

0174-523 Level 2 Technical Certificate in Forestry and Arboriculture

March 2026

Chief Examiner Report

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Introduction

This document has been prepared by the Chief Examiner. It is designed to be used as a feedback tool for centres to use in order to enhance teaching and preparation for assessment. It is advised that this document be referred to when preparing to teach and then again when candidates are preparing to sit examinations for City & Guilds Technical qualifications.

This report provides general commentary on candidate performance and highlights common themes in relation to the technical aspects explored within the assessment, giving areas of strengths and weakness demonstrated by the cohort of candidates who sat the **March 2026** examination series. It will explain aspects which caused difficulty and potentially why the difficulties arose, whether it was caused by a lack of knowledge, incorrect examination technique or responses that failed to demonstrate the required depth of understanding.

The document provides commentary on the following assessment:

0174-523 – Level 2 Technical Certificate in Forestry and Arboriculture - Theory exam

Theory Exam – March 2026

Grade Boundaries and distribution

Assessment: **0174-523**

Series: **March 2026**

Below identifies the final grade boundaries for this assessment, as agreed by the awarding panel:

Total marks available	
Pass mark	17
Merit mark	23
Distinction mark	29

The approximate distribution of grades and pass rates for this assessment is now available as a single easy-to-view resource on the Technicals Resources pages of our website [Resource Hub - Technical Qualifications | City & Guilds](#) under the 'Post-results services' drop down tab.'

Chief Examiner Commentary

General Comments on Candidate Performance

Assessment component: 0174-523

Series 1 (March 2026)

This 40-question paper covering Units 202, 203, 205 and 206 was generally answered well. The question paper had a good balance of questions with varied levels of demand, and it accurately sampled the knowledge and understanding required from across the relevant units.

Candidates attempted all questions, with greater success achieved in recall questions linked to practical applications rather than those requiring more detailed understanding or knowledge of key technical terminology. There was a slightly stronger performance in some of the scientific areas in this paper than in previous versions and a generally good basic knowledge of practical requirements and roles and responsibilities for working in the industry.

Strengths and weaknesses

There was a fair range of recall knowledge and understanding shown across all units being tested. Areas of strength were basic A01 questions including recall of the roles and responsibilities within the industry, fundamental environmental knowledge, resilient tree stock, basic soil science, some aspects of plant structure and practically based tree protection and support. It was interesting to see an improvement in basic soil science knowledge.

There was a lack of specific detailed knowledge from candidates in some areas across the specification, but no discernible trend in any one subject area. Some specific weaknesses were observed in distinguishing between the components of a CV and a cover letter, confusion between the purpose of a plant passport and a phytosanitary certificate, and appropriate situations for using microinjections. The term “beating up” was poorly understood. Questions asking for benefits and reasons rather than straight recall were less well-answered.

Scenario-based questions

One of the scenarios based on diseased trees overhanging a public footpath was answered very well. The other scenario-based questions were answered generally well, except for a question on appropriate planting methods where many candidates did not go back to the wording of the scenario and answered incorrectly.

Aspects for centres to consider would include:

- Reinforcing technical terminology and definitions.
- More emphasis on biosecurity processes.
- Ensuring that candidates refer back to the scenarios of the extended response questions and check the details before responding to the questions.

Centres are encouraged to support to candidates in developing exam technique.

<https://www.cityandguilds.com/qualifications-and-apprenticeships/land-basedservices/horticulture/0174-technical-in-horticulture-and-forestry-arboriculture#tab=document>