AQA GCSE Geography – Exam Outline

Paper 1: Living with the Physical Environment

(35% of the final grade – 1 hour 30 mins)
Focuses on natural environments and physical processes.

Topics covered:

- *Section A: The Challenge of Natural Hazards*
  - Tectonic hazards (earthquakes, volcanoes)
  - Weather hazards (tropical storms, extreme weather in the UK)
  - Climate change
- *Section B: The Living World*
  - Ecosystems (rainforests and hot deserts)
- *Section C: Physical Landscapes in the UK*
  - Coastal landscapes
  - Glacial landscapes

Paper 2: Challenges in the Human Environment

(35% of the final grade – 1 hour 30 mins)
Explores human processes and the challenges facing society today.

Topics covered:

- *Section A: Urban Issues and Challenges*
  - Population growth and urbanisation
  - Urban growth in Rio de Janeiro
  - Urban change in Leeds
- *Section B: The Changing Economic World*
  - Global development and inequality
  - Economic growth in Nigeria (a study of an NEE country)
  - Economic change in the UK
- *Section C: The Challenge of Resource Management*
  - Focus on water, food, and energy resources
  - Optional focus on food management

Paper 3: Geographical Applications

(30% of the final grade – 1 hour 30 mins)
Assesses students' ability to apply their knowledge to real-world scenarios and fieldwork.

Key components:

- *Section A: Issue Evaluation*
  - Pre-release material provided before the exam
  - Analysis of a geographical issue, using problem-solving skills
- *Section B: Fieldwork*
  - Questions on students' own fieldwork experiences (Hornsea and Leeds) and geographical skills.

Paper 1 – Physical Geography

Section A: The Challenge of Natural Hazards

Key Idea	Specification Content	Red	Amber	Green
PART 1: Natural Hazards				
Natural hazards pose major risks to people and property.	Definition of a natural hazard			
	Types of natural hazard			
	Factors affecting hazard risk			
PART 2: Tectonic Hazards				
Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are the result of physical processes.	Plate tectonic theory			
	Global distribution of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and their relationship to plate margins.			
	Physical processes taking place at different types of plate margin (constructive, destructive and conservative) that lead to earthquakes and volcanic activity.			
The effects of, and responses to, a tectonic hazard vary between areas of contrasting levels of wealth.	Primary and secondary effects of a tectonic hazard.			
	Immediate and long-term responses to a tectonic hazard.			
	Use named examples to show how the effects and responses to a tectonic hazard vary between two areas of contrasting levels of wealth. **(LIC – Haiti, HIC – Italy)**			
Management can reduce the effects of a tectonic hazard .	Reasons why people continue to live in areas at risk from a tectonic hazard.			
	How monitoring, prediction, protection and planning can reduce the risks from a tectonic hazard.			
PART 3: Weather Hazards				
Global atmospheric circulation helps to determine patterns of weather and climate.	General atmospheric circulation model: pressure belts and surface winds.			
Tropical storms (hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons) develop as a result of particular physical conditions.	Global distribution of tropical storms (hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons).			
	An understanding of the relationship between tropical storms and general atmospheric circulation.			
	Causes of tropical storms and the sequence of their formation and development.			
	The structure and features of a tropical storm.			
	How climate change might affect the distribution, frequency and intensity of tropical storms.			
Tropical storms have significant effects on people and the environment .	Primary and secondary effects of tropical storms.			
	Immediate and long-term responses to tropical storms.			
	Use a named example of a tropical storm to show its effects and responses. – **Typhoon Haiyan**			
	How monitoring, prediction, protection and planning can reduce the effects of tropical storms.			
The UK is affected by a number of weather hazards.	An overview of types of weather hazard experienced in the UK.			

