

Examiners' Report

Summer 2010

Principal Learning

Environmental and Land-based Studies Level 1 Controlled Assessments

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Level 1 Principal Learning in Environmental and Land-based Studies

Unit 2: Environmental and Land-based Production, Systems and Services

The basic format for this unit is valid and secure and it should be possible to create an appropriate assignment to assess the unit for learners in the Foundation Level of this Diploma.

The programme of study needs to be clearly set out for the learners and in a style that not only covers each of the Learning Objectives but in a manner that learners are very clear and can access the exercise, skill or activity that they are being asked to perform.

It is a good idea to place the assignment's programme of study at the beginning the learners' project/coursework/research so that they have every opportunity to understand each aspect of the assignment in order to achieve to the best of their ability and enables the moderator to comprehend the character of the assignment. At Foundation Level it is very easy to overpower Foundation learners and assignments should be made as user friendly as possible.

The character of the assignment necessitates that there will be a degree of teacher led content but it is important that throughout the assignment learners are aware that the assessment of their work will reflect their ability to display levels of independent, and creative, thinking, analysis and evaluation. If a learner copies excerpts from text books, magazine articles, newspapers, etc., cuts and pastes lengthy sections from the internet or uses a teacher created handout, without adapting such information they cannot expect to move out of Mark Band 1.

In a similar manner if a learner lists observations, or ideas, or displays photographs or attaches flyers, without placing them within the context of the assignment, and/or offering some kind of self-personalisation of the content then they will, again, struggle to get out of Mark Band 1. Even if it is information or data gathered by a group of learners it needs to be personalised in some manner.

It is quite valid for a teacher, or facilitator, to present a document, power point, spreadsheet etc., as a stimulus in order for learners to make use of it in their assignment but it is extremely important that the learner works with that piece of information and adds personal ownership and identity to it.

Annotation by learners of diagrams, graphs (especially using figures gleaned from the graphs therefore extending their functional skills) and photographs prove a good source of credit and should be promoted as should sketch drawings, proof of visits into the field, transcripts of interviews with relevant individuals such as park rangers, farmers, environmentalists, conservationists, politicians etc.

To reach Mark Band 2 or 3 learners need to have **touched upon** all aspects of the Learning Objectives criteria. For example in Learning Objective 1.1 (but the principle applies to all Learning Objectives) to achieve a mark in Mark Band 1, learners needed to clearly show evidence of the role of plants and animals within the food chain, society and the environment. To climb out of Mark Band 1 and into 2 and 3, they had to extend and personalise their comments or observations in some manner.

Although it is not necessary to organise the assignment so that it follows a linear progression through the Unit's Learning Objectives, it is important that both the institution's assessor and the Edexcel moderator are clear as to where each Learning Objective is being covered. The more transparent the Learning Objective coverage the better the chance that the learner will receive the grade that they are entitled to.

Double coverage, where a section of the assignment is perceived as covering two Learning Objectives and as such may struggle to be credited twice.

A clear but concise conclusion saves the assignment from coming to an abrupt end and will bring together the most prominent aspects of the assignment.

Report on individual Learning Outcomes

LO 1.1

Learners need to clearly show evidence of the key facets of the assessment language of each Learning Objective. As suggested earlier, in this Learning Objective, learners must have covered plants and animals, a food chain, society and the environment.

LO 1.2

It does say potential hazards and learners must, especially in Mark Band 2 and 3, be prepared to use research to present information which satisfies the higher order wording.

LO 2.1

Please take note of the Key words in each Mark Band. Mark Band 1 "Adequately identifies"; Mark Band 2, "Identifies in detail"; and Mark Band 3 "Comprehensively identifies" all must be adhered to.

LO 3.1

Whichever direction the assignment follows in must cover both "natural" and "human influenced" land.

LO 3.2

The key word in this Learning Objective is "Location". An annotated Ordnance Survey Map (or any kind of map) early on in the project would be very useful and gain full credit.

LO 4.4

Not only are the skills associated with the surveying of the environment a running theme throughout this diploma but so is the land use, activities and issues associated with the surveys and it is important that students recognise this relationship

Administration

The administration of the assignment needs to be clear and complete for each learner including the Record Sheet and the Diploma Learner Observation Record.

If learners number pages and reference them at the beginning of the assignment, on the Record Sheet, the assignment is a lot easier to both mark and moderate.

Detailed annotation by the teacher/facilitator makes the moderation exercise far easier and has to be to the benefit of the learner.

Unit 3: Introduction to Working in the Environmental and Land-based Sector

The work for this unit presented for moderating was on the whole excellent. This was the result of clear assignment briefs outlining the tasks in user friendly manner, which in turn were clearly linked to the grading criteria. In addition, there was clear guidance and support by tutors.

However, whilst it is acknowledged that a certain element of teacher led content is important, it is equally important to ensure that throughout the assignment, learners are aware that independent thinking and evaluation is used to personalise assignment work.

Evidence gathering must be from a variety of sources to ensure the learner is fully aware of all opportunities, provision and qualifications within their chosen specialism, and must not be limited to one institutions provision, which may result in biased conclusions.

Learners should be encouraged to investigate careers outside the limits of their own interests, thus allowing for a thorough investigation into all land based careers, qualifications and supporting organisations.

Care must be exercised when using the internet for research purposes, some information was from sources in the USA, which are not appropriate to the UK industry.

Centres however ensured that the guidance was relevant to the chosen area of study, work submitted by learners was detailed and supported with clear diagrams, illustrations and evidence of work experience. The latter was approached by centres in a supportive and thorough manner, which resulted in some excellent grades.

In most cases feedback to learners was constructive and highlighted areas of success and areas for improvement, thus allowing learners to develop their assignment writing and research skills.

General Observations

Learners are required to produce a report focussing on their chosen career within the land based industry. Some listed rather than elaborated in most sections as there appeared to be little encouragement to provide detail. Descriptions of work experience, job applications and risk assessments all allowed for the learner to provide relevant information in response to the task that was set.

Marks were lost where learners were not detailed enough with their answers. For example to guarantee marks learners should try provide additional detail on risk assessments and the reason why these are completed for each practical job.

Some learners provided lists of tasks and qualifications centred around their college's prospectus, rather than a broad overview of national. It is felt that the learners were not encouraged to broaden their horizons in contacting supporting organisations to gain an insight into the tasks and qualifications available in the land based sector. Organisations such as LANTRA have a detailed table which would allow learners to fully research their chosen specialism.

The use of handouts to stimulate learners discussion should be used in such a manner that the learner elaborates and evaluates if the marks are to be awarded outside the boundaries of mark band 1.

Grade Boundaries

Level 1 Unit 2: Environmental and Land-based Production, Systems and Services

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	75	64	47	30
Points Score	8	6	4	2

Level 1 Unit 3: Introduction to Working in the Environmental and Land-based Sector

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	75	65	48	31
Points Score	4	3	2	1

Notes

Maximum Mark (raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme or mark grids.

Raw boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a learner to qualify for a given grade.

Please note: Principal Learning qualifications are new qualifications, and grade boundaries for Controlled Assessment units should not be considered as stable. These grade boundaries may differ from series to series.

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