

Examiner's Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2012

TDIP

Level 2 Principal Learning
in Environmental and
Land-Based Studies

Plants & Animals-Role (ES205_01)

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Unit 5: Plants and animals and their role in society

Introduction

This is a work-related subject with a strong applied approach, and the external examination will seek to assess candidates in similar situations. It is therefore important that centres stress the need for candidates to read the stimulus information carefully before they answer questions and then be prepared to use the information within their responses. In order to ensure that the 'applied' part of the assessment has prominence, 'generic' material will only gain limited credit compared to specific, detailed, case study material.

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 simpler command words at the beginning with an incline of difficulty to more challenging requirements towards the end of the paper.

In most cases the questions that require shorter responses will be 'point marked' and the longer ones will be 'levels marked'. For the latter, centres need to fully and critically use all the information in the exam paper, including the resources and details within the question stem. Levels marking rewards candidates who can show their ability to use higher level skills in their responses – not just offer more points at the same level. It will be the 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. This will require candidates to plan their answers before writing. 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 appeared to be accessible to the candidates and they were able to complete the paper in the time available. The incline of difficulty through the exam worked well. There was a "starter" item for each question which helped structure and direct candidates' responses. Also there was an attempt to provide a sequence through the questions leading the candidate through a series of ELBS processes. This year the levels marked questions worked better – nearly all candidates made a decent attempt at answering but it was much clearer how to discriminate between candidates, and as a result the mark scheme was much less open to interpretation.

Question 1

This question was intended as a simple introduction to the exam paper that was accessible to all. It met its objective with over 90% of candidates scoring on the first two items. However the third item which required specific knowledge only 55% scored. It is an area deliverers can focus on as ways of classifying plants and animals is one of the clearest, smallest (in terms of content) and least adaptable (from the examiner's point of view) of the LOs.

Question 2 (a)

This was a straightforward skills requirement and candidates responded well to it with 100% obtaining full marks. .

Question 2 (b)

There was evidence that candidates had better knowledge than previous years, and that they were using that knowledge constructively to answer the question – it was pleasing to note candidates taking a number of different routes and gaining merit – 55% gained more than half marks. Few paid careful attention to the wording of the question – the key word was "value" - and therefore only 13% obtained full marks.

Question 3 (a)

This was a good question in that it was unambiguous, encouraging solid answers, as a result marking was straightforward. Candidates answered fully. Some 72% scored half or more marks.

Question 3 (b)

This was very similar to 3a - unambiguous, encouraging solid, full answers, marking straightforward. However it is more demanding requiring some evaluation and this is reflected in poorer marks – 56% scoring less than half marks and none scoring a maximum 4.

Question 4 (a) (b)

There was some concern that this question would not be accessible because candidates had to grasp different aspects of the resource and hold those in mind while addressing the question. The purpose was to get candidates to think in an exam situation and not respond automatically. Mostly it worked well – answers were variable but candidates grasped the purpose of the question and there were some good quality full mark answers, but some 15% scored 0, which does reflect some lack of accessibility. Interestingly the answers regarding “quality” were better than the answers regarding “quantity”, which was not expected.

Question 5

The comments above for q.4 can be repeated here – a concern regarding accessibility (10% failed to score), variable but merit worthy answers, some good quality answers. However 62% scored less than half marks. It was straightforward for candidates to score 2 marks stating what the groups stood for but they weak on how they influenced each other. The candidates needed some structure to help them start and then direct them to the development.

Question 6 (a) i

This was a good starter question. The resource was complex but understood – 92% were correct without it being a giveaway mark.

Question 6 (a) ii

This question worked well – nearly all candidates made a full attempt at answering the question, but it discriminated well based on quality. Level 3 answers were clearly high quality, and few candidates managed to achieve this. Many potentially good answers lost marks because candidates did not read the question properly, thinking it referred only to 6(a)i rather than to all of the groups.

Question 6 (b)

Similar comments to 6aii above – a good question that encouraged candidates to produce but also discriminated well, reflected in the fact that it was straightforward to identify the levels in the candidates' work and therefore to mark. Again potentially good answers were undermined by no reading the question carefully – it referred only to the environment and not economic or social factors.

Question 6 (c)

37% scored 0 which was disappointing, and even where candidates had scored few were able to develop the answer to higher marks. This is somewhat surprising considering that not only is it clearly part of the specification, but it is an integral part of most of the other units, so is almost bound to be covered somewhere. The question is straightforward and being 'description' is low order.

Question 6 (d)

This was a good accessible question that all candidates made a good attempt at. There were many good ideas, but few candidates understand the exam technique necessary to develop an answer – broadly, any question that has 4 or more marks is going to need some kind of development (factual, technical, evaluative, discursive, complexity).

Summary

The responses to this paper were possibly the best so far. Centres had correctly entered candidates, candidates had improved in knowledge-based questions through better preparation by centres, and the quality of the coloured resource booklet allowed to candidates to both show their knowledge but also to respond in a problem-solving way. Accessibility to all levels of candidate throughout the paper was also pleasing as well as a few decent discriminators that provided a challenge to the best candidates.

Marks were needlessly thrown away when clearly candidates had the ability to do better.

This was particularly true for 3b, 4b, and 6c.

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