Extreme weather events in the UK have impacts on human activity.	An example of a recent extreme weather event in the UK to illustrate: **Beast from the East.** Causes			
	Social, economic and environmental impacts			
	How management strategies can reduce risk.			
	Evidence that weather is becoming more extreme in the UK.			
PART 4: Climate change				
Climate change is the result of natural and human factors and has a range of effects.	Evidence for climate change from the beginning of the Quaternary period to the present day. Possible causes of climate change: Human factors – use of fossil fuels, agriculture and deforestation.			
	Natural factors – orbital changes, volcanic activity and solar output			
	Overview of the effects of climate change on people and the environment.			
Managing climate change involves both mitigation (reducing causes) and adaptation (responding to change).	Managing climate change: Mitigation – alternative energy production, carbon capture, planting trees, international agreements			
	Adaptation – change in agricultural systems, managing water supply, reducing risk from rising sea levels.			

Section B: The Living World

Key Idea	Specification Content	Red	Amber	Green
Part 1: Ecosystems				
Ecosystems exist at a range of scales and involve the interaction between biotic and abiotic components.	An example of a small-scale UK ecosystem to illustrate the concept of interrelationships within a natural system, an understanding of producers, consumers, decomposers, food chain, food web and nutrient cycling. – **Post Hill**			
	The balance between components. The impact on the ecosystem of changing one component.			
	An overview of the distribution and characteristics of large scale natural global ecosystems.			
Part 2: Tropical rainforests				
Tropical rainforest ecosystems have a range of distinctive characteristics.	The physical characteristics of a tropical rainforest.			
	The interdependence of climate, water, soils, plants, animals and people.			
	How plants and animals adapt to the physical conditions.			
	Issues related to biodiversity.			
Deforestation has economic and environmental impacts	Changing rates of deforestation.			
	A case study **(Amazon Rainforest)** of a tropical rainforest to illustrate: causes of deforestation – subsistence and commercial farming, logging, road building, mineral extraction, energy development, settlement, population growth.			
	Impacts of deforestation – economic development, soil erosion, contribution to climate change.			
Tropical rainforests need to be	Value of tropical rainforests to people and the environment.			

managed to be sustainable.	Strategies used to manage the rainforest sustainably – selective logging and replanting, conservation and education, ecotourism and international agreements about the use of tropical hardwoods, debt reduction			
Part 3: Hot deserts				
Hot desert ecosystems have a range of distinctive characteristics.	The physical characteristics of a hot desert.			
	The interdependence of climate, water, soils, plants, animals and people.			
	How plants and animals adapt to the physical conditions.			
	Issues related to biodiversity			
Development of hot desert environments creates opportunities and challenges.	A case study of a hot desert **(Mojave)** to illustrate: Development opportunities in hot desert environments: mineral extraction, energy, farming, tourism.			
	Challenges of developing hot desert environments: extreme temperatures, water supply, inaccessibility.			
Areas on the fringe of hot deserts are at risk of desertification.	Causes of desertification – climate change, population growth, removal of fuel wood, overgrazing, over-cultivation and soil erosion.			
	Strategies used to reduce the risk of desertification – water and soil management, tree planting and use of appropriate technology.			

Section C: Physical landscapes in the UK

Part 1: UK physical landscapes				
The UK has a range of diverse landscapes.	An overview of the location of major upland/lowland areas and river systems.			
Part 2: Coastal landscapes in the UK				
The coast is shaped by a number of physical processes.	Wave types and characteristics.			
	Weathering processes – mechanical, chemical			
	Mass movement – sliding, slumping and rock falls			
	Erosion – hydraulic power, abrasion and attrition			
	Transportation – longshore drift			
	Deposition – why sediment is deposited in coastal areas.			
Distinctive coastal landforms are the result of rock type, structure and physical processes.	How geological structure and rock type influence coastal forms.			
	Characteristics and formation of landforms resulting from erosion – headlands and bays, cliffs and wave cut platforms, caves, arches and stacks.			
	Characteristics and formation of landforms resulting from deposition – beaches, sand dunes, spits and bars.			
	An example **(Holderness Coast)** of a section of coastline in the UK to identify its major landforms of erosion and deposition.			
Different management strategies can be used to protect coastlines from the effects of	The costs and benefits of the following management strategies: **Hard engineering** – sea walls, rock armour, gabions and groynes			
	Soft engineering – beach nourishment and reprofiling, dune regeneration			

