

# Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

January 2016

NQF BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Firsts in  
Construction

Unit 1: Construction Technology  
(21492E)

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January 2016

Publications Code BF043032

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## Introduction

This report has been written by the Lead Examiner for BTEC Construction and the Built Environment Unit 1 – Construction Technology. It is designed to help you understand how learners performed overall in the exam. For each question, there is a brief analysis of learner responses. You will also find some example learner responses at Level 2 Pass, Merit and Distinction. We hope this will help you to prepare your learners for future examination series.

## Grade Boundaries

### Introducing external assessment

The new suite of 'next generation' NQF BTECs now include an element of external assessment. The external assessments for NQF BTEC Construction are timetabled paper-based examinations.

### What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we set the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade (Distinction, Merit, Pass and Level 1 fallback).

### Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries – this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark should be for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to ensure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

### Variations in external assessments

Each test we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries for each test, because then it wouldn't take into account that a test might be slightly easier or more difficult than any other.

### Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

Grade	Unclassified	Level 1 Pass	Level 2 Pass	Level 2 Merit	Level 2 Distinction
Boundary Mark	0	11	21	31	42

## General Comments

This was the fourth time that this paper has been sat and, overall, the paper produced a good range of responses. Lower ability learners often gave inaccurate or simplistic responses to questions and therefore gained limited marks. The more demanding questions provided learners with an opportunity to apply their knowledge in relation to construction scenarios and it was pleasing to see some extended answers that focused on the vocational context. In some cases, learners simply provided responses which repeated information from the question stem or from previous question stems. In a number of other cases, candidates gave answers that appeared to reflect general knowledge rather than any detailed understanding of construction components or methods under consideration.

In preparation for future series, centres should focus on the analysis of the SAM (Sample Assessment Material) for this unit together with using this exam and its mark scheme as the basis for identifying and applying relevant more expansive solutions to the questions set. Learners should also be familiar with the full range of content from the unit specification and ought to be able to examine the application of these concepts in different scenarios. Learners should be able to sketch and label elements of construction as identified in the unit specification.

The ability to recognise the demands of a question is also important. Candidates should understand the different responses required for different command words, for example, identify, explain or discuss.

### Question 1

This question was aimed at aspects associated with building performance requirements.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim A.1

Most learners correctly identified the two component/elements with their respective performance requirement.

A number of learners incorrectly identified that a soffit was linked to sound insulation or weather resistance.

### Question 2

This question was aimed at aspects of sound insulation.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim A.1

2a) Learners were required to give two purposes of sound insulation. This was mostly well answered by learners with many achieving 2 marks. Most incorrect responses stated that the purpose of sound insulation was to improve thermal insulation properties. The purpose(s) of sound insulation are clearly stated within the unit specification and are also included within the mark scheme which centres should refer to.

2 mark response example:

2 (a) Give **two** purposes of sound insulation. (2)

1 to provide privacy

2 to stop noise pollution

1 mark response example:

2 (a) Give **two** purposes of sound insulation. (2)

1 one purpose would be to stop nuisances and noise distracting other people. E.g. Neighbors

2 It's easier to hear other people from far distances around a house or building.

The first response relates to preventing noise from neighbours but the second response is incorrect.

2b) Learners were required to identify two types of sound insulation. This was well attempted by learners. Most learners correctly identified the correct answers of:

- A – Carpeting
- D – Triple Glazing

### Question 3

This question was aimed at a range of aspects relating to sustainability.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim A.1

3a) Learners were required to give two reasons for the need for sustainability in construction. This question was poorly answered by many students with many achieving 0 marks. Acceptable responses can be found in the mark scheme.

Responses not linked to the need for sustainability were awarded 0 marks and often included:

- allows for the re-use of materials
- it's cheaper/saves money

2 mark response example:

3 (a) Give **two** reasons for the need for sustainability in construction. (2)

1 Reduces the Usage of finite resources

2 Reduces Carbon emissions into the atmosphere

1 mark response example:

3 (a) Give **two** reasons for the need for sustainability in construction. (2)

1 To keep the environment healthy so no waste products.

2 ~~make~~ sure so there is no accidents.

The first response relates to reducing the impact on the environment. The second response is incorrect.

