**CCEA GCSE Agriculture and Land USe
Summer Series 2016**

Chief Examiner's Report

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culture
and
land use

Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in Agriculture and Land Use for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk

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GCSE AGRICULTURE AND LAND USE

Chief Examiner's Report

The number of pupils completing this course has increased from 2015 and with more new centres starting this year the uptake of GCSE Agriculture and Land Use should continue to rise.

It is pleasing to report that the papers in the Summer 2016 series provided further evidence of good quality learning and teaching of the CCEA GCSE Agriculture and Land Use course. The level of knowledge and thinking skills shown in answers, particularly the extended writing questions, was commendable throughout and highlights the enthusiasm for the specification.

The A* - C achievement levels overall are down slightly but are still relatively similar to 2015.

Both papers were answered well by the majority of candidates and the actual marks achieved were very similar for Units 2 and 3 when compared with 2015. However the marks were lower for Unit 1 due to a more challenging paper, particularly the extended writing questions. These may not have been deemed as 'interesting' by candidates and so may not have been revised as thoroughly as other topics in the specification for Unit 1.

For both exam units, particularly Unit 2, the candidates completed the extended questions well. Several highlighted the key words in the question and planned their extended writing question in the space before attempting to answer it; this worked well and should be encouraged in the future as many candidates scored in the top band in these questions.

The language used in the questions was deemed to be appropriate as most candidates attempted all questions and seemed to have enough time to complete the papers.

Assessment Unit 1   Soils, Crops and Habitats

Overall the marks were less compared with 2015.

Q1   Part (a) was a well answered opening question with most candidates achieving two out of three marks as many confused 'Timothy' and 'Perennial Ryegrass'. Part (b)(i) was answered well, but in Part (ii) few candidates provided a suitable suggestion.

Q2   The question was answered very well with some excellent reasons given in Part (d) (ii).

Q3   In Part (a) candidates gave partial definitions, which could not be fully credited with two marks. The rest of the question was answered well except for Part (c)(i); many candidates struggled with giving specific adaptations of bluebells and not just any flower.

Q4   This question was answered well probably due to the overlap with GCSE Science.

Q5   In Part (a) most candidates achieved at least one out of two marks. Part (b)(i) caught many candidates out with relatively few pupils getting full marks. Candidates did well in Part (ii) and (iii).

Q6   The extended writing question was quite topical and many candidates were able to correctly describe many of the changes in our weather patterns and how this would affect crop production in Northern Ireland. However, for the last bullet point many candidates gave answers which would 'increase' rather than 'decrease' the risk of flooding downstream. This part of the question proved quite difficult to obtain high marks in.

Q7   The whole question was generally very well answered.

Q8   Part (a) was the most challenging question in the paper as candidates seemed to confuse fertilisation with pollination, or were just confused on the order of the fertilisation process, even with the aid of the diagram. Part (b) and (c) were answered well except for several candidates thinking that dandelions are wind pollinated.

Q9   Candidates either did well in this question or else they described other soil tests which were not relevant to the question.

Assessment Unit 2   Animals on the Land

Overall the marks were very similar to 2015.

Q1   The question was answered well.

Q2   All parts were answered well. In Part (b)(ii) candidates would be encouraged to be more specific when describing symptoms of mastitis.

Q3   All parts were well answered.

Q4   In Part (a)(i), many candidates filled in the flowchart incorrectly but most were able to answer the rest of the question.

Q5   Most candidates were not able to label the 'chalazae' part of the egg in Part (a). In Part (b)(ii) candidates thought light was important to egg incubation. The rest of the question was answered very well but in Part (c) candidates should have used data from the graph to support their answers.

Q6   Part (a) and (b) were well answered well, as was Part (c) which was the extended writing task. This was possibly due to the interesting and topical nature of the question.

Q7   The whole question was again answered very well.

Q8   This question proved to be the most challenging for the candidates but nearly all attempted the question. They struggled in listing the main requirements of being in a scheme and the advantages of taking part.

Assessment Unit 3   Contemporary Issues in Agriculture and Land Use

Principal Moderator's Report

Controlled Assessment

This year saw the second submission of the controlled assessment element of the GCSE Agriculture and Land Use which was worth 60% of the overall course. All fifteen centres completed the new eCRS (eCandidate Record Sheets) online with virtually no mistakes.

The Controlled Asessment element has improved both in quality of work from pupils and also in the marking of work from teachers. It was evident that many centres had prepared their candidates well prior to submitting the controlled assessment tasks with the help of the CCEA pro-forma checklist and this accounted for the large majority of the material submitted being within tolerance.

Teachers are to be commended for their accuracy and consistency in their marking. The vast majority of centres understood the requirements of the new assessment components and it was noticeable that those centres who had availed of the portfolio clinics held earlier on in the year,

had much less discrepancy in the marks awarded compared to other centres. There was good evidence of internal standardisation throughout the vast majority of centres but it was lacking for some. Overall two centres were adjusted down in marks and one new centre was adjusted up.

The team of moderators have reported back the following:

Task 1

Most centres chose to investigate how the growing media or organic farming affected plant growth tasks. Some of the practical tasks were very well designed, incorporating two factors (for example different soil types, different types of plants grown, different fertilisers), measured two variables (for example height and mass) and allowed the candidates to complete repeats. This provided the candidates with the opportunity to fully expand their analysis and conclusions. Other centre tasks were more restrictive. In some reports plans were written as a narrative rather than laid out as a proper step by step scientific method. Candidates should be encouraged to structure a step by step method to help prevent key steps being omitted, and include justification of the steps and methods they are going to use. Overall the work was completed to a high standard. Candidates should also be encouraged to design their own tables; for example where a class pool of results are placed on the board, the units, averaging or calculation parts could be left for each pupil to complete. The results then could be recorded on their own spreadsheet to allow more differentiation.

Task 2

Most centres chose to investigate the food labelling or animal breeding tasks. The research projects were generally well completed and it was interesting to see the varied approaches taken. Some centres had generated very useful primary data, for example from home farms, developed questionnaires and surveys for neighbours/consumers or collected river water samples to assess water quality. Other centres relied heavily on secondary data and this greatly limited the candidates' reports as they could not expand on the topic with appropriate tables and graphs, analysis or conclusions. Candidates should be encouraged to obtain their own primary data, and use the opportunities provided such as farm visits to collect information through the use of surveys and questionnaires, rather than be passive observers. In the planning stage candidates often refer to generic sources of secondary information for example internet. They should provide more detail regarding secondary sources, like identifying specific websites and books that they are going to use for their research. Similarities between plans, data collection, primary and secondary sources used and results were very evident amongst the candidates in some centres. This is understandable in a 'whole class' approach to the task. However candidates should try to individualise their work even within the planning stages and this should be clearly demonstrated through their analysis, conclusions and evaluation if they are to achieve high marks.

General Administration

Generally the administration was very good with all centres placing candidates in rank order, with candidate and centre numbers clearly displayed on cover sheets in most work sets. There was evidence that candidates had followed the CCEA mark scheme, and teacher annotations also reflected the use of the proforma. This helped guide the candidates through the tasks and allowed them to score in most areas of the task. Most centres demonstrated clear labelling of tables and graphs with candidates referring to them within their written text. The candidates and centres who scored the highest marks expanded on their own research. Overall the achievement levels were very similar to 2015 for the Controlled Assessment Task.

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