

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

Environment

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
included in this report**

Managing Environmental Resources – Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	10
Pre appeal	10
Post appeal	10

Number of entries in 2002	18
Pre appeal	18
Post appeal	18

General comments re entry numbers

The small number of entries continues to be disappointing.

Nevertheless, 18 candidates in 2002 represents an increase of 80% over 2001 and 50% over 2000.

The number of presenting centres had increased from two in 2001 and three in 2002 to five in 2002. All five centres were from the FE sector: one was a centre that had not presented for this course before; three had presented once before, and one had presented on both previous occasions. One centre presented candidates from a local school, having delivered the course in a partnership arrangement with the school.

General comments

The overall ability of the candidate group was generally satisfactory.

There was some evidence to suggest that most candidates were better prepared for the paper than the previous group. It is still difficult for centres to decide whether candidates should be presented at Intermediate 2 and Higher. It was the judgement of the markers that it would have been more beneficial for two of the candidates if they had been presented at Intermediate 2 rather than at Higher.

However, in a sample of only eighteen candidates, it is difficult to make valid generalisations.

Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

	Mark (out of 110)	%
upper A	93	85
A	77	70
B	66	60
C	55	50

General commentary on grade boundaries

Notional percentage cut-offs for each grade

Question papers and their associated marking schemes are designed to be of the required standard and to meet the assessment specification for the subject/level concerned.

For National courses the examination paper(s) are set in order that a score of approximately 50% of the total marks for all components merits a grade C (based on the grade descriptions for that grade), and similarly a score of 70 % for a grade A. The lowest mark for a grade B is set by the computer software as half way between the C and A grade boundaries.

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

As for 2000 and 2001, there were no reasons to adjust the grade boundaries.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

There was a good spread of marks across the paper as a whole.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Candidates generally performed well in the six structured questions comprising Section A of the paper. The average mark for Section A was 56.7 out of 80 (70.9%); two candidates achieved over 70 out of 80.

Candidates performed best in Question 2 (ecology) – the average mark was 11.8 out of 15 (78.9%); candidates performed least well in Question 4 ((land use) but the average mark was still 7.2 out of 12 (60.2%);

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Candidates scored less well in the essay questions comprising Section B of the paper. As for 2001, candidates were asked to answer one structured essay from a choice of two and one unstructured essay from a choice of two.

The average mark for Section B as a whole was 11.2 out of 30 (37.2%). The average mark for the structured essays was 6.6 out of 15 (44%) and the average mark for the unstructured essays was 4.6 out of 15 (31.7%). However, it should be pointed out that the latter figure incorporates four scores of 0 out of 15 where candidates did not attempt the question.

Generally, candidates did not perform well in the essay questions and there appears to be two reasons for this:

- poor essay writing skills;
- insufficient time left for the essay questions.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

The following advice is offered as a result of analyses of candidates' responses in 2002 in particular and the three diets held so far.

- Practice in writing both structured and unstructured essays should be developed during the course.
- Practice in answering questions within a time limit should be developed during the course

The following recommendation relates to Diets 2000 and 2001 (but not particularly to Diet 2002).

- If candidates do not have a strong background in science, it is important to give as much support with the quantitative aspects of ecology as possible.