

# Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

June 2014

NQF BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Firsts in  
Construction

Unit 1: Construction Technology  
(21492E)

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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.

## General Comments

This was the first time that this paper has been sat and, overall, the paper produced a reasonable 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 focussed 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 a range of aspects relating to the structural performance required for low-rise construction.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim A.1

**1a)** The majority of learners correctly matched the two materials to their associated performance requirements. Most learners were able to match sheep's wool to thermal insulation. Incorrect responses primarily focussed on learners incorrectly matching flashings to weather resistance.

A small number of learners used multiple matching lines from an identified material, attracting 0 marks. The question appeared to be well understood by many learners.

**1b)** Learners were required to identify that a slump test is used to measure a property of concrete. This was only satisfactorily attempted by learners. Most incorrect responses often included the response of mortar.

**1c)** Learners were required to identify that stress grading indicates the strength of timber. This was mostly well answered by learners who gave the correct response of timber.

**1d)** Learners were required to identify two purposes of sound insulation for a building. This was mostly answered well by students with many achieving a minimum of 1 mark.

The mark scheme indicates correct solutions e.g.:

- Preventing nuisance
- Provide confidentiality

In addition learners were awarded marks if their responses indicated that sound insulation could double up as thermal insulation. In a small number of cases learners did not identify the purpose of sound insulation and incorrectly named materials which could be used for locations, such as cavity wall, where the sound insulation material could be placed.

**1e)** Learners were required to describe one benefit of sheep's wool in construction. The command verb used for this question is describe, therefore 1 mark was allocated to the identification of a benefit and 1 mark for a linked description of that 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 description

of the identified benefit. Learners therefore often did not provide a complete description of their identified benefit.

Many learners achieved 1 mark by identifying that sheep's wool was:

- a sustainable material
- renewable
- it is natural material
- it is a good insulator
- it may be used for sound insulation
- keeps the house warm
- stops heat loss

However, linked descriptions were poor. Some acceptable descriptions included:

- good insulator(1) and stops heat loss(1)
- keeps the building warm (1) and insulated (1)

Level 2 Pass example:

(e) Describe <b>one</b> benefit of using sheep's wool in construction projects. (2)
It is a cheap, easy to get and there is an infinite amount of it, also it is a really good insulator for keeping you warm.
(Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)

2 marks awarded. 1 mark awarded for identification of the benefit and a further mark awarded for the linked description of the benefit.

## Question 2

This question was aimed at aspects of sub-structure ground works.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim B.2

**2a)** Learners were required to identify two earthwork support methods used to prevent the collapse of the sides of an excavation. The two correct answers were timbering and steel trench sheets. Many learners were able to identify at least one method.

**2b)** Learners were required to identify one method for the temporary control of surface water in excavations.

The correct answer was sump pump although a range of variations on this method including pump and pumping were also accepted. Learner responses were mixed although up to half of all learners who responded to the question did provide an acceptable answer.

A number of incorrect responses which were not accepted included:

- steel trench sheets (this prevents the ingress of groundwater, not surface water)
- using a bucket
- damp proof membrane
- cover over the trench.

Level 1 Pass example:

<p>(b) Identify <b>one</b> method used for the temporary control of surface water in excavations.</p> <p>USE PUMPS TO PUMP OUT ALL OF THE UNWANTED WATER.</p> <p>(1)</p> <p>(Total for Question 2 = 3 marks)</p>	
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1 mark was awarded for the correct identification of a method for temporary control of surface water in excavations.

### Question 3

This question was aimed at the aspect of preconstruction work in association with how sub-structures are constructed.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim B.1

The majority of learners correctly matched the two types of preconstruction activity to a relevant activity. Incorrect responses primarily focussed on learners not demonstrating the matching of site-based preconstruction to the activity of gates and security of the site. A small number of learners used multiple matching lines from an identified preconstruction activity, which attracted 0 marks. The question appeared to be well understood by many learners.

#### Question 4

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

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim C.1

**4a)** Learners were required to identify two functions of a wall. This was well answered with most students achieving a minimum of 1 mark and a high percentage achieving both marks.

The mark scheme identifies a wide range of acceptable responses. In addition the following correct or similar responses were also considered acceptable:

- keep the building standing (stability)
- keep the weather out
- separation of rooms (compartmentalise)
- thermal loss is low
- keeps the building up (stability)

Level 2 Pass example:

4 (a) One function of a wall is to reduce sound transmission.  
Identify **two** other functions of a wall. (2)

1 to provide insulation.