3b) Learners were required to identify two sustainable methods used in construction. This was satisfactorily answered by students with most achieving at least 1 mark. The correct responses were:

- B – Prefabrication of elements
- D – Using local suppliers

Students often failed to identify that the use of local suppliers is a sustainable method used in construction

3c) Learners were required to name two low embodied energy materials used in construction. This question was satisfactorily answered by learners who often achieved a minimum of 1 mark. Most correct responses indicated that timber was a low embodied energy material. Many learners stated that bricks or concrete were low embodied energy materials when in fact the energy requirements to produce these materials is high.

Acceptable responses can be found in the mark scheme.

2 mark example response:

(c) Name **two** low embodied energy materials used in construction. (2)

1 Timber - used in roofs and walls in houses

2 Sheeps wool - its free, can grow again and a good thermal insulator.

(Total for Question 3 = 6 marks)

1 mark response example:

(c) Name **two** low embodied energy materials used in construction. (2)

1 Sips pannels

2 sheeps wool

(Total for Question 3 = 6 marks)

The first response is incorrect. SIPs are a composite, not a single material. The second response is correct.

#### Question 4

This question was aimed aspects of structural insulated panels (SIPs).

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim A.2

4a) Learners were required to name two external finishes used with structural insulated panels:

This question was satisfactorily answered by learners who often achieved a minimum of 1 mark. Most correct responses indicated that timber or brickwork could be used as an external finish. Some learners failed to understand the term 'external' and incorrectly stated wallpaper or plastering as an external finish. Acceptable responses can be found in the mark scheme.

2 mark example response:

4 (a) Name **two** external finishes used with structural insulated panels (SIPs). (2)

1 Face brick work on the out side  
Larger

2 Rendering the out side Panels

1 mark example response:

4 (a) Name **two** external finishes used with structural insulated panels (SIPs). (2)

1 Brickwork

2 plasterboard.

The first response is correct. The second response is incorrect.

4b) Learners were required to explain two benefits of using structural insulated panels (SIPs) rather than a traditional construction form for a housing development. The command verb used for this question is explain, therefore 1 mark was allocated to the identification of a benefit and 1 mark for a linked explanation of the stated benefit.

Learners were often able to achieve 1 mark for the identification of a benefit but then often failed to understand the need to develop a linked explanation from it. Learners therefore often did not provide a complete description of their identified benefit.

Many learners achieved 1 mark by identifying one benefit of using structural insulated panels rather than a traditional construction for a housing development e.g.

- it is a quicker form of construction.
- it has better thermal properties/is a better insulator
- it is environmentally friendly method/more sustainable method

Some students did not interpret the question well and gave a range of inaccurate responses. The incorrect responses below cannot be clearly identified as a benefit of the use of structural insulated panels rather than a traditional construction form as they are dependent on the size and nature of a development.

Responses awarded 0 marks included:

- they use low embodied materials
- it is a cheaper form of construction
- it looks nicer

3 mark example response:

(b) Explain **two** benefits of using structural insulated panels (SIPs) rather than a traditional construction form for a housing development. (4)

1 This method proves to be more sustainable, therefore allowing the construction process to be ethical.

2 This method also proves to be a quicker option. Therefore proving to be an ideal method to use if you want a quick finish.

(Total for Question 4 = 6 marks)

The first response refers to sustainable (1), without an appropriate linked response.

The second response is a linked response and relates to bullet point 3 in the mark scheme.

2 mark example response:

(b) Explain **two** benefits of using structural insulated panels (SIPs) rather than a traditional construction form for a housing development. (4)

1 SIPs panels are ready built materials  
So they are cheaper to install and <sup>don't</sup> require many workers.

2 SIPs panels are sustainable as they are quick to install.

(Total for Question 4 = 6 marks)

The first response refers to pre-fabrication (1), with no appropriate linked response. The second response refers to sustainable (1), with no appropriate linked response.

### Question 5

This question was aimed at the the strength and stability of buildings.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim A.1

Learners were required to state one way loads are transferred from the roof of a building to its foundation. This was poorly attempted by learners with many achieving 0 marks.

