

CCEA GCSE Agriculture and Land Use
Summer Series 2017

Chief Examiner's Report

agri
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

Contents

Assessment Unit 1: Soils, Crops and Habitats	3
Assessment Unit 2: Animals on the Land	4
Assessment Unit 3: Contemporary issues in Agriculture and Land Use	4
Contact details	7

GCSE AGRICULTURE AND LAND USE

Chief Examiner's Report

Once again the number of pupils completing this course has increased from 2016 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 2017 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 very similar to 2016.

Both papers were answered well, however marks were slightly lower in Unit 1 compared to Unit 2 particularly the extended writing questions. These extended writing questions in Unit 1 may not have been deemed as 'interesting' or as 'general farming knowledge' by candidates and so may not have been revised as thoroughly as other topics. With the extended writing questions as in previous years the students who highlighted the key words in the question and planned their extended writing question in the space before attempting to answer it did very well. The language used in the questions was deemed to be appropriate as most candidates attempted all questions and all students seemed to have enough time to complete the papers.

Assessment Unit 1 Soils, Crops and Habitats

Overall the marks were similar to 2016.

- Q1** Part (a) was answered poorly by many students only correctly identifying Holly but several students did match all of the pictures correctly. However, Part (b) was answered well but some students who answered 'acts as a fence' did not receive credit as this is not a benefit to the livestock.
- Q2** For Part (a) several students incorrectly gave the answer of 'completes its lifecycle in more than two years' and this was not given credit. The rest of the question was answered well throughout.
- Q3** This question was answered very well by the majority of students. In Part (c) several students give partially correct answers which with more explanation could have received credit. For example 'better weather' is not sufficient however 'better weather for planting' would have been appropriate.
- Q4** Part (a)(i) was poorly answered but Parts (ii) and (iii) were answered well. In Part (b) (i) several students listed many answers and students should be reminded that the first answer given in a question will be the only one which can receive credit even if subsequent answers are correct. Students cannot 'list' answers in the hope that they get a correct answer. Parts (b) and (c) were otherwise answered well.
- Q5** Several students incorrectly thought that hydroponics involved growing plants in 'manure'. The rest of the question was fine. However, for Part (c)(ii) 'the amount/level of each nutrient' was not acceptable and students should be encouraged to learn 'the relative proportions/ratios of each nutrient'.
- Q6** Overall, the question was answered well. However several students still struggle with the % calculation in Part (b)(iii). Students should be encouraged to ask if their answer sounds sensible before writing it down.

- Q7** This question was the most challenging in the examination paper. However the question was answered very well by most students. Some students misunderstood the question and described 'soil tests' which was perhaps due to the learning of a previous mark scheme. Students who mentioned other methods including 'sweep nets' or 'shaking a bush' also received marks and if a valid method/answer was provided there was no reason why students could not achieve the top mark band.
- Q8** This question was well answered by nearly all candidates.
- Q9** This was another challenging question but several candidates achieved the top band. However, some candidates did not read the question carefully and described how to plant, harvest and store a crop rather than focussing on the points asked for.

Assessment Unit 2 Animals on the Land

Overall the marks were very similar to 2016 and the raw marks were slightly higher than Unit 1.

- Q1** This was answered well except for the function of the large intestine which only some students answered correctly.
- Q2** All parts were answered well in this question.
- Q3** This question was answered well by most students.
- Q4** In Question 4(a)(i) several students did not list modern technologies and missed out on marks; a 'milking parlour' is not deemed to be modern technology but a 'robotic milker' was given credit, a 'tractor' was not given credit but a 'tractor with GPS' was given credit. In Part (ii) many students did not describe how the technology worked well enough in detail to receive any credit.
- Q5** Part (a) was answered well, but in Part (b)(i) several students mixed up their calculations. They did still receive an 'addition' ecf mark. Part (c) was not answered well with most students only receiving one mark in each part. Parts (ii) and (iii) were answered well.
- Q6** This nine mark extended writing question was answered well by most candidates.
- Q7** This question was answered well throughout.
- Q8** This question was answered well throughout.
- Q9** This question proved to be the most challenging for the candidates but nearly all attempted the question. Students struggled to properly list the main features of an intensive unit and with providing enough detail when writing about advantages and disadvantages of the chosen system. However many students did do very well in this question.

