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Examiners' Report June 2010

Principal Learning
Environmental and Land-based Studies
ES306 Plants and Animals - Safe Working Practices

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Level 3 Principal Learning in Environmental and Land-based Studies

Unit 6: Plants and Animals - Safe Working Practices and Relevant Legislation

Introduction

This was the second series for this paper and there was a very small entry. Hence most of the comments made will be directed at the performance and future direction of the paper rather than concentrating too much on how learners performed in this series.

As a work-related subject with a strong applied approach, this means that the external examination will always be one in which we will seek to put the learners in these types of situations and ask them to respond to these. This will mean that it will be essential that centres stress to learners the need to read the stimulus information carefully before they answer questions and then be prepared to use the information within their responses. Failure to do this will severely restrict the amount of credit that learners can get for their responses. Material that is of a generic 'learnt' nature will only gain limited credit to ensure that the 'applied' part of the assessment has the importance it deserves. Another aspect of this applied approach will be for learners to be able to link health and safety issues to their own work-based experience or study of actual organisations. Although this did not form part of this assessment, it is likely to form a part of some future series.

Deliverers should ensure that learners are aware of the requirements of the full range of command words that might be used at this level. The paper will tend to have more complex requirements on the longer questions, with the combination of these and the applied nature producing the stretch at the top end of the ability range.

In most cases the questions that require shorter responses will be 'point marked' and the longer ones will operate with 'levels of response' mark schemes. In the latter, the necessity to consider the points in the previous paragraphs will be vital. These mark schemes seek to reward learners that can show their ability to use higher level skills in their responses - not just offer more points at the same level. Hence it will be their ability to both apply their responses and offer a correct interpretation of the command words that will allow them to rise to the top levels of the mark scheme. Learners who produce material that is of a generic nature will usually be limited to Level 1 as a key requirement of Level 2 will be to apply their learning.

Deliverers should also ensure that all the parts of the 'What you need to learn' has been covered before learners are entered for the external assessment.

Report on individual questions

The whole paper was set in the scenario of Ridgend Farm, a dairy farm. This appeared to be accessible to the learners and they were able to complete the paper in the time available.

Question 1(a)

Most learners were able to identify two types of PPE that might be used on a dairy farm. Often this, quite rightly, was based around the picture shown. Explanation was usually sound, relating to specific activities that might be expected to be carried out. As an applied paper this will always be a key part of responding well to questions

Question 1(b)

This proved to be unexpectedly challenging to learners as many of them did not interpret the term 'environment' well and simply suggested how animals on the farm might be at risk. This is rather contrary to the aims of a farm such as this so was rather self limiting in credit terms. A few responses did note the difficulties or dangers of slurry disposal, but overall performance on a relatively straightforward question was disappointing.

Question 1(c)

Most learners were aware of the basic 'policing' role of the HSE with regard to legislation, although this was as far as knowledge went at times. This was a purely generic knowledge based question and responses tended to be rather superficial.

Question 1(d)

On setting external assessments in this work based diploma, it will be assumed that learners have experienced actual organisations and can relate their learning to them. This will always be done in very broad terms - as in this question - but centres should be aware of the need to prepare learners for questions of this type. Some learners answered at too generic a level to get out of level 1, merely reinterpreting the given information and stating how it might, in theory, help solve problems related specifically to the staffing measures given. For full credit this needs to be brought into the full context of the question, referring to the operations as a whole and, of course, placing it in an organisational context.

Question 2(a)

There was some confusion between the information required for part (b) on tracking and the legislation that affected health in transport. The latter was not well known and although some responses did address the topic directly and were able to suggest that conditions and feeding times would have to be suitable, rather more outlined how their health could be tracked from one place to another. Learners should ensure that they are clear about the distinction between the legislation for these areas.

Question 2(b)

Tracking procedures were generally well known on this response, together with a sound awareness of auditing procedures. Learners made a sound attempt in general to link their knowledge to the stimulus, showing sound understanding of the link between the procedures and DEFRA. Reference was made to both the procedures that mean that cattle are tracked from birth and those that ensure that this continues when they are being moved.

Question 2(c)

Most learners had a basic understanding of the implications of a disease outbreak, although some did restrict themselves by considering only the implications to the farm. The latter were generally well outlined, with consideration of temporary farm closure, loss of income etc. This did tend to be restricted to economic implications, however, and it was the learners who took the broader view who succeeded in dealing with the social implications more successfully, with the influence on employment and the loss of income to the rural community as a whole knock on effects on shops etc. responses could have been extended even further in a question such as this, by dealing with national issues - the impacts upon imports/exports etc. use of specific industry knowledge - possibly case studies - would greatly enhance the quality of responses in broad questions of this type.

Question 2(d)

Responses to this question were generally a little disappointing as they tended to be rather narrow. Most learners had some idea of what HACCP involved and conveyed this correctly, but in an applied question such as this that limits learners to a level 1 response. In keeping with the diploma ethos, learners will be required to apply their learning to unknown scenario, so rather than just saying that there will be control points where problems can be nullified, possible control points from the information given about the farm should be identified and possible actions suggested. It is the application of their knowledge that is the key to the upper mark bands. A similar approach was required for the food safety legislation, although learner knowledge of this was less obvious anyway - this was a pity as in reality it is more straightforward to understand and use.

Grade Boundaries

Level 3 Unit 6: Plants and Animals- Safe Working Practices and Relevant Legislation

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	42	37	32	27	22	17
Points Score	14	12	10	8	6	4	2

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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