2 to hold up the roof

2 marks were awarded for two acceptable answers. Refer to bullet points 1 and 5 in the mark scheme.

**4b)** Learners were required to outline the function of lintel. This was poorly answered by most learners who did not demonstrate an understanding of the function of a lintel.

The correct answer was:

- to support the material/wall above the opening

An additional acceptable answer was accepted in relation to the function of a lintel being aesthetically pleasing or decorative.

Some students did not answer the question and a number of incorrect responses, which did not relate to the principal function of a lintel, were also stated such as:

- prevents the ingress of water (not the prime function of a lintel)
- to strengthen a door
- to stop a door frame collapsing
- fire resistance
- allows water to drip off it
- moisture barrier.

Level 2 Pass example:

	<p>(b) Outline the function of a lintel.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1)</p> <p>It is found above any opening and is used to support the bricks above any opening</p>	
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1 mark was awarded for correctly outlining the function of a lintel.

**4c)** Learners were required to identify two types of wall finishes that could be used on a building. The majority of learners correctly identified the two correct answers of rendered blockwork and facing brickwork. Incorrect responses primarily focused on learners not identifying rendered blockwork as a type of wall finish.

## Question 5

This question was aimed at hazards associated with groundworks and is included in the sub-structure groundworks aspect of the unit specification.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim B.2

Learners were required to explain two measures that *XYZ Homes* could have put in place to reduce the risk of damaging underground power cables during the excavation of foundations. The command verb used for this question is explain, therefore 1 mark was awarded to the identification of a measure and 1 mark for the expansion of the measure identified. This question was targeted at the merit and distinction level of demand. Learners were often able to achieve 1 mark for the identification of a measure but then failed to understand the need to expand their identified measures.

Identification marks were awarded for:

- check plans
- hand dig
- check location of cables by talking to local suppliers
- ask neighbours of local knowledge of site
- use a detector
- do a survey

Marks for linked responses were achieved in some instances, some typical examples included:

- hand digging near cables (1) for better accuracy of location/safer method to dig (1)
- check cable maps (1) see where the cables are and find (1)
- use trained people (1) because they understand how to excavate safely (1)

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

Level 2 Distinction example:

**5** XYZ Homes is a building contractor.  
During the excavation of foundations on a large housing development site an XYZ Homes employee cut into an underground power cable.  
Explain **two** measures that XYZ Homes could have put in place to reduce the risk of damaging underground power cables.

1 They could ask local people to find out what was on the site previously so they will know if there are any pipes or cables underground.

2 They could hand dig it with shovels so more precaution can be taken around the areas where the wires might be

(Total for Question 5 = 4 marks)

4 marks were awarded for this response. 1 mark was awarded for the identification of using local people (1) as a source to locate the cables (1) - please refer to bullet point 2 in the mark scheme. 2 further marks were awarded for the identification of the need to hand dig (1) and the additional precautions taken (1) - refer to bullet point 6 in the mark scheme.

Level 2 Merit example:

5 XYZ Homes is a building contractor.

During the excavation of foundations on a large housing development site an XYZ Homes employee cut into an underground power cable.

Explain **two** measures that XYZ Homes could have put in place to reduce the risk of damaging underground power cables.

1 XYZ homes should have used ~~water~~ pumps trained workers.

2 XYZ homes should have ask the area developer constructor ~~where~~ cables on what underneath the excavation of foundation.

2 marks were awarded for this response as the learner has identified the need to use trained operatives and use plans. No further marks were achieved by the learner as they provided no linked responses.

### Question 6

This question was aimed at the identification of the components of a roof and the materials included in the superstructures-roofs aspect of the unit specification.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim C.3

**6a)** Learners were required to label four components of a roof structure. In general this question was poorly answered by many learners. The correct acceptable answers for each component were:

- (i) valley/valley rafter/valley board/lead valley/GRP valley
- (ii) ridge/ridgeboard
- (iii) jack/jack rafter
- (iv) hip/hip rafter

Many students did not give a response or included inaccurate terms such as eaves, rafter (too general), trussed rafter or gutter (for valley). 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 is likely to be included in future examinations.