physical processes.	**Managed retreat** – coastal realignment.			
	An example **(Hornsea)** of a coastal management scheme in the UK to show: • the reasons for management • the management strategy • the resulting effects and conflicts.			
Part 3 Glacial landscapes in the UK				
Ice was a powerful force in shaping the physical landscape of the UK.	Maximum extent of ice cover across the UK during the last ice age.			
	Glacial processes: Freeze-thaw weathering			
	Erosion – abrasion and plucking			
	Movement and transportation – rotational slip and bulldozing			
	Deposition – why glaciers deposit sediment (till and outwash).			
Distinctive glacial landforms result from different physical processes.	Characteristics and formation of landforms resulting from erosion – corries, arêtes, pyramidal peaks, truncated spurs, glacial troughs, ribbon lakes and hanging valleys.			
	Characteristics and formation of landforms resulting from transportation and deposition – erratics, drumlins, types of moraine.			
	An example **(Lake District)** of an upland area in the UK affected by glaciation to identify its major landforms of erosion and deposition.			
Glaciated upland areas provide opportunities for different economic activities, and management strategies can be used to reduce land use conflicts.	An overview of economic activities in glaciated upland areas – tourism, farming, forestry and quarrying.			
	Conflicts between different land uses, and between development and conservation.			
	An example **(Lake District)** of a glaciated upland area in the UK used for tourism to show: The attractions for tourists			
	Social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism strategies used to manage the impact of tourism.			

Paper 2: Human Geography

Section A: Urban Issues and Challenges

Key Idea	Specification Content	Red	Amber	Green
PART 1: Urban Theory				
A growing percentage of the world's population lives in urban areas.	The global pattern of urban change.			
	Urban trends in different parts of the world including HICs and LICs.			
	Factors affecting the rate of urbanisation – migration (push–pull theory), natural increase.			
	The emergence of megacities.			
PART 2: Rio de Janeiro				
Urban growth creates opportunities and challenges for cities in LICs and NEEs .	The location and importance of the city, regionally , nationally and internationally			
	Causes of growth: natural increase and migration			
	How urban growth has created social opportunities: access to services – health and education;access to resources – water supply, energy			
	How urban growth has created economic opportunities: how urban industrial areas can be a stimulus for economic development			
	How urban growth has created challenges: managing urban growth (slums, squatter settlements), providing clean water, providing access to services (health and education), reducing unemployment and crime, managing environmental issues (waste disposal, air and water pollution, traffic congestion)			
	An example of how urban planning is improving the quality of life for the urban poor. (Favela Bairro)			
PART 3: Leeds				
Urban change in cities in the UK leads to a variety of social, economic and environmental opportunities and challenges.	Overview of the distribution of population and the major cities in the UK.			
	The location and importance of the city in the UK and the wider world			
	Impacts of national and international migration on the growth and character of the city			
	How urban growth has created social and economic opportunities (cultural mix, recreation and entertainment, employment, integrated transport systems)			
	How urban growth has created environmental opportunities: urban greening			
	How urban change has created social and economic challenges: urban deprivation, inequalities in housing, education, health and employment			
	How urban change has created environmental challenges: dereliction, building on brownfield and greenfield sites, waste disposal			
	The impact of urban sprawl on the rural-urban fringe, the growth of commuter settlements			
	An example of an urban regeneration project to show reasons why the area needed regeneration and the main features of the project (Leeds Climate Innovation District)			
Urban sustainability requires management of	Features of sustainable urban living: • water and energy conservation • waste recycling • creating green space.			

resources and transport.	How urban transport strategies are used to reduce traffic congestion.			

