GCSE
GEOGRAPHY

8035/3 Paper 3: Geographical applications
Report on the Examination

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General

This was the fifth cycle of examining the specification, but due to the Covid pandemic it was only the third time that it had been attempted by a full cohort of students. For this examination cycle the examination paper was reduced to one hour with 56 marks, rather than the usual 1 hour and 15 minutes with 76 marks. This was the result of removing the seen fieldwork questions, as directed by Ofqual. The examination paper retained its basic assessment pattern, with the marks largely allocated to AO3 (Apply knowledge and understanding to interpret, analyse and evaluate geographical issues and make judgements) and AO4 (select, adapt and use a variety of skills and techniques to investigate questions and issues and communicate findings).

It was clear that in the majority of cases students appeared to have been effectively prepared for the Issue Evaluation part of the examination paper and were comfortable with both the topic expressed in the pre-release material and the individual resources. The shortened fieldwork section appeared to present few difficulties and the majority of students attempted every question.

Overall there was no evidence to suggest that time had been an issue and the examination paper performed effectively, offering the opportunity for students of all abilities to demonstrate their capabilities and discriminating effectively.

Question 01.1 – This question presented few problems and virtually all of the candidates selected the correct answer.

Question 01.2 – Virtually all of the candidates identified an upward trend, many using the starting and finishing figures to qualify their answers. A significant proportion of candidates identified differences within the general trend - usually describing 2000-2002 as a period of more gentle growth, 2002- 2011 as a period of more rapid growth and 2011- 2017 as a fairly static period. A small proportion of candidates identified a small decline from 2018. There were a number of ways to achieve the two marks allocated to the question and a significantly high proportion of candidates achieved both marks.

Question 01.3 – The majority of candidates demonstrated an understanding of the question and used the resources effectively to identify reasons why the governments recycling aim may not be met. Those candidates who selected appropriate points from the resources (usually observations about the lack of investment in recycling plants and issues about the complications of recycling) generally achieved Level 1 credit. Those candidates who developed these ideas with a degree of explanation (“not being clear about what can or cannot be recycled means that some things that could be recycled will be put in normal waste and this will limit the total amount being recycled”) or added additional ideas generally achieved a Level 2 credit. A small number of candidates failed to address the question in any meaningful way, in some cases simply continuing their description of the data from Question 01.2.

Question 01.4 – Candidates had to demonstrate some appreciation of the global nature of the issue of waste management. This was approached in different ways, from the simple acceptance that all countries produce waste, especially those that are experiencing rapid industrial change, to slightly more developed observations which highlighted the international trade in waste or links between the management of waste and global environmental issues (burning waste adding to the issue of climate change or plastic waste found in oceans). In most cases candidates used one of these avenues to express the “global” nature of the waste issue.

Question 01.5 – In most cases candidates selected appropriate information from the resources in order to support or develop their answer. Comparing the circular waste system with the linear waste system often provided a useful starting point for many candidates. The ideas of "resource opportunity" and "problem", as expressed in the question, were generally both considered. The focus of the question was largely generic, as indicated by the initial reference to Figure 1 and in most cases candidates appeared to appreciate this and respond in an appropriate way. However, some candidates developed their answer largely around Figure 3 and simply referenced the Cambridge Incinerator. While this approach allowed candidates to express an understanding of "opportunities" and "problems" associated with waste management, it was slightly self-limiting and did not always create the opportunity for a broader discussion about the value of waste in relation to resource supply. Those candidates who did adopt a broader approach often produced thoughtful answers which demonstrated a balanced understanding of the issue. The general quality of answers was largely dictated by the level of development of the points expressed in the resource booklet. At the lower level, candidates largely selected appropriate points and copied them from the resource booklet, often with limited development and only making basic points about recycling and pollution. At the higher level candidates developed these ideas and expressed a sound understanding of the circular waste system, often making thoughtful observations about the scarcity of resources and how waste can be used to reduce the need to use mineral and oil based resources to create "new" materials. A number of candidates developed this theme further by expressing quite sophisticated ideas about how approaching waste management in a more positive way will allow a shift in perception with regard to the "opportunity – problem" discussion. A small number of candidates appeared to change the thrust of the question and addressed it almost wholly in relation to climate change. This approach did not really allow for the breadth of discussion demanded by the question.

Question 02.1 – The key to this question was the focus on future waste management in Cambridge and understanding the pressures that the city was likely to face. The information in the resource booklet indicated that the population of Cambridge was increasing, leading to a likely increase in the volume of waste. In addition there were observations about the increasing cost of dealing with waste and the fact that the current landfill site was nearly full, so there would be a need to make challenging decisions about future waste management. This, in turn, would likely create conflict, both in relation to how waste should be managed and where any waste plants might be located. Those candidates that clearly identified the need to examine some of these issues in relation to the future management of waste in Cambridge usually produced effective responses, either by identifying and developing a specific point or identifying at least two appropriate points. A significant number of candidates did not really identify the specific requirement to address the question in relation to the needs of Cambridge and consequently made generic points which were not always relevant.