**6b)** Learners were required to identify the material used to manufacture trussed rafters. The correct answer was softwood. Most students incorrectly identified hardwood as the material used to manufacture trussed rafters.

### **Question 7**

This question was aimed at the sketching of a cross-section through a solid ground floor. It targeted the understanding of how foundations are detailed in the sub-structure groundworks aspect of the unit.

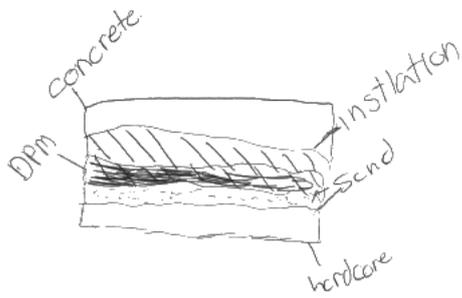
Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim B.2
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Learners were required to sketch a diagram of a cross-section through a solid ground floor. This question requires learners to be able to demonstrate the use of sketching techniques as per the requirements of Topic B.2-sub-structure groundworks section. This was poorly attempted by many students. Many either did not attempt a response or focussed incorrectly on foundation types rather than the specific cross section requirements of a solid ground floor, as indicated in the question. Some learners also included details with components in an incorrect order.

Centres should consult 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 be included in future examinations.

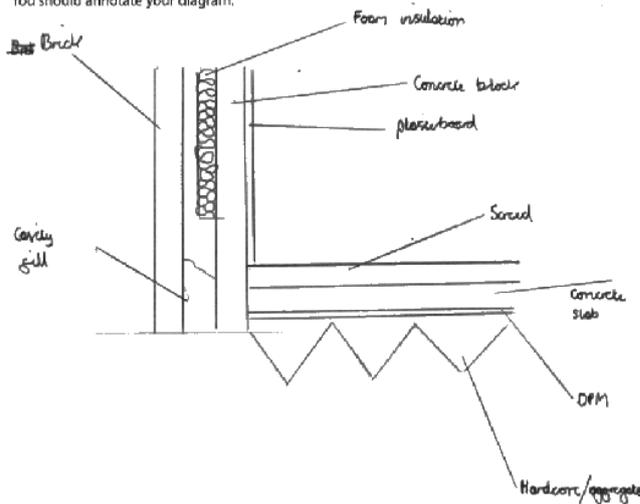
Level 2 Pass examples:

7 Sketch a diagram of a cross section through a solid ground floor.  
You should annotate your diagram.



5 marks were awarded for this response. Although the sketch is of a poor quality, 5 components of a solid ground floor are indicated and the correct order.

7 Sketch a diagram of a cross section through a solid ground floor.  
You should annotate your diagram.



4 marks were awarded for this response as 4 components have been identified in the correct order.

## Question 8

This question required learners to explain two advantages of using a solid ground floor in a low rise-building, other than how it could be completed in a short period of time.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim B.2

The command verb used for this question is explain, therefore 1 mark was allocated to the identification of an advantage and 1 mark for a linked explanation of the identified advantage.

Many learners were able to identify two advantages but only a small number then went on to provide a linked explanation. This question was targeted at the merit and distinction level of demand.

The mark scheme indicates examples of linked responses which would be awarded two marks including:

- simple construction form (1) therefore can be cost effective (cheap) (1)
- no need to ventilate the solid floor (1) because a solid floor will not rot/is more durable.

Level 2 Merit example:

**8** Solid ground floors are often used in low-rise buildings as they can be constructed in a short period of time.

Explain **two** other advantages of a solid ground floor in a low rise-building.

1 Solid ground floors are often used in low-rise buildings as they ~~are~~ are easier to construct on site and less labour is required.

2 Solid ground floors do not require as much skill to lay them.

(Total for Question 8 = 4 marks)

2 marks were awarded for this response. The learner has identified three advantages (less labour intensive, easier to construct and less skill required to lay). The maximum number of marks awarded for the identification of advantages is 2 marks. No further marks are awarded as no linked explanations are provided.

Level 2 Merit/Distinction example:

8 Solid ground floors are often used in low-rise buildings as they can be constructed in a short period of time.

Explain **two** other advantages of a solid ground floor in a low rise-building.