Section B: The Changing Economic World

Key Idea	Specification Content	Red	Amber	Green
PART 1: Development				
There are global variations in economic development and quality of life.	Different ways of classifying parts of the world according to their level of economic development and quality of life.			
	Different economic and social measures of development: gross national income (GNI) per head, birth and death rates, infant mortality, life expectancy, people per doctor, literacy rates, access to safe water, Human Development Index (HDI). Limitations of economic and social measures.			
	Link between stages of the Demographic Transition Model and the level of development.			
	Causes of uneven development: physical, economic and historical.			
	Consequences of uneven development: disparities in wealth and health, international migration .			
PART 2: Reducing Development Gap				
Various strategies exist for reducing the global development gap.	An overview of the strategies used to reduce the development gap: investment, industrial development and tourism, aid, using intermediate technology, fairtrade, debt relief, microfinance loans.			
	An **example** of how the growth of tourism in an LIC or NEE helps to reduce the development gap. (Kenya)			
PART 3: Nigeria's Growing Economy				
Some LICs and NEEs are experiencing rapid economic development which leads to significant social, environmental and cultural change.	The location and importance of the country, regionally and globally			
	The wider political, social, cultural and environmental context within which the country is placed			
	The changing industrial structure. The balance between different sectors of the economy. How manufacturing industry can stimulate economic development			
	The role of transnational corporations (TNCs) in relation to industrial development. Advantages and disadvantages of TNC(s) to the host country			
	The changing political and trading relationships with the wider world			
	International aid: types of aid, impacts of aid on the receiving country			
	The environmental impacts of economic development			
	The effects of economic development on quality of life for the population.			
PART 4: UK's Changing Economy				
Major changes in the economy of the UK have affected, and will continue to affect, employment patterns and regional growth.	Causes of economic change: de-industrialisation and decline of traditional industrial base, globalisation and government policies			
	Moving towards a post-industrial economy: development of information technology, service industries, finance, research, science and business parks			
	Impacts of industry on the physical environment. An **example** of how modern industrial development can be more environmentally sustainable (Nissan Factory)			

	Social and economic changes in the rural landscape in one area of population growth and one area of population decline			
	Improvements and new developments in road and rail infrastructure, port and airport capacity			
	The north–south divide. Strategies used in an attempt to resolve regional differences			
	The place of the UK in the wider world. Links through trade, culture, transport, and electronic communication. Economic and political links: the European Union (EU) and Commonwealth.			

Section C: The Challenge of Resource Management

Key Idea	Specification Content	Red	Amber	Green
PART 1: Resource Management				
Food, water and energy are fundamental to human development.	The significance of food, water and energy to economic and social well-being.			
	An overview of global inequalities in the supply and consumption of resources.			
The changing demand and provision of resources in the UK create opportunities and challenges.	The growing demand for high-value food exports from low income countries and all-year demand for seasonal food and organic produce			
	Larger carbon footprints due to the increasing number of 'food miles' travelled, and moves towards local sourcing of food			
	The trend towards agribusiness.			
	The changing demand for water			
	Water quality and pollution management			
	Matching supply and demand – areas of deficit and surplus			
	The need for transfer to maintain supplies.			
	The changing energy mix – reliance on fossil fuels, growing significance of renewables			
	Reduced domestic supplies of coal, gas and oil			
	Economic and environmental issues associated with exploitation of energy sources.			
PART 2: Food				
Demand for food resources is rising globally but supply can be insecure, which may lead to conflict.	Areas of surplus (security) and deficit (insecurity)			
	Global patterns of calorie intake and food supply			
	Reasons for increasing food consumption: economic development, rising population			
	Factors affecting food supply: climate, technology, pests and disease, water stress, conflict, poverty.			
	Impacts of food insecurity – famine, undernutrition, soil erosion, rising prices, social unrest.			
Different strategies can be used to increase food supply.	Irrigation, aeroponics and hydroponics, the new green revolution and use of biotechnology, appropriate technology			
	An **example** of a large scale agricultural development to show how it has both advantages and disadvantages.			
	The potential for sustainable food supplies: organic farming, permaculture, urban farming initiatives, fish and meat from sustainable sources, seasonal food consumption, reduced waste and losses			
	An **example** of a local scheme in an LIC or NEE to increase sustainable supplies of food.			