## Exam links

### Using this issue for AQA AS and A2 geography

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What future for the Amazon?

This article provides excellent support material for two elements of the A2 course:

1. first, for students of an equatorial rainforest region (the Amazon) in terms of its climate, and the possible impact of climate change
2. second, for students of the equatorial rainforest in terms of its ecosystem

Currently the AQA specification separates out these two areas of study, but it goes without saying that an understanding of the interrelationships between climate and vegetation is fundamental in recognising wider synoptic links. These links also include the role of humans in the management and monitoring of such a fragile environment.

It would seem that the Amazon is doing the human race a major favour in its ability to act as a carbon sink for up to one-fifth of current global fossil fuel emissions. There are some serious questions to ask however.

- To what extent can this continue, and what have been the impacts of existing climate change on this region, especially with the threat of increased drought in the future?
- How will further economic development of the region influence an already fragile environment?

So for students of the Weather and climate and/or Ecosystems physical options, this article is essential reading.

Question and answer Weather and climate

This Question and answer is of direct interest to A2 students of the Weather and climate and associated hazards physical option, based as it is on responses to a previous AQA examination question — on the January 2011 Unit 3 (Geog3) paper.
Students are encouraged to read the question, mark scheme, student answers and commentary on them. The excellent advice on the required levels of knowledge and understanding and on examination technique offered here should be heeded strongly.

**Online Migration**

This Online will be of direct interest to all students of the AS core human topic *Population change*. The specification makes two references to migration — the impact of migration on national population structure, and the ways in which migration affects the character of rural and urban settlements. The weblinks contained in this piece will be most useful for the first aspect of these two areas of study.

Some themes of weblinks may not be as relevant to the AS course as others — for example AS students do not need to study refugees, migration models or bias within data sources. However, as ever with geographical study, wider synoptic links may be useful in A2 areas of study and students should be encouraged to investigate them. For example, there are some obvious links to the A2 human option *Contemporary conflicts and challenges*, and in particular the topic of multicultural societies in the UK.

**The global digital divide: inequality and internet access**

Although all geography students with an interest in digital technology, and that probably mean all of them, will find this an interesting article, it is the students of the A2 human option *Development and globalisation* who will find this article particularly useful in their work. For this topic candidates are required to have an overview of how development and globalisation are impacting on the world in a number ways — social, economic, political and cultural. The rapid rise in mobile phone telephony and the increasing use of and requirement for fast broadband internet access are contemporary examples of the impact of globalisation.

This interesting article describes and explains the varying levels of access to digital technology across the world, not only in terms of the infrastructure in the regions themselves but also in terms of age-group usage and underlying levels of technological skill. New technologies are constantly improving and expanding which means inevitably that some places will receive them first, and others second. Furthermore, some governments are keen to retain some ‘control’ and yet their efforts to do so are proving to be fruitless. In some ways personal technology puts power literally in the hands of individuals, through social media. These are fascinating times in the technological world, and political and cultural geography is being impacted by them.

**Environment today Lakes in a warmer world.**

This article will be of general interest to students of the A2 physical option *Ecosystems: change and challenge*. Though lakes are not a specific theme on the specification for this option, students do need to be aware of the wider links between human activity, biodiversity and impacts on fragile environments.

Nick Middleton examines the pressures on lake ecosystems in a general fashion, with a brief case study of Lake Maggiore in Italy featuring as an inset. The world’s temperate lakes are warming, leading to more algal blooms, and changes in species diversity through varying and widening thermal
and oxygen levels within the lakes. One possible cause of the changes is global warming, but this also acts in combination with previously known problems of water pollution from both agriculture and industry.

**The changing face of the Earth**

Geography teachers around the world will have fond memories of their geomorphology lectures at university, and indeed many continue to teach the theories and content that formed their earlier studies. But the discipline has moved on in the last 50 years, and here Professor Gregory provides a resumé of the main developments in this area of study and suggests where it may venture next.

Many geography students continue to be fascinated by the natural world and want to know and understand how the physical landscape has evolved. In addition, natural processes continue to influence human activities, and equally human activities feed back to natural processes. The issue of flood management illustrates this well. Students who are considering a university course in either geography or environmental science, and maybe a career in these fields, will find this article very interesting. As elsewhere, the availability and use of new technologies provides exciting opportunities for investigation in both the academic and ‘real’ worlds.

**What makes examiners weep Performance**

This is essential reading for all A-level geography students, at whatever level. Indeed it is suggested that the free pdf is downloaded, printed and displayed inside all geography classrooms. The advice in this piece applies to all examinations, from GCSE to A2. Many students fail to appreciate that the marker of their exam paper is NOT their teacher who maybe well aware of their weaknesses and strengths — it is another teacher (or geographer) and also a human being who has the basic requirements of wanting an answer that is targeted, focused and legible.