Learners were unable to interpret the meaning of this question and often gave incorrect responses related to the use of cranes to transfer materials.

1 mark example response:

5 State **one** way loads are transferred from the roof of a building to its foundation.

~~extend~~ It is transferred through roof  
tops to the walls down to the foundations onto  
the bearing stratum.

(Total for Question 5 = 1 mark)

**Question 6**

This question was aimed at aspects of earthwork support used in sub-structure groundwork activities.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim B.2

6a) Learners were required to give two factors to be considered when designing earthwork support. This question was satisfactorily answered by learners with many achieving a minimum of 1 mark.

Typical incorrect responses included:

- stability
- safety
- flooding
- risk assessment

2 mark example response:

**6 (a) Give two factors to be considered when designing earthwork support. (2)**

1 Underground water

2 Electricity cables

1 mark example response:

**6 (a) Give two factors to be considered when designing earthwork support. (2)**

1 make sure the ground isn't too soft ~~and it's~~

2 and you use strong materials

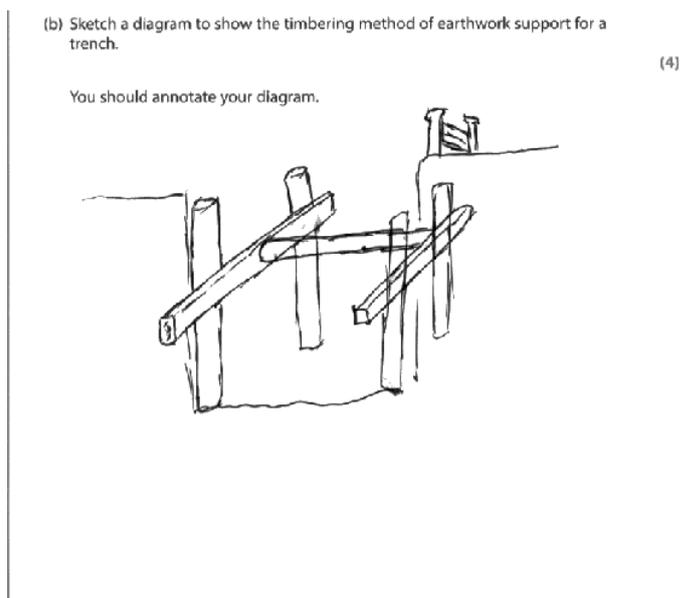
The first response is correct and relates to bullet point 5 in the mark scheme. The second response is too vague in detail.

6b) Learners were required to sketch a diagram to show the timbering method of earthwork support for a trench. This question requires learners to be able to demonstrate the use of sketching techniques.

Many learners either did not attempt a response or focused incorrectly on a past exam series detail. Some learners sketched details of a solid ground floor or cavity wall section, which had been included in previous exam series, rather than the requirements of a diagram to show the timbering method of earthwork support for a trench.

Centres should consult with the mark scheme to consider the detail required for a sketch question of this type. Centres also need to understand that this type of question will continue to be included in future examinations.

3 mark response example:



3 marks awarded. The learner has sketched timber earthwork support showing poling boards, walings and a strut.

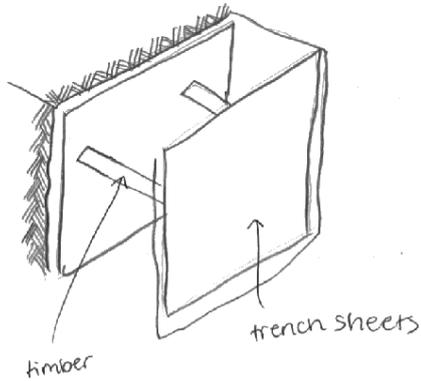
While the question states learners should annotate their diagram, the absence of annotations did not disadvantage the learner.

2 mark example response:

(b) Sketch a diagram to show the timbering method of earthwork support for a trench.

(4)

You should annotate your diagram.



