

# Examiners' Report

## January 2010

Principal Learning

### Environmental and Land-based Studies ES101 The Natural Environment

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January 2010

Publications Code DP022781

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# Level 1 Principal Learning in Environmental and Land-based Studies

## Unit 1: The Natural Environment

### Introduction

This was the first series for this paper and there was a very small entry.

This report includes some observations on how candidates performed in the examination paper and some references to its future direction.

Because the Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies is a work-related subject and has a strong applied approach, this means that the external examination will always be one in which we will seek to put the candidates into scenarios where they will be asked to respond to practical situations they have experienced. This will mean that it will be essential that centres stress to candidates the need to read the stimulus information carefully before they answer questions and then be prepared to use the information within their responses.

Consortiums and individual centres should ensure that candidates are aware of the requirements of the full range of command words that might be used at this level. Although the paper will have simple command words such as list, state and identify there will be questions, particularly the longer ones, where key words such as 'describe' and 'explain' should suggest to the candidate that more detail is required in their answer.

In the Foundation papers the questions will be 'point marked' and it would be valuable if candidates could practice how to respond to this kind of question.

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

In order to establish differentiation, the style of the paper became more difficult as the candidate worked through the questions.

This paper was based around a freshwater aquatic habitat as per the specification. It was accessible to the candidates and they were able to complete the paper in the time available.

Consortiums and individual centres should be aware that any one of the habitats in the specification, e.g. common terrestrial habitats (lowland, upland, woodland, urban); common freshwater aquatic habitats; common saltwater habitats, could be chosen as the vehicle on which to base the examination paper.

With the applied nature of the Diploma being one of its major constructs it is very important that candidates should experience the full variety of natural environments in the specification and be familiar with the character of, and the species which inhabit, those natural environments.

The applied nature of the Diploma necessitates candidates having practical experience of collecting data in the field which they can then use in their examination responses.

## Report on individual questions

### Question 1

All sections of Question 1 were structured to bring the candidate gently into the focus of the exam paper i.e. a freshwater aquatic habitat, and generally speaking the candidates recognised what was being asked of them.

Marks were lost on Question 1 because the candidates were not precise enough with their answers. To guarantee marks candidates should try to use specific rather than generic examples of plants, insects, birds and animals e.g. "buttercups" rather than "flowers", "badgers" rather than "animals" and "robins" rather than "birds".

The photograph in this question was underused as a valuable resource. It is important that candidates follow the command words, and the questions instructions, properly e.g. if it says "Using Figure 1" then it is expected the candidate uses Figure 1 to answer the question.

### Question 2

The style of this paper was to make the questions progressively harder in order to facilitate differentiation so this question was slightly more challenging than Question 1.

It was vital that the candidates read the stimulus information before they answered the questions. On occasions in Question 2 candidates were not thoroughly conversant with the stimulus information and responded with inaccurate answers as a result.

Some candidates misread the table in Question 2. Centres should expect to find tables, graphs, diagrams, photographs etc. throughout this examination paper and prepare candidates for such eventualities. It is vital that candidates familiarise themselves with these methods of presentation otherwise, as happened in this question, their answers will be applied incorrectly and lose marks. Candidates should be reminded of the integration of their Functional Skills across the Diploma.

A number of candidates answered questions very briefly and it is important that they should take notice of how many marks are allocated to the question and respond appropriately.

In addition, the number of lines given for the candidate to write their answer should suggest to the candidate that a more detailed answer is required other than just simple words and phrases.

### Question 3

This section of the paper focused on environmental surveys.

Generally, Question 3 was not answered well because candidates appeared quite limited in their knowledge of the large variety of Information Technology and Digital and traditional equipment that is available in order to collect, record and present the data that is necessary for them to understand and offer valid conclusions about the natural environment.

It is also important that candidates are familiar with the many techniques and strategies necessary to accurately collect valid data “in the field” and to be able to logically describe the processes that have to be implemented in order to gather such precise data. For example detailed knowledge about basic weather apparatus and the way in which it works was lacking in the answers to the appropriate sections in this question.

### Question 4

This question was challenging, in keeping with the progressive difficulty of the paper to initialise differentiation. Candidates should have been prepared to offer higher order skills above simple description, if they were to be successful.

The use of the word “Explain” should suggest to the candidates that more detailed answers are needed if they are to achieve well.

It would be good practice to use numerous examples in an answer to prove a point and if these were from personal experience they would receive appropriate credit.

Many of the answers to the question were not precise enough to deserve high marks because candidates did not make the move from description to explanation and how the landowner intended to use the information, referred to earlier in the paper, in order to make decisions that his livelihood depended on.

This progression from identification of the character of a habitat, to the collection of accurate empirical data and objective evidence and then the application of such information to make a successful decision is of fundamental importance in this Diploma and is a process that candidates should be able to recognise.





# Statistics

## Level 1 Unit 1: The Natural Environment

	Max. Mark	A*	A	B
Raw boundary mark	40	31	23	15
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.





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Order Code DP022781 January 2010

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