



0174-20 Level 2 Technical Certificate in Horticulture

2022

Qualification Report

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Foreword

Results August 2022

As you will likely be aware, Ofqual has announced that grading for General Qualifications this summer will be more generous than prior to the pandemic. This is partly due to managing the impact of disruption and learning loss on learner performance and also managing fairness between learners in different years who had different methods of determining their grades. Therefore, for A levels and GCSEs, grading will seek a midway position between 2019 and 2021, meaning, in general, results will be somewhat higher than prior to the pandemic. This year, 2022, is a transitional year and outcomes and standards will likely return to pre-pandemic levels in 2023.

Similarly, for Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs), this summer will be a transitional year and Ofqual has now been clear that for VTQs “we should expect that this summer’s results will look different, despite exams and assessments taking a big step towards normality.” Ofqual has published a blog [What’s behind this summer’s VTQ results.](#)

In acknowledgement of the disruption to learning and to support fairness for all learners certificating this summer (some of whom will be competing against learners taking General Qualifications for the same progression and higher education opportunities), we will be taking loss of learning into consideration, whilst still acknowledging the need to uphold the validity of the qualifications. On this basis, we have made the decision to apply a form of ‘safety net’ through some additional ‘generosity’ to both the theory examinations and synoptic assignments within our Technical Qualifications wherever appropriate, (noting that it may not be appropriate to apply where there is a clear impact on knowledge and skills to practice, particularly health and safety requirements or other relevant legislation). We are therefore also reviewing candidate work a few marks below (equivalent to 5% of maximum marks) the Pass and Distinction notional boundaries – the boundaries used during the awarding process as the best representation of maintaining the performance standard from 2019.

The reason for lowering boundaries, where appropriate, by 5% of the maximum marks available, is that it is broadly commensurate with the level of generosity learners are likely to see in General Qualifications at level 2 and level 3. Providing that senior examiners can support the quality of learners’ work seen below the notional boundaries and agree it is sufficient to maintain the integrity, meaning and credibility of the qualifications, the grade boundaries will be lowered across the full set of grades – e.g Pass, Merit, Distinction and Distinction Star. Given the circumstances, this is the best approach to take into account the disruption to teaching and learning across every learner in a fair and transparent way, and at the same time maintain the integrity and meaning of qualifications. This approach helps to level our Technical Qualifications awarding approach with that adopted for General Qualifications and other qualifications awarded in England and in the wider UK.

Spring examination series 2022

Having taken this decision, we are also mindful of learners who have taken components in **Spring 2022** and believe they should also have access to the same level of generosity. For these learners, we wish to adopt a similar approach. Therefore, for learners taking Technical Qualification assessments in spring there will be similar generosity, through the addition of 5% of the maximum mark available for the assessment. It is a different mechanism to that we are using for the summer assessments but provides the same level of generosity to those learners taking assessments in the summer.

Introduction

This document has been prepared by the Chief Examiner and Principal Moderator; it is designed to be used as a feedback tool for centres in order to enhance teaching and preparation for assessment. It is advised that this document is referred to when planning delivery and when preparing candidates for City & Guilds Technical assessments.