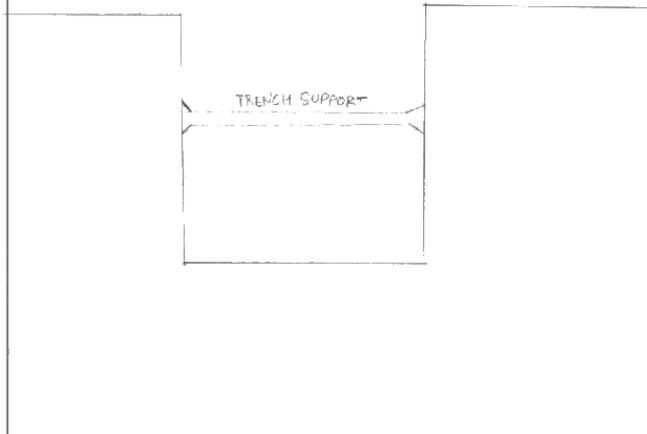
The learner has sketched timber earthwork support showing trench sheets and a timber strut.

1 mark example response:

(b) Sketch a diagram to show the timbering method of earthwork support for a trench.

(4)

You should annotate your diagram.



The learner has sketched timber earthwork support showing a strut.

### Question 7

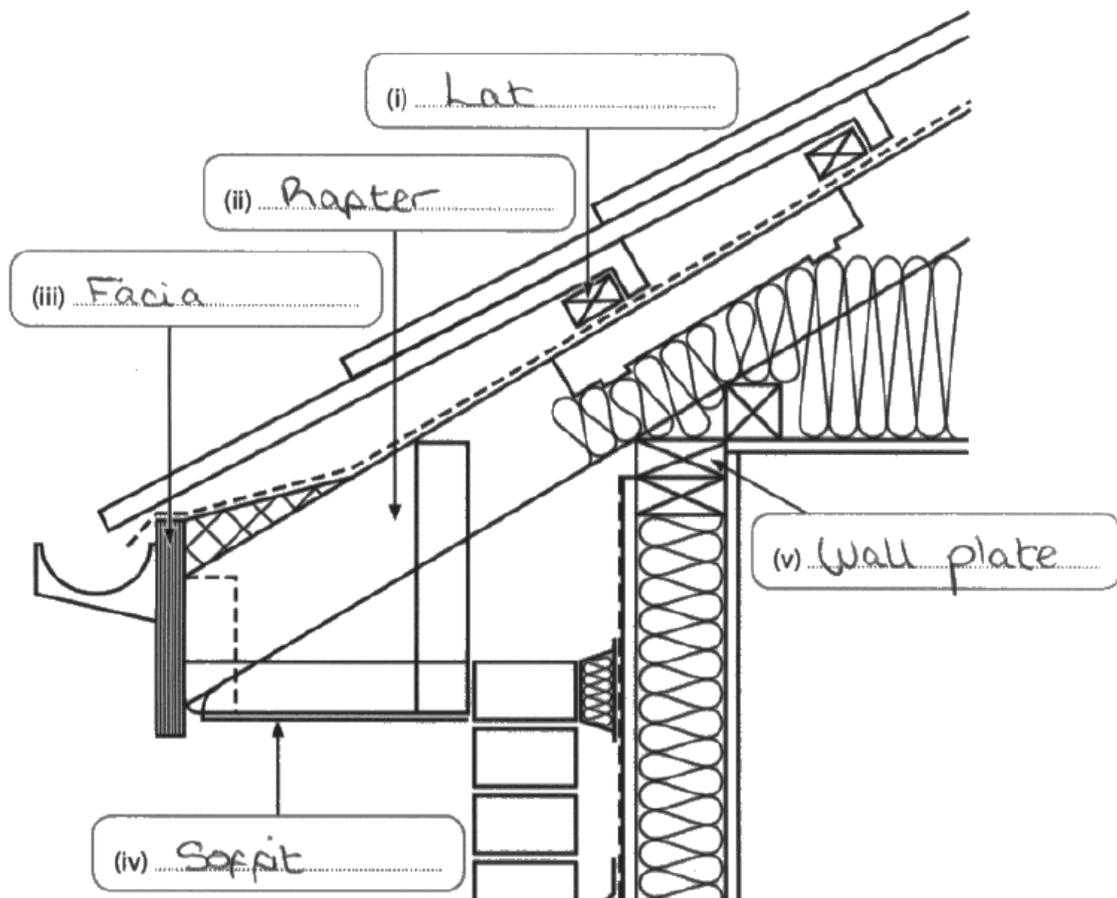
This question was aimed at a range of aspects relating to the superstructures of roofs.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim C.3

Learners were required to identify four parts of a pitched roof diagram. This was poorly attempted by learners with many only achieving 1 mark.

