

Examiners' Report

January 2010

Principal Learning

Environmental and Land-based Studies ES306 Plants and Animals

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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 first series for this paper and there was a very small entry. Hence, most comments will be directed at the performance and future direction of the paper, rather than concentrating too much on how candidates 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 candidates in these types of situations and ask them to respond to these. 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. Failure to do this will severely restrict the amount of credit that candidates 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 candidates 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 candidates 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 this first paper the requirements of 'discuss' in Q1c and 'evaluate' in Q3a were rarely met.

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

Report on individual questions

The whole paper was set in the scenario of Trialgro, an agricultural research company. This appeared to be accessible to the candidates and they were able to complete the paper in the time available.

Question 1

(a) Explain the role of QICs in helping to control the spread of pests and diseases

Most candidates appeared to understand the basic principle of QICs, although there was some confusion with plant passports. Explanations of the role were sometimes rather generic, although a few at the top end did relate specific characteristics, such as the identification of symptoms of disease, with the mechanism of identification/isolation etc that would enable control to take place.

(b) Explain the benefits of having legal controls on plant quality

Most responses tended to be rather narrow, considering it only as an extension of the previous question rather than in a broader context. The national/international nature of the possible problems caused by uninhibited transfer of organic material should be an essential part of consideration for delivering this unit. The social and economic effects on individual units of production are also important. Explanation was rather limited, being statements of what might happen if it did not occur in a rather limited context.

(c) Discuss the role of plant import procedures in ensuring that these imported plants from the Netherlands are pest and disease free.

Candidates appeared to be well aware of the variety of methods that were available for control, with requirements for border checks, import/export paperwork and plant passports all being considered. Marks were limited by the lack of consideration of what their role was - i.e. how they operated. This was the key to the upper levels of the mark scheme here. Many seemed content with simply stating what the procedures were without demonstrating how they controlled. There were occasional sound responses discussing the role of individual procedures such as quarantine, but this was the exception.

(d) Explain how Trialgro would conduct a risk assessment to try to minimise the possible danger to the environment.

Somewhat surprisingly, there was considerable confusion as to what a risk assessment was and this question showed disappointing performance overall. Many candidates explained how a 'trials' process would work - often very well - but this would only be a part of the 'minimising risk' element of the risk assessment so there was limited credit available. There was also some confusion with HAACP.

Question 2

(a) *Explain why Trialgro needs to carry out this procedure.*

Most candidates had a basic understanding of the need for Trialgro's actions but responded at a rather generic level. There were some good responses that used the stimulus well and showed clear application of learning, with reference to the need to clear other crops 'as the farm may not know whether they are infected' and included comments on symptoms not showing etc.

(b) *Identify three hazards to farm workers in the operation of Trialgro's farm. For each hazard explain how the risks to personnel could be minimised.*

Candidate performance on this question was very pleasing, with correct identification of at least two hazards by all candidates and some good application of knowledge and understanding in the rest of the response. Occasional problems were the lack of appreciation that the question referred to hazards to personnel and a tendency in a few candidate to explain - often very well, especially for the working time issue - why it would be such a problem rather than explain how the risks could be minimised.

Question 3

(a) *Evaluate the impacts these accidents might have on the farm's operation.*

Most candidates were able to describe some of the immediate impacts that the accidents might have but only a small proportion really took this through to consider the farm's operation. Those that did were often quite thoughtful about it, with sound comment on possible staffing issues due to the accident to the manager and with cost issues due to damage to equipment. There was also consideration of the effects of the number of accidents might have on the farm's reputation, although this was rarely explicit in how it might transfer itself into operational issues. Candidates should be reminded to consider how realistic their responses are in terms of the stimulus given at times. The result of 'minor tractor collisions' was sometimes seen to lead to all tractors being unusable for a length of time and, whilst there is an element of truth in this, it would be advisable for reality checks to be an important part of subduing the young, often fertile, minds of learners!

(b) *With reference to specific legislation, explain how Trialgro's actions are following legislation to minimise the risk of future accidents.*

A rather disappointing response overall here, with most candidates ignoring the requirement to refer to legislation. Most took the information that the stimulus provided and stated how it might make the farm a safer place. Whilst this was pleasing to see, some applied use of the stimulus material, the need to refer to legislation limited the marks that could be gained for 'half the answer'. There is a requirement in the WYNTL section of this unit to have knowledge of HASAWA and the assumption that learners will have probably come across others in work environments as indicated by the need to have considered 'current legislation'. There was some occasional reference to the general requirement under HASAWA for the employers to be responsible for employee safety and to protect them from risk, but this was the exception rather than the rule.

Statistics

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	18
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.

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