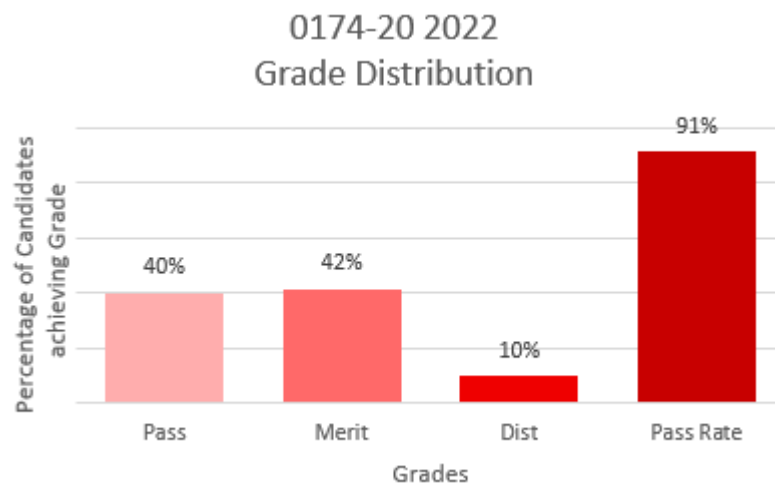
This report provides general commentary on candidate performance in both the synoptic assignment and theory exam. It highlights common themes in relation to the technical aspects explored within the assessment, giving areas of strengths and weakness demonstrated by the cohort of candidates who sat assessments in the 2022 academic year. It will explain aspects which caused difficulty and potentially why the difficulties arose.

The document provides commentary on the following assessments:

- 0174-521 Level 2 Horticulture – Theory exam
 - March 2022 (Spring)
 - June 2022 (Summer)
- 0174-020 Level 2 Horticulture – Synoptic Assignment

Qualification Grade Distribution

The approximate grade distribution for this qualification is shown below:



Please note City & Guilds will only report qualification grades for candidates who have achieved all of the required assessment components, including Employer Involvement, optional units and any other centre assessed components as indicated within the Qualification Handbook. The grade distribution shown above could include performance from previous years.

Theory Exam

Grade Boundaries

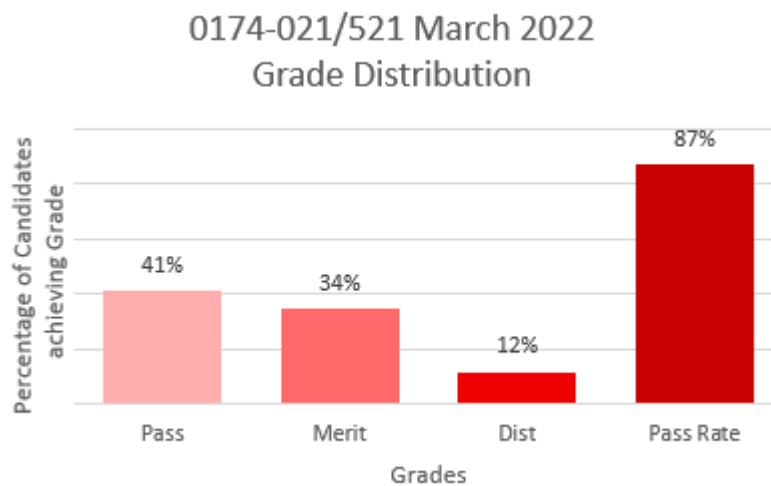
Assessment: 0174-521

Series: March 2022 (Spring)

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

Total marks available	40
Pass mark	16
Merit mark	22
Distinction mark	27

The graph below shows the approximate distributions of grades and pass rate for this assessment:

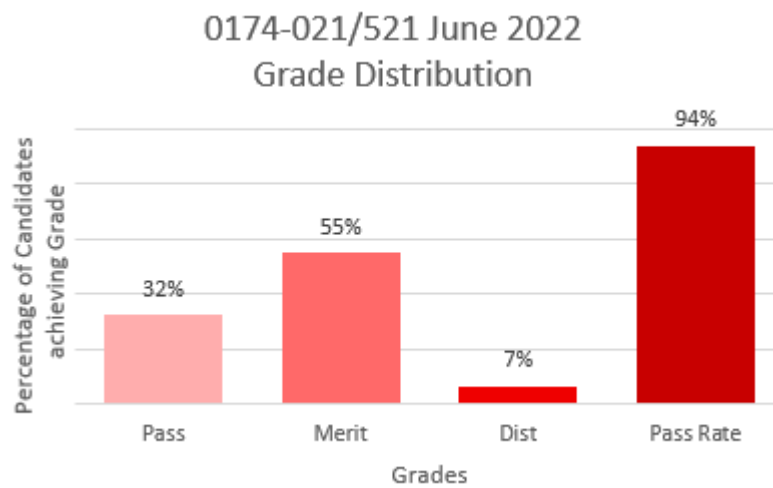


Assessment: 0174-521
Series: June 2022 (Summer)

