whilst identifying that this was the *across specification link* question requiring application of knowledge and understanding from the Changing Places unit. Where the link was identified the best responses identified 2 or more specific economic characteristics of place. The importance of these specific factors was then evaluated in relation to the specific volcanic event, with clear details in support. Answers that did not score well, either lacked an appropriate case study, or lacked focus on specific economic characteristics of place, instead focusing on generic levels of economic development at a national level. The specification requires students to study one recent volcanic event. A very significant number of responses tried to compare one event to another. This could score credit. However, with the time and space limitations on this 9-mark question, this made it difficult for students to develop the specific detail required for the higher level. Focusing on just one event, as prescribed in the specification would have allowed scope for more specific detail to emerge.

4.6
This question differentiated well, with a mean of 12.28. About 95% of students reached Level 2, over 2/3 went on into Level 3 and over 1/5 scored in Level 4. The best responses showed a clear understanding of the storm hazards and the extent to which their seasonality, location, path, and intensity are predictable. They were able to give balanced accounts that differentiated between preparation for the storms and mitigation of possible impacts. Many made comparisons between two contrasting storms to illustrate their points, and as long as the purpose of this was to explicitly address the statement in the stem of the question this was acceptable. Many weaker responses struggled as they failed to differentiate between the preparation for storm events as being distinct to attempts to mitigate their impacts.

Question 5

As in 2022 and 2023, about 20% of the students attempted Contemporary Urban Environments.

5.1
This proved very accessible with 96% of students correctly identifying Option C as the correct answer.

5.2
This question differentiated better than 5.1, with 49% of students accurately choosing option D.

5.3
Many students found this question challenging. The mean mark was only 1.16/3.00. The most common mistake was students *flipping* the question and describing possible impacts of thunderstorms on urban areas. This was not creditworthy. The best answers clearly understood urban climate in good detail.

5.4
As in other series this AO3 skills question proved quite challenging for many students. The mean mark was 3.4, but only about 15% scored 5 or 6 marks. Those scoring well confidently used and manipulated data from the graph. Many struggled with the data being presented as percentages/proportions and found it very difficult to make comparisons or manipulate the data. The best responses also made succinct clear points showing a good grasp of the nature of the data. The weakest answers rarely went beyond lifting values from the figure and lacked comparisons between strategies, or address differences between countries. Inevitably a number of students appeared unprepared for these AO3 skills questions and sought to explain and give reasons for the data, which would be AO2 content and therefore not creditable.

5.5
This question differentiated well, with a mean mark of 4.83 and over 3/4 of students getting into Level 2 or higher, and a 1/5 managing to score in Level 3. The best responses had clear knowledge and understanding of specific aspects of atmospheric pollution in urban areas, whilst identifying that this was the *cross-specification link* question requiring application of knowledge and understanding from the Changing Places unit. Where the link was identified the best responses identified 2 or more specific economic characteristics of place. The importance of these specific factors was then evaluated in relation to specific aspects of atmospheric pollution, with clear details in support. Answers that did not score well, either lacked an appropriate case study, or lacked focus on specific economic characteristics of place, instead focusing on generic levels of economic development at a national level. A very significant number of responses tried to compare one urban area to another. This could score credit. However, with the time and space limitations on this 9-mark question, this made it difficult for students

to develop the specific detail required for the higher level. Focusing on just one urban area, would have allowed scope for more specific detail to be developed.

5.6

This question differentiated well, with a mean of 12.17. Over 80% of students reached Level 2, and over 70% went on into Level 3 and around 1/4 scored in Level 4. The best responses showed a clear understanding of specific features of, and factors affecting megacities. They gave balanced accounts of how such huge and generally rapidly growing cities will have very specific issues for their populations in the future. Some of the best responses differentiated between possible economic, social, demographic, environmental and even cultural challenges that such cities may face in the future. Clearly good responses were supported with clear detail from appropriate case studies. The vast majority of students used London as their example of a *megacity*. London does not meet many of the criteria commonly set out as defining *megacities* but in the circumstances was accepted as an appropriate example. Nevertheless many of the better responses did illustrate their points with reference too truly large and fast-growing megacities with well over 10 million, if not 20+ million residents.

As noted elsewhere in this report, many responses were limited due to poor quality written communication in terms of accurate reference to the past, present, or future tense. This was important as the question explicitly asked for focus on the future. Whilst the highest marks were reserved for answers that explicitly referenced possible future challenges, credit was awarded for evaluation of accurate and specific challenges that may have recently happened, or be happening in the present, with the implication that they will continue to have an impact in the immediate future.

Some responses were limited by use of exemplification and illustration from examples that were decades out of date or were lacking in awareness of what the lives of people living in specific cities are like in the 21st Century. Many students made sweeping statements about “slums” and whole groups of people that were inappropriate and would be offensive to the people living in those cities. The specification encourages the empathetic study of different places, with a clear focus on developing an awareness of the lives of other people. This is especially true with the concepts of “sense of place” and “lived experience” from the Changing Places unit.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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