

CCEA GCSE Agriculture and Land Use
(Summer Series) 2014

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

Contents

Assessment Unit 1: Soils, Crops and Habitats	3
Assessment Unit 2: Animals on the Land	4
Contact details	6

GCSE AGRICULTURE AND LAND USE

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Generally, the standard of answer and overall performance shown by candidates were good. The most obvious progress seen by examiners was in those questions requiring extended writing. A pleasing proportion of the candidates scored full marks in these questions by writing succinctly and using appropriate scientific terms to describe and evaluate the stimulus material. Examiners were pleased that weaker candidates, on the whole, attempted the questions requiring extended writing.

Every effort is made by examiners to provide appropriate stimulus material for each question and to use language and a layout which helps to make the question accessible. Unfortunately, many candidates do not always take the time to examine the details in the diagrams etc. closely enough and therefore struggle to answer the more demanding questions.

Other examination skills also need further development. All questions have a mark allocation clearly printed at the right-hand side of the answer lines. The answers of a significant number of candidates suggest that they take little or no notice of this. In particular, when there are two marks allocated, candidates should be aware that their answer should contain more than one word or phrase. For example in Unit 1, Question 3(c), where two marks were available, students should have realised that 'provides a habitat' is insufficient on its own as it could not be awarded even one mark. This idea should have prompted them to explain that ASSIs provide a protected habitat where good data collection can support the populations or environmentally sensitive farming practices also benefits the priority species.

The use of evidence or data to support an answer is a new emphasis in this new specification and centres have for the most part made good progress in developing this skill in their candidates. More practice should be completed on applied questions, like that of Question 8c in Unit 1.

A handful of candidates had written their names on the examination paper. This puts the integrity of the anonymous marking system at risk. Please ensure that candidates know to only use their candidate number.

Assessment Unit 1 Soils, Crops and Habitats

- Q1** Generally a well answered question.
- Q2** (a) A number of candidates implied that the quadrats should be thrown randomly, and did not explain this statement.
- (b) Many candidates gave partial definitions, which could not be credited as only one mark was available for the full definition. In Part (iii) a large number of candidates gave weak reasons so did not achieve both marks.
- (c) A number of candidates reworded the job advertisement, which was insufficient for the definition of conservation.
- Q3** Generally a well answered question. Most candidates described the lack of recovery from the graph. Part (c) lacked thorough explanation with several candidates making a statement about habitats, without explaining how being an ASSI has an impact on the habitat.

- Q4** Most candidates answered this well, though some need to learn the definition of GM crops.
- Q5** Most candidates answered this well, using the four steps (production, harvesting, preservation and storage) to structure their answer. Examiners were pleased to see that weaker candidates also attempted this question.
- Q6** A generally well answered question, though few candidates could give a benefit of composting.
- Q7** Generally a well answered questions, though some candidates forgot to use the diagram (as instructed) and answered with ‘strong scent’ which was not accepted.
- Q8** Candidates answered this well, showing a good knowledge of photosynthesis. In Part (c) many candidates described the results, with the distance from the lamp increasing – for one mark; but then described it again with the distance decreasing – which could not be awarded a second mark.
- Q9** Most candidates chose two sources of renewable energy, with wind and solar being the most popular. On the whole, candidates structured their answer using the four prompts (location, cost, efficiency and environmental impact). Many candidates seemed uncertain about the meaning of ‘efficiency’ in this context. Fewer candidates attempted this question, than Question 5, which may be due to its position as the final question, or they were less familiar with renewable energy.

Assessment Unit 2 Animals on the Land

- Q1** This was a well answered question by the majority of candidates. It worked well as an opening question, with a structured layout to guide candidates through the question.
- Q2**
- (a)** A number of candidates did not answer Part (a) well. Joining the correct boxed answer proved difficult for some, yet there was only one completely wrong answer.
 - (b)** In general, candidates answered this section satisfactorily.
 - (c)** A significant number of candidates selected ‘lameness’ and ‘creams’ for the last two missing words, although some students did get all four choices correct.
- Q3** Generally a well answered question. The vast majority of candidates scored full marks in Part (a), and most got Parts (b) and (c)(i). Explanations in Part (c)(ii) separated out stronger and weaker candidates as some just made statements of where improvements could be made without fully explaining them.
- Q4** The majority of candidates answered this question well, however some did not get all three marks for Part (c).
- Q5** In general Part (a)(i) was not well done despite the clear diagram of the cow's digestive system provided. Part (a) (ii) was also not well done generally, although it did require answers to be correctly placed into the table provided. Surprisingly Part (b) answers were often just placed the wrong way around. Part (c) was answered satisfactorily. Some candidates did manage to get full marks. Overall this may indicate that digestion/nutrition is a more difficult topic for candidates.

- Q6** A wide range of answers was offered, with some excellent answers. Examiners were pleased that weaker candidates did attempt the question, with some just achieving a band one score.
- Q7** The majority of candidates scored well on the structured elements, but only a minority were able to properly explain why the ration was for production.
- Q8** Candidates answered this quite well overall with the stronger candidates offering clearly written evaluations of good diversification examples, with benefits to both farmers and consumers. Again weaker candidates did attempt to answer the question, but often with fewer examples and less well explained benefits.

Contact details

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