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

Total marks available	40
Pass mark	14
Merit mark	19
Distinction mark	25

The graph below shows the approximate distributions of grades and pass rate for this assessment:



Chief Examiner Commentary

0174-521 Level 2 Horticulture- Theory exam

Series 1 – March 2022

The paper overall was broadly similar in content and balance to previous papers, with two illustrations used (often found to be achievable by candidates) and three tables, often found to be more challenging. The balance across the test specification was consistent with previous years, and overall level of difficulty was also considered to be comparable.

Overall, as might be expected, AO1 questions were effectively answered by most candidates, and AO2 questions proved more difficult. AO4 scenario-based questions were found to be most challenging.

The strongest performing units were:

- Unit 206 Horticultural Business Practices.
- Unit 202 Working in the horticulture industry.

The units that were seen to be more difficult were:

- Unit 203 Plant naming, identification, selection and science
- Unit 204 Preparation, planting and maintenance of plants

One particular question, on the habit of a plant, surprisingly caused difficulty across all levels of achievement and should be a renewed focus for future delivery. It was also notable that the questions on soils (structure, texture and cultivation) proved challenging. This is a fundamental subject for horticulture and one that should be grasped by all candidates and entrants to the industry.

The AO4 scenario-based section of questions demonstrated a clear differentiation of performance between higher and lower achieving candidates and consideration could be given to ensuring that candidates are aware of the nature and methodology of this style of questioning. An awareness of the importance of exam technique should also be considered in effectively preparing candidates.

Centres are reminded of the City & Guilds Technicals 'Exam Guides' available here:

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

Series 2 – June 2022

The balance of the paper was as per the specification in terms of the areas of the qualification, and the nature of the questions in respect of which AOs are being tested is aligned with the specification.

There were three questions which involved images and all of these, whether AO1 or AO2 questions, were answered well by candidates.

There were also five tables, and once again these were challenging, in particular to candidates ranking in the lower and middle achieving zones. These are typically in a 'paired statements' style and would benefit from candidates having an awareness of this approach, as the questions themselves are not inherently at a higher level of understanding.

Scenario-based questions clearly define higher-achieving candidates from others, and this should be considered as a particular focus in the preparation of candidates for taking the examination.

The areas of the examination behaved broadly as expected from past evidence:

- **Unit 202 Working in the horticulture industry** showed some good awareness in respect of general health and safety but low awareness of organisations in the sector and employment legislation
- **Unit 203 Plant naming, identification, selection and science** was managed well by middle and high-achieving candidates but notably less so by those ranked lower. It was noted that where scientific names were used in the question stem, lower achievement was evident across all levels of candidate.
- **Units 204 Preparation, planting and maintenance of plants and 206 Horticultural Business Practices** were effectively answered by high-achieving candidates, but both AO1 and AO2 questions proved more difficult for others.

An aspect of the examination that would not have been applicable in years prior to 2022 is the unfamiliarity of candidates with the whole nature of 'sitting an examination' and whilst this cannot be evidenced specifically, it was very noticeable during the Moderation process that younger candidates observed (typical for this programme) are recognisably unfamiliar with any formal assessment process.

