

0174-521 Level 2 Horticulture – Theory Exam

Spring 2026

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 **Spring 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;
0174-521 Level 2 Horticultural – Theory Exam.

Theory Exam – Spring 2026

Grade Boundaries and distribution

Assessment: **0174-521**

Series: **Spring 2026**

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

Total marks available	40
Pass mark	16
Merit mark	21
Distinction mark	27

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.

Principal Examiner Commentary

General Comments on Candidate Performance

Assessment component: 0174-521

Series 1 (Spring 2026)

The performance of the Spring 2026 cohort was comparable to that of the previous year. Candidates generally performed well on AO1 knowledge recall questions, with particular strengths evident in practical and taxonomy-based areas. However, some candidates struggled with questions relating to the uses of specific plant species, plant structures (both internal and external), and the roles of industry associations. Overall, candidate performance in this series was consistent with previous series.

Candidates demonstrated depth of knowledge in the following topic areas: job roles and basic business partnerships, basic nomenclature, basic soil analysis, and customer service. There was also improved knowledge of RHS zones and trading standards when compared with previous series.

Some gaps in knowledge were evident in the following topic areas: roles of industry associations, plant structures (internal and external), uses of specific plant species, soil formation, planting procedures, and the legal aspects of horticultural businesses.

Scenario-based questions proved more challenging for candidates, reflecting trends seen in previous series. However, questions relating to preparing and maintaining plants and employee rights were generally answered well. A consistent area of weakness was specific plant knowledge and its application, with some candidates demonstrating a limited understanding of plant functions alongside aspects of business practice.

Consideration should be given to greater focus on the plant, site and botanical aspects of the qualification, as these are fundamental skills and knowledge underpinning all horticulture. An awareness of the importance of exam technique should also be considered in effectively preparing candidates. Candidates need to be reminded to take care and read the questions carefully.

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

[Horticulture qualifications and training courses | City & Guilds](#)