The correct parts were:

- (i) Batten
- (ii) Rafter
- (iii) Fascia
- (iv) Soffit
- (v) Wall plate



Many students did not give a response or included incorrect terms such as wall plate, insulation or brickwork.

The labelling of the components of elements of a structure is an important part of this unit and centres need to understand that this type of question will be included in future examinations.

### Question 8

This question was aimed at components of a wall.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim C.1

Learners were required to identify two components of a wall opening. This was satisfactorily answered by learners with most achieving at least 1 mark.

Students often failed to identify that a lintel was a component of a wall opening.

### Question 9

This question was aimed at aspects of wall superstructure.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim C.1

Learners were required to explain two benefits of using a traditional brick cavity wall construction method when building houses. The command verb used for this question is explain, therefore 1 mark was awarded to the identification of a benefit of using a traditional brick cavity wall form and 1 mark for a linked explanation. Learners were often able to achieve 1 mark for the identification of a benefit but then did not understand the need to provide a linked explanation.

The mark scheme for this question is detailed and offers centres the opportunity to review how linked responses should be presented.

3 mark response example:

9 Explain **two** benefits of using a traditional brick cavity wall construction method when building houses.

1 The benefits of using a traditional brick cavity wall is you get all the insulation so the building is all warm and it will save you so money for energy bills.

2 The cavity wall can re use materials like old bricks to use as hardcore and you can use ins sheep wool for the insulation so the heat stays in.

(Total for Question 9 - 4 marks)

The first response is a linked response attracting 2 marks and relates to the first bullet point in the mark scheme. The second response is awarded 1 identification mark for re-use of materials.

2 mark response example:

9 Explain two benefits of using a traditional brick cavity wall construction method when building houses.

1 ~~it's~~ ~~got~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~made~~ ~~on~~ ~~site~~ ~~and~~ ~~it's~~ ~~easier~~ ~~and~~ ~~you~~ ~~can~~ ~~see~~ ~~where~~ ~~all~~ ~~the~~ ~~openings~~ ~~got~~ ~~to~~ ~~go~~ ~~its~~ ~~fire~~ ~~resistant~~.

2 ~~it~~ ~~provides~~ ~~more~~ ~~strength~~ ~~and~~ ~~stability~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~whole~~ ~~house~~.

(Total for Question 9 = 4 marks)

2 identification marks are awarded for fire resistant (1) and strength (1). No linked responses have been provided, so no further marks are awarded.

### Question 10

This question was aimed at aspects of superstructures – roofs.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim C.3

Learners were required to explain two advantages of a flat roof compared to a pitched roof for a semi-detached house extension. Learners were often able to achieve 1 mark for the identification of an advantage but then failed to understand the need to expand their identified reason.

The mark scheme for this question is detailed and offers centres the opportunity to review how linked responses should be presented.

3 mark example response:

**10** A single storey extension is to be added to a three bedroom semi-detached house.  
Explain **two** advantages of a flat roof compared to a pitched roof for the extension.

1. A flat roof is much cheaper to install compared to a pitched roof. It also takes a lot less time due to its simplicity.

2. A flat roof has the advantage of being able to be converted for recreational uses such as putting in a balcony.

(Total for Question 10 = 4 marks)

Only 2 of the 4 available marks can be awarded for identification.

The first response has two identifications of cheaper and simplicity, however only 1 mark can be awarded because the second response has an identification with a linked explanation worthy of 2 marks, making 3 marks in total.

The second response has identified that the flat roof creates a balcony (1) which can be used as a recreational space (1).

2 mark example response:

**10** A single storey extension is to be added to a three bedroom semi-detached house.  
Explain **two** advantages of a flat roof compared to a pitched roof for the extension.

1. It looks more aesthetically pleasing as its only a flat roof and not sticking out

2. It can be used to access so people could go up their leg balcony on roof

(Total for Question 10 = 4 marks)

The first response has two identifications of aesthetically pleasing and not sticking out (obstructing views). The second response has one identification mark for the balcony.

