



0174-38 Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Forestry and Arboriculture (1080)

**Version 2.0
2025**

Qualification Report

Version and date	Change detail	Section
V2.0 15 August 2025	Qualification achievement data updated	Qualification grade distribution

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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 2025 academic year. It will explain aspects which caused difficulty and potentially why the difficulties arose.

The document provides commentary on the following assessments:

Year 1

- Pathway 1 (Forestry) and Pathway 2 (Arboriculture)
 - 0174-512 Level 3 Forestry and Arboriculture – Theory exam (1)
 - March 2025 (Spring)
 - June 2025 (Summer)
 - 0174-011 Level 3 Forestry and Arboriculture – Synoptic Assignment (1)

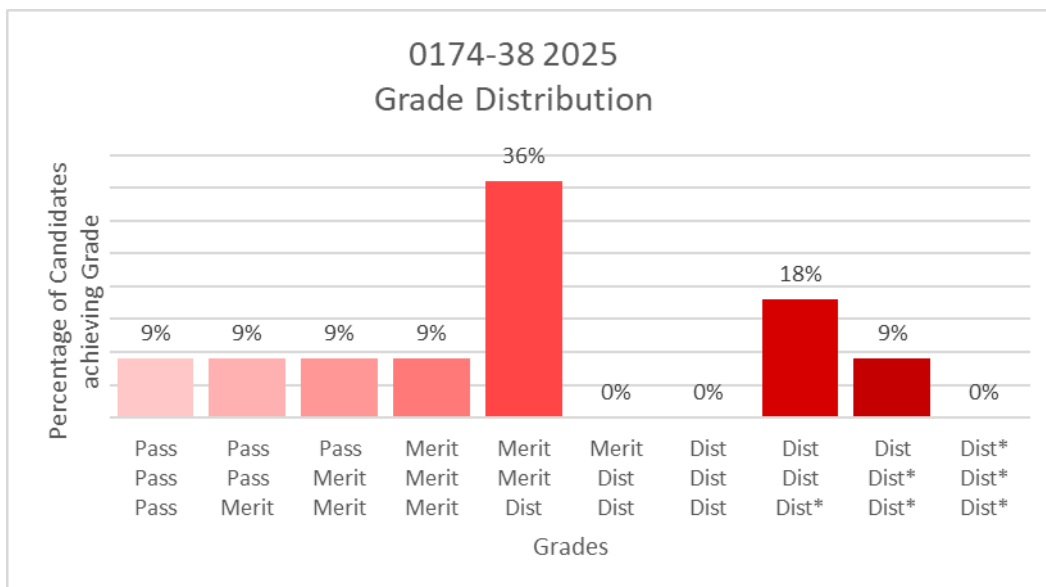
Year 2

- Pathway 1 (Forestry) and Pathway 2 (Arboriculture)
 - 0174-514 Level 3 Forestry and Arboriculture - Theory exam (2)
 - March 2025 (Spring)
 - June 2025 (Summer)
 - 0174-013 Level 3 Forestry and Arboriculture - Synoptic assignment (2)