1 A solid ground floor is stronger and can therefore take more of a load.

2 A solid ground floor lasts longer than a floor therefore the building itself has the potential to last longer.

(Total for Question 8 = 4 marks)

3 marks were awarded for this response. 1 mark was awarded for strength and 1 mark for the linked explanation of the ability to take imposed loads. 1 mark was awarded for the identification of the advantage of durability.

Additional accepted 1 mark identification responses included:

- weather resistant
- gives some thermal insulation
- prevents some heat loss
- last a long period of time
- they keep the heat in

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

### Question 9

This question required learners to explain two benefits of engineered timber joists used in the construction of the upper floors of low-rise buildings

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim C.2

The command verb used for this question is explain, therefore 1 mark was awarded to the identification of a benefit and 1 mark for a linked explanation of the identified benefit. This question was targeted at the merit and distinction level of demand. Many learners were able to identify two benefits but only a small proportion then went on to provide a linked explanation.

Level 2 Merit example:

9 Engineered timber joists are often used in the construction of the upper floors of low-rise buildings.

Explain **two** benefits of using engineered timber joists in the construction of the upper floors of low-rise buildings.

1 one of the benefit of using engineering joists is that they are sustainable

2 ~~Another~~ Another benefit is that they are strong and can bare the load imposed on them

(Total for Question 9 = 4 marks)

2 marks were awarded for this response. 1 mark was awarded for the identification of sustainability as a benefit. No further marks were awarded here as the learner has not provided a linked explanation. 1 further mark was awarded as the learner has identified the second benefit, i.e. engineered timber joists are strong (please refer to the mark scheme), however the learner did not provided a linked response, so no further marks were awarded.

Level 2 Distinction example:

9 Engineered timber joists are often used in the construction of the upper floors of low-rise buildings.

Explain **two** benefits of using engineered timber joists in the construction of the upper floors of low-rise buildings.

1 The timber joists are less heavy and are sustainable way of construction using timber joists will make us to use less concrete in foundations as the building have to bare less loads

2 The timber joists are pre-fabricated so less waste

(Total for Question 9 = 4 marks)

4 marks were awarded here as two benefits with linked explanations are provided. For the first response, please refer to bullet point 3 in the mark scheme. For the second response, please refer to bullet point 1 in the mark scheme.

The mark scheme indicates examples of linked responses which would be awarded two marks including:

- lower installation costs (1) because it is easy to handle/quick to install (1)
- timber is sustainable (1) because it is grown from managed forests (1)
- reduced wastage on site (1) because joist are made to measure (1)

Typical 1 mark identification responses included:

- strong
- sustainable material
- put them up quickly
- quicker to install

Some typical two mark accepted responses included:

- easier to put in (1) quicker to build (1)
- lighter (1) less stress on the building foundation (1)

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

### Question 10

Learners were required to explain one reason why timber frame housing is a sustainable form of construction.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim A.2

The command verb used for this question is explain, therefore 1 mark was awarded for the identification of how a timber a frame is sustainable and 1 mark for a linked explanation. This question was targeted at the merit and distinction level of demand. Many learners were able to identify a reason why timber frame housing is a sustainable form of construction but most did not include provide a linked explanation.

Level 2 Merit example:

10 Explain **one** reason why timber frame housing is a sustainable form of construction.

because it is a renewable source  
of energy of wood

(Total for Question 10 = 2 marks)

1 mark was awarded for the identification of timber being a renewable resource. No further marks were awarded as no linked explanation is provided.

Level 2 Distinction example:

10 Explain **one** reason why timber frame housing is a sustainable form of construction.

Timber is a form of wood and wood can keep being reproduced because wood comes from trees and you can plant tree sapling to keep supply.

(Total for Question 10 = 2 marks)

2 marks were awarded for this response. The term reproduced is accepted in place of renewable, and there is a linked response.

The mark scheme includes a range of suitable responses including:

- it is a renewable resource (1) because it uses timber from managed forest (1)
- reduces waste (1) because it is produced off-site (1)
- fast form of construction/reduction in erection time (1) therefore reduces energy consumption during the construction phase (1)

Typical accepted 1 mark identification responses included:

- timber is renewable
- it is more eco friendly to the environment
- reduced wastage

Some learners simply repeated the word sustainable which was in the stem of the question.

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

## Question 11

Learners were required to discuss whether a property developer should build a new housing development on a greenfield local park area or a brownfield former industrial site.