**The Wast Water screes**

This article will be of general interest to students of the AS physical option *Cold environments*. The geomorphological aspects of glacial and periglacial landform development are key elements of the specification, and students need to have a working knowledge of the processes involved. These include weathering in cold environments and frost shattering resulting in associated landforms such as screes. Although the Wast Water screes could be quoted as an example of glacial landforms, it is clear from this article that other processes are likely to have also been involved in their formation. There is significant evidence of mass movement resulting from loosened valley sides caused by stress-release fractures after ice reduction and melt. Such processes are given the term ‘paraglacial’ - not a term used in the AQA specification.

It is useful for the more able AS students to appreciate that there is often no simple single explanation for any landform in the natural environment — composite processes are often in action.

**Practical geography Fieldwork of the future?**

Students and teachers of each of AS Unit 2 and A2 Unit 4A will find this Practical Geography of great interest. A central feature of the AQA specification is investigative skills, and the application of fieldwork-based research methods. All students are required to undertake fieldwork which includes the
collection of data from either primary or secondary sources, followed by the presentation and analysis of key aspects of those data.

David Holmes provides an interesting resumé of a range of ways in which today’s technology can be used for each of these fieldwork elements. Data can be collected far more easily by individuals and groups using portable devices, and shared via electronic media. At the same time a range of official data sources are providing more raw and processed data in electronic formats. Examples of apps, GIS and social media uses are suggested, as well as a recognised form of online questionnaires.

The availability of technology is increasing at a pace — one has to ask whether the examination and assessment community will be able to keep pace with these developments and allow students to demonstrate fully their application of modern fieldwork practices.

**Dankalia: the shaping of a hostile environment**

This article provides a fascinating insight into one of the most environmentally hostile areas on the planet. Dankalia, lies on the disputed border between Ethiopia and Eritrea in Africa. From a landscape point of view, the area is part of the great east African rift valley, with evidence of both past and present volcanic activity. Landforms include the shield volcano Erta Ale, which contains one of only five lava lakes in the world, dykes of basaltic rock and minor extrusive forms such as fumeroles. The area is also a hot desert where heat and wind play major roles. Deflation, sand abrasion, mechanical and chemical weathering have all helped to shape the landscape. Students of the AS physical option *Hot deserts and their margins*, and the A2 physical option *Plate tectonics and associated hazards* will find this article both useful and interesting.

The area is also home to a unique tribe, known for its fortitude and resilience — the Afar. This tribe is highly marginalised, partly as a result of its own fearsome characteristics, but also due to its geographical isolation. Interesting development issues are likely to arise for these people, especially as exploitation of the valuable mineral resources in the region seems likely.

**TNCs: the geography of ownership, profit and identity.**

This article could not be more topical for students of the A2 human option *Development and globalisation*. The recent media coverage of the non-payment of corporate taxes to the UK government by certain well-known TNCs has illustrated the degree to which the corporate structure and spatial organisation of TNCs has changed in recent years. This change is to the benefit of TNCs (and that of their shareholders). Students of this option are required to study the spatial organisation of TNCs, but this is clearly interrelated with their corporate structure. This article provides excellent background and case study material on this area of study and hence is essential reading for students of this option.

As with many aspects of contemporary geography, the real world of TNCs does not mirror generalisations made in textbooks, and is forever changing. In an examination context, this is termed synopticity; something which all A-level students need to consider.
Development update Remittances

This Development update is also useful for the A2 students of the human option Development and globalisation. Economic benefits of international migration is not a topic on the AQA specification, but students do need to be aware of the features of globalisation and their impacts. One of these features is the flow of labour around the world, and remittances are a key impact. In addition to an overview of the topic, two useful small case studies of Bangladesh and Mexico are given.

At AS, students are also required to study the economic implications of population change, which could include migration, within the core topic Population change. This article will be useful for these students too, especially if they have studied an area such as the Persian Gulf where migration has been encouraged to raise levels of economic development in countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar.

Snapshot Venice: swamped in more ways than one

This interesting summative piece provides a case study that will be useful for students of the A2 human option Development and globalisation in their study of ‘Sustainable tourism: myth or reality?’. Venice is one of the world’s most popular tourist spots and a World Heritage site. But its popularity is causing significant problems in terms of managing the influx of tourists, and is also affecting the local population. Furthermore its unique, low-level canal-based layout is putting its very existence at risk from a wider geographical phenomenon — climate change, and more specifically sea-level rise. What is the best way to enable people to visit such special locations while at the same time preventing the damage that threatens them? As with many aspects of geography, there is no straightforward answer.