2 mark example response:

**10** A single storey extension is to be added to a three bedroom semi-detached house.  
Explain **two** advantages of a flat roof compared to a pitched roof for the extension.

1. less skilled construction is needed to put up a flat roof and no need for tiles

2. cheaper, as it costs less to make and less to insulate as it is very simple compared to a pitched roof which needs rafters and tiles, much more embodied energy goes into this

(Total for Question 10 = 4 marks)

The first response attracts no marks as the flat roof does not necessarily require less skilled labour to install.

The second response has two identification marks for cheaper (1) and very simple (1) (see additional guidance).

A maximum of 2 marks can be awarded for identification.

**Question 11**

This question was aimed at aspects of common structural forms for low-rise construction.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim A.2

Learners were required to explain one way in which timber frame construction minimises the impact on the natural environment.

Learners were often able to achieve 1 mark for identification of a factor but then did not provide a linked explanation.

The mark scheme for this question is detailed and offers centres the opportunity to review how linked responses should be presented.

2 mark example response:

11 Explain **one** way in which timber frame construction minimises the impact on the natural environment.

Because timber is renewable/sustainable  
as when you cut down one tree  
you plant two back

(Total for Question 11 = 2 marks)

The learner has identified sustainable, with a limited but acceptable linked response.

1 mark example response:

11 Explain **one** way in which timber frame construction minimises the impact on the natural environment.

~~that it doesnt need much machinery so it~~  
that it doesnt produce ~~waste~~ as much wastage so  
it doesnt take up loads of space which the environment  
may use

(Total for Question 11 = 2 marks)

The learner has identified wastage (1) (see bullet point 1), however the linked response provided is not appropriate, so the second mark is not awarded.

## Question 12

This question was aimed at aspects of sub-structure groundworks.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim B.2

Learners were required to discuss two ground floor construction methods to be considered by an architect for a new housing scheme.

Learners should identify the issue/situation that is being assessed within the question using the mark bands provided in the mark scheme. Marks were awarded dependent on the detail of points identified and described and as to whether the learner had made a comparison between the two ground floor options and linked their responses to the development of a new housing scheme.

Most learners attempted this question. Many achieved some marks. Learner marks were mostly in mark band 1 or at the lower end of mark band 2. Some high mark band 2 and occasional mark band 3 learner work was also seen.

Typical advantages of a suspended timber floor form stated by learners included:

- Aesthetically pleasing
- Easy to install services
- lightweight

Typical disadvantages of a suspended timber floor form stated by learners included:

- It can rot
- It can warp
- It takes more skilled craftsman and time to construct

Typical advantages of a beam and block floor form stated by learners included:

- Stronger
- Quicker to install
- Fire resistant

Typical disadvantages of a beam and block floor form stated by learners included:

- It is heavy and needs lifting equipment to place
- Less sustainable than timber

Learners generally identified a few key points from one or both structural forms. Few learners provided a balanced argument with sufficient detail to achieve marks beyond those in mark band 2. Some learners provided detailed responses and achieved mark band 3 criteria marks. These responses were well balanced and included detailed explanations, and the points made were linked to the development of a new housing scheme.

The mark bands and level descriptors are included in the mark scheme for question 12.

7 mark example response:

12 An architect is to design a new housing scheme and is considering the following ground floor construction methods:

- suspended timber floors
- concrete beam and block floors.

Discuss the two construction methods.

(8)

Each of these flooring methods are reliable. However they both have some disadvantages. I will list and explain each of the methods advantages and disadvantages:

Suspended timber floors:

Advantages:

- Very sustainable as it uses natural resources.
- Leaves a gap underneath which means wires/piping can be run under it.
- Requires less lab.
- Doesn't require a lot of labour as ~~no~~ no bricks or concrete need to be laid.
- Very time efficient as not a lot of work is needed.

Disadvantages:

- If it gets wet it will rot after time.
- Cannot lay during wet weather.
- If mistakes are made it can produce

a lot of ~~waste~~ site waste.

- ~~Pione~~ can wear if used a lot which can lead to beams snapping.