Principal Moderator's Report

Assessment Unit 3 Contemporary Issues in Agriculture and Land Use

Controlled Assessment

This year saw the third submission of the controlled assessment element of the GCSE Agriculture and Land Use specification from centres. Again it was evident that many centres had prepared their students very well prior to submitting the controlled assessment tasks and this accounted for the large majority of the material submitted being well within tolerance.

Teachers are to be commended for their accuracy and consistency in their marking with the vast majority of centres accurately applying the marking criteria. However there was a tendency for candidates to ignore the word limit suggested for each task, and while candidates are not penalised for being in excess or deficit of the word guidelines they should be encouraged to adhere closely to it, with an excess of 10% suggested. Candidates should include an appendices section in any additional material they wish to submit. This material is not included in the word count.

Task 1

Of the available topics for the Practical Investigation (Task 1), the most popular was the analysis of soil with recommendations to grow a range of crops followed by the investigation into the nutritional value of grass. Few candidates selected the habitat investigation.

Most candidates conducted an appropriate range soil analyses. However some candidates' introductions to this topic, in the planning section, were excessively long, lacked a clear focus and hypothesis hence reducing the marks that could be awarded for this section. Some candidates did not address the suitability of the soil type analysed for a range of crops. This in turn limited the marks that could be awarded.

There was generally good agreement of the moderators with the mark bands awarded to the various sections of the task. However there was some evidence of awarding marks too leniently in some centres. But overall, centre marking was appropriate for all of the assessment criteria bands.

Task 2

For the Research Project (Task 2), the investigation into health and safety and the use of risk assessments, and the investigation into farm diversification proved equally popular. The majority of centres applied the assessment criteria very well to the content of the research projects with a full range of marks being awarded. As on previous occasions, many candidates failed to provide any justification for their research methods and this reduced the marks that could be awarded. This is clearly outlined in the Data Collection Section of Task 2. It was encouraging to see the effort that many students went to in order to obtain primary data. However, several candidates used inappropriate graphical forms to convey data, which reduced the overall mark awarded in this section. Candidates should be encouraged to present different data gathered using a range of appropriate graphical forms rather than using a range of graphical forms to present the same data. There was a tendency for the conclusion and evaluation sections to be generously marked in some centres. Candidates needed to give a detailed description of their review of research and produce conclusions linked to their findings to achieve Band 4, but many candidates failed to give enough detail in order to access this band. The level of detail required for these and other sections of the task is clearly outlined in the Guidance for marking the controlled assessment.

General Administration

The majority of candidates submitted their controlled assessment tasks in the suggested formats outlined in the Specification Booklet. This helps the moderation team to see more clearly where marks have been awarded. Those that do not are more difficult to read and demonstrate the justification of marks awarded. Candidates should be encouraged to include a contents page of their Task submissions. The quality of labeling of tables and graphs continues to vary greatly across centres. Some candidates demonstrated very clear labeling of tables and graphs and referring to them within their written text. A lack of labels and keys to graphs significantly reduced the marks that can be awarded in this section to candidates' work.

Some candidates presented their submissions in a power point format. These candidates were not penalised in their marks but candidates should be instructed to present their submissions in an appropriate written report format following the suggested structure.

It would be very helpful for moderation if teachers clearly annotate the basis of the mark band awarded to each section of both tasks, as this would assist the moderator assessment of the accuracy of marking. On a few occasions the comments made by markers in some sections did not reflect the content and the mark applied. It also aids moderation when there is clear evidence of internal standardisation. A small number of errors in centre calculations of candidates' marks were noted.

Contact details

The following information provides contact details for key staff members:

- Specification Support Officer: Nuala Tierney
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, extension: 2292, email: ntierney@ccea.org.uk)
- Officer with Subject Responsibility: Edith Finlay
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, extension: 2267, email: efinlay@ccea.org.uk)