Question 02.2 – It was evident that very few candidates appeared to understand the term "physical geography", and in most cases references were made to features of human geography, with roads and specific buildings often identified. Those candidates who did respond to the command to describe the physical geography were usually able to consider the height and slope of the land by identifying the single contour line or the spot height of 4m just north of the proposed site or make observations about the streams, lakes and ponds shown on the map. This question was an important part of developing an understanding of the nature of the landscape and being able to appreciate the likely impact of a large industrial complex within such a landscape.
The Cartographic skills checklist in the Specification gives a comprehensive list of the Ordnance Survey skills that students are expected to be able to understand and use, and when an Ordnance Survey map extract is included as part of the Pre-release material it would be useful to reference this within the general planning and preparation period.

Question 02.3 - This question presented few problems and a very high proportion of the candidates selected the correct answer.

Question 02.4 – This question gave candidates the opportunity to discuss the economic and environmental factors pertinent to waste management. In most cases answers were clearly expressed and identified both economic and environmental factors, although these were often considered in a simplistic way and not developed sufficiently to offer a detailed discussion. In general terms the majority of candidates considered the expense of building waste treatment plants and also offered observations about air and water pollution issues associated with waste management. Those candidates who did offer a more detailed discussion often produced thoughtfully considered ideas which expressed the complexity of the issue by comparing the relative cost and environmental impact of different types of waste management or offered quite sophisticated discussion about the balance between economic and environmental costs.

Question 3 – It was clear that most centres had prepared their students thoroughly and in most cases candidates wrote confidently and expressed their views appropriately in relation to their chosen position. It appeared to be an issue that was clearly understood and candidates were generally able to show an awareness of the complexity of the debate and an appreciation that there were significant advantages and disadvantages to each position. It is worth remembering the assessment objectives being tested in relation to this question; AO3 (interpret, analyse and evaluate geographical information and issues to make judgements) and AO4 (investigate issues and communicate findings). This is important because an understanding of the assessment objectives helps to inform the students about what is required, and this, in turn, often dictates the overall quality of a candidates response. A Level 1 response is typically seen where a candidate simply selects appropriate information with no real attempt to consider its relative importance. At Level 2 there is a clear attempt to analyse information by developing ideas, linking points together or expressing the relative importance of different information. Level 3 responses take this further by offering an increasing depth of analytical and evaluative thinking and communicating ideas effectively to draw the discussion back to the original objective of the question. The overwhelming majority of candidates approached this question by offering observations about the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the incineration plant. While this was clearly a legitimate approach, in many cases candidates spent rather too much time supporting the view that they had not initially chosen and at times this led to a slightly limited evidence base for the chosen position.

Question 04.1 - This question presented few problems and a very high proportion of the candidates selected the pie chart as the most appropriate method of presenting the data.

Question 04.2 - This question presented few problems and a very high proportion of the candidates calculated the answer correctly.

Question 04.3 – The key to this question was having a clear awareness of the aim of the investigation, expressed in the opening instructions, and understanding the data in Figure 4 in relation to the question, which specifically asked candidates to use the data to draw conclusions about “the impact of tourism”. Two sets of data in Figure 4 were only recorded once (Land use and Environmental quality survey) and the Pedestrian count data was recorded twice. Consequently, specific comparative judgements (more litter or more traffic in the summer) could not actually be made from the data provided. Using the data, the two key points were essentially that there were more people in the town in the summer than the winter, suggesting that visitors were attracted to the local area, and that there appeared to be a disproportionate number of visitor related businesses, suggesting that tourism was economically significant. Observations about the

relatively poor environmental quality and the potential link to tourist numbers were legitimate as long as they were not expressed in absolute terms.

Question 04.4 – This question required candidates to consider how the existing methods of data collection could be adapted, rather than identifying additional data collection methods that might be used. This is a distinction clearly identified within the Assessment Objectives (AO4 -1b –"Adapt a variety of skills and techniques to investigate questions"). Those candidates who recognised and responded to the instruction to "suggest adaptations" generally scored both marks by making relatively simple points. The more common observations included; extending the pedestrian counts (in time, across days),carrying out the environmental quality survey in the winter in order to make a comparison, extending the categories in the land use survey or extending the pedestrian count/environmental quality survey across a wider part of the town. A number of candidates made more specific suggestions, including extending the environmental quality survey (in relation to categories, types of litter or the actual range of numbers used in the table) and linking the land use data to the location of the pedestrian counts.

Question 04.5 - This question presented few problems and a very high proportion of the candidates calculated the mode, median and range correctly.

Question 04.6 – Candidates were expected to demonstrate an understanding of how their chosen measure would be useful in relation to the original aim of the investigation. The aim of the investigation was essentially about investigating change in beach width, so any expression which linked to this was creditable ("Range was a useful measure because it identifies differences"). A significant number of candidates did not really express this link, some showing no real understanding of the question while others simply offered definitions of the terminology (which were usually correct) without really linking this to the aim of the investigation.

Question 04.7 – The majority of candidates stated that the original hypothesis was correct or that the beach did get wider from west to east. A significant proportion developed this further by using the data and stating that the beach was 3/4 m wider on the eastern side.

Question 04.8 – A significant number of candidates provided evidence of data manipulation by calculating the individual totals or mean values for each area. This information was then generally used effectively to reach a decision about which area had the highest residential quality. At the highest level candidates used both the overall area total/mean value data, as well as considering the individual category data. A significant number of candidates made a convincing case that despite Area C having the highest total, Area D had the highest residential quality because it had a more narrow range across the individual categories. It was clear that Area C or D were potentially the areas with the highest residential quality, and virtually all candidates recognised this. The overall quality of the response was dictated by the level of data use/manipulation and the strength of the discussion.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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