Concrete Beam and Block:

Advantages:

- Precast so less site waste is produced.
- Can lay in any weather so saves time.
- ~~Is extremely strong~~ as it's made of concrete so it doesn't wear.
- ~~Can run pip~~ Doesn't require a lot of labour as it's precast.
- ~~Is reinforced with steel beams~~ so it's extremely strong. Immune to rot, so it won't break up.

Disadvantages:

- Not very sustainable as it doesn't use natural resources.
- ~~Very inefficient with time~~ as a lot of on-site work is required.

(Total for Question 12 = 8 marks)

TOTAL FOR PAPER = 50 MARKS

7 marks awarded. While the response initially looks like a list, bulleted descriptions have been provided, therefore enabling the response to move beyond mark band 1.

The response describes a range of points for and against each floor type and is reasonably balanced, placing the response in mark band 3. While the majority of points are relevant, there is no direct link to a new housing scheme, so this does not attract full marks.

5 mark example response:

12 An architect is to design a new housing scheme and is considering the following ground floor construction methods:

- suspended timber floors
- concrete beam and block floors.

Discuss the two construction methods.

(6)

A concrete beam and block floor design is a more simple method which would require less man hours but it would need a stronger foundation due to the greater weight. It has much stronger more effective flooring as block is more dense than timber but it's likelier to get colder over time as it's block and concrete which would then increase the cost in the long run. The timber floors are more environmentally friendly as they are renewable and they require a much less of a strong foundation. Due to being much lighter, one problem of them being made of wood would mean they have a likelihood of rotting if not properly treated making them more problematic than the other design and potentially far more costly. Overall, the greater more economically efficient one of the two would be concrete beam and block floors as they are much cheaper than timber and provide a more solid frame than timber making them sustainable too.

5 marks awarded. This response falls in the middle of mark band 2 as there are some points described but the discussion is unbalanced and lacks the detail to push it into mark band 3.

Overall, the learner shows a good understanding of floor construction.

3 mark example response:

12 An architect is to design a new housing scheme and is considering the following ground floor construction methods:

- suspended timber floors
- concrete beam and block floors.

Discuss the two construction methods.

(8)

Suspended timber floor would be good because you can use local timber so it will be more sustainable. Timber floor is much quicker to put up. Timber floors will be less ~~more~~ <sup>more</sup> cost effective than a concrete beam and block floor. But the disadvantage of timber floor is that it rots ~~in a~~ quicker, so the floor will last as long as concrete beam and block.

The advantages of concrete beam and block is that it last much longer than timber floor. But a disadvantage of concrete beam and block is that it cost more for the concrete than for the timber. Concrete beam and block are usually used in larger rooms. Concrete beam and block is much more harder to put up, so the

for you need more skilled labourers.

In conclusion I think that they should go with timber floors because they are much cheaper than concrete beam and block. Timber floor is much more sustainable than concrete beam and block. Finally you need less skilled labourers.

3 marks awarded. This response falls into mark band 1 as there are a few key points identified, even though some of the comments are debatable, e.g. timber is more cost effective.

The response does not reach mark band 2 as the points made are not linked to a new housing scheme, and the answer is unbalanced and repetitive.

2 mark example response:

12 An architect is to design a new housing scheme and is considering the following ground floor construction methods:

- suspended timber floors
- concrete beam and block floors.

Discuss the two construction methods. (8)

Suspended timber floors ~~are~~<sup>is</sup> a very good method to use with ground floor construction methods because it is well known so all the builders will know how to build it and because you use timber and trees grow back it is a sustainable method. But, because timber isn't as strong and durable as concrete it won't last as long as the concrete beam and block floor.

Concrete beam and block floors are also very good because they are very strong and durable. Also concrete beam and block floors are very similar in design to suspended timber floor so most builders will know how to ~~design~~ build this as well. Concrete beam and block floors aren't sustainable whereas suspended timber floors are and sustainability is a very important aspect to the construction industry so personally I would go for the suspended timber floors.

2 marks awarded. This response falls in the middle of mark band 1 as the points made are superficial and not applied directly to the situation. Although the response is in sentences and paragraphs, the text is identifying points rather than fully describing them.

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