Targeted Specification Area: Learning Aim A.1 Sustainability

The command verb used for this question is discuss. A discussion question requires learners to investigate a theme or topic by reasoning or argument. Learners should identify the issue/situation that is being assessed within the question and explore all aspects of the issue/situation by reasoning or argument. This question is marked using mark bands, rather than a points based marking system. 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 options and linked their responses to the parkland scenario.

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 or 3 scoring learner work was also seen.

Typical advantages of brownfield sites centred on:

- more environmentally friendly
- regeneration of a brownfield site
- existing infrastructure such as roads and utilities being in place

Disadvantages discussed included:

- contamination costs
- need to demolish existing structures

Typical advantages of the parkland green field site centred on:

- reduced potential design costs
- reduced potential need of contingency costs (diverting services etc)

Disadvantages discussed included:

- damage to natural environment
- no utility services may be at hand, therefore costly to install
- may take longer to receive planning approval

Learners generally identified a few key points from one or both site options. 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 parkland site in the scenario.

The mark scheme for this question is detailed and offers centres the opportunity to review how linked responses should be presented. The mark bands and level descriptors are also included to identify how learners can move from mark band 1 to mark band 2 or mark band 2 to mark band 3.

Level 2 Pass example:

11 A property developer has two design options to build a new housing development in an inner city area. One design option is to build on local parkland, which is a greenfield site. The other design option is to build on a site previously used for industry, which is a brownfield site.

Discuss whether the property developer should build on the greenfield site or the brownfield site.

First of all he has to bring the aspects of both sites into consideration and will have to do a lot of market research. He has to take into consideration if the house is being built in a suitable place, if there's going to be anything that will get in the way of him building there and what actions he may have to take.

I think he should build on the greenfield site as he may not have as many challenges to face and it will be a nicer area than the brownfield site.

More people will want to buy the newly built house if they know it's on a greenfield site rather than a brownfield site, especially if it's used for industry.

This response falls into mark band 1. 1 mark was awarded as the learner has identified that some people would prefer to live on a greenfield site. However, this is a superficial answer which does not really identify or describe key points specific to a green or brownfield site, so no further marks are awarded.

Level 2 Merit example:

greenfield site. The other design option is to build on a site previously used for industry, which is a brownfield site.

Discuss whether the property developer should build on the greenfield site or the brownfield site.

I think the property developer should build on the Brownfield site because it would be better for him and the local community. Greenfield sites are very expensive unlike Brownfield sites, the current brownfield site may look a mess to the local community so by developing ~~the~~ land it would be a favour to the community and greenfield land fits in to the environment and can be used by farmers for agricultural purposes. If the developer does agree to buy the brownfield site it may come in as an advantage to him as all of the piping and electricity cables may already be installed so this saves them money, the brownfield site may also already be leveled out. ~~the~~

This response falls into mark band 2. 4 marks were awarded as some key points are identified. Much of the response is quite general in regards to detail and no link to the scenario has been made.

Level 2 Distinction example:

11 A property developer has two design options to build a new housing development in an inner city area. One design option is to build on local parkland, which is a greenfield site. The other design option is to build on a site previously used for industry, which is a brownfield site.

Discuss whether the property developer should build on the greenfield site or the brownfield site.

The green field site would be a cheaper plot to buy but destroys habitats and ruins local views and social area. Building on a green field site would also let the properties services such as electricity and gas pipes, ~~to~~ <sup>to be</sup> allocated were needed whilst a brown field site has services already put in place and the homes would have to be built around them. <sup>The</sup> Brown field site would be a better option. ~~It is better~~ Brown field sites do not destroy wild life's natural habitats or affect sociable areas like parks. Service lines are also already put in place so less work is required. The grounds work for the site has already been ~~done~~ done, such as sewage pipes and power cables. Another benefit on a brown field site is the foundations have already been put in place and that soil has load bearing capabilities. This means less time and resources are needed to finish the project. Brown field sites also have better ~~access~~ ~~to~~ site access and travel routes to the site and are environmentally friendly.

(Total for Question 11 = 8 marks)

This falls at the top of mark band 2. 6 marks were awarded as a range of points are described. The answer is fairly well balanced, with some limited links to the question. The descriptions weren't detailed enough to get this response into mark band 3.

## 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	12	22	32	42

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