Centres are reminded of the City & Guilds Technicals 'Exam Guides' available here

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Synoptic Assignment

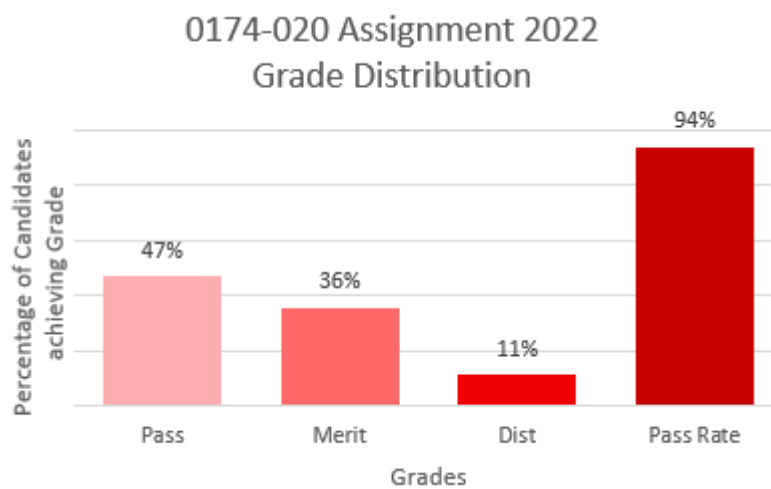
Grade Boundaries

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

Assessment: 0174-020
Series: 2022

Total marks available	60
Pass mark	22
Merit mark	30
Distinction mark	39

The graph below shows the approximate distributions of grades and pass rate for this assessment:



Principal Moderator Commentary

The assignment was in general assessed effectively. However, the context of the Assignment Brief was integral to tasks 1a and 2 and this was not routinely the case at all centres. The Assignment Brief set the context as being 'an educational garden for students' at a secondary school. Where the context was fully embedded, responses were relevant in terms of plant selection to maximise educational value (task 1a) and for the renovation plan of badly-worn turf at the site (Task 2). The educational context was not consistently evident, and in many cases differentiation between renovation and routine maintenance was not seen by moderators. Task 1b was addressed inconsistently by many candidates across all Centres. The task required that a quotation was provided for supply of the plants chosen in Task 1a. On many occasions this showed no evidence of checking sources for plants, giving realistic prices for plants or appropriate numbers to be planted.

In general, AO1 was judged reasonably accurately by centres, but with a tendency to leniency. PO forms made reference to knowledge recall during practical tasks; clear marking on written work, or about written work on the CRF, was evident in most cases. Insufficient recognition of accuracy in Task 1a was, however, seen often; plants were routinely mis-categorised (as annuals rather than perennials etc); plant names were frequently incomplete, lacking named species and/or cultivars.

AO2 was also judged accurately in most cases, with good reference to the PO form commentary and clear marker comments on the written work or about the written work on the CRF. It was, however, evident that the context of the assignment brief was not adequately taken into consideration for this AO, in particular as it affected lower-achieving candidates. Plants for school gardens often failed to recognise the effect of the school holiday periods, and an effective link to educational and horticultural value of the selections. The size of plants was frequently inappropriate to the size of the beds available, but not taken into consideration by markers. As noted earlier, it was also unclear whether candidates were considering routine turf maintenance or, as the task required, renovation.

AO3 was judged well throughout the assignment on the great majority of samples. PO forms were completed in varying ways across centres, but in all cases markers should remember that the quality of the comments and how these link to the band descriptors is more important than the quantity of description. Specific task-related comments (e.g. quality of mowing, checking and setting height of cut, extent of overlaps, creation of headlands, completed at industry-speed) are of greater value than general commentary. Risk assessments were very variable across Centres but also at times remarkably similar within Centres. Where moderators observed tasks on the synoptic moderation visit, detailed conversations with Centre staff were found to be very beneficial.

AO4 was also judged well on most occasions. Good links were made on well-completed PO forms. Consideration of the wider application of AO4 across all the tasks in the synoptic should be evident at all times.

AO5 was seen to have been assessed well during moderation, with recognition of all components of the assignment. Where this is best seen is where e.g. plants have been carefully checked for accuracy of names and accuracy in botanical convention, as these give opportunity to differentiate higher-achieving candidates in particular. Completion of Task 1b and appropriate seasonality in Task 2 are both usefully used by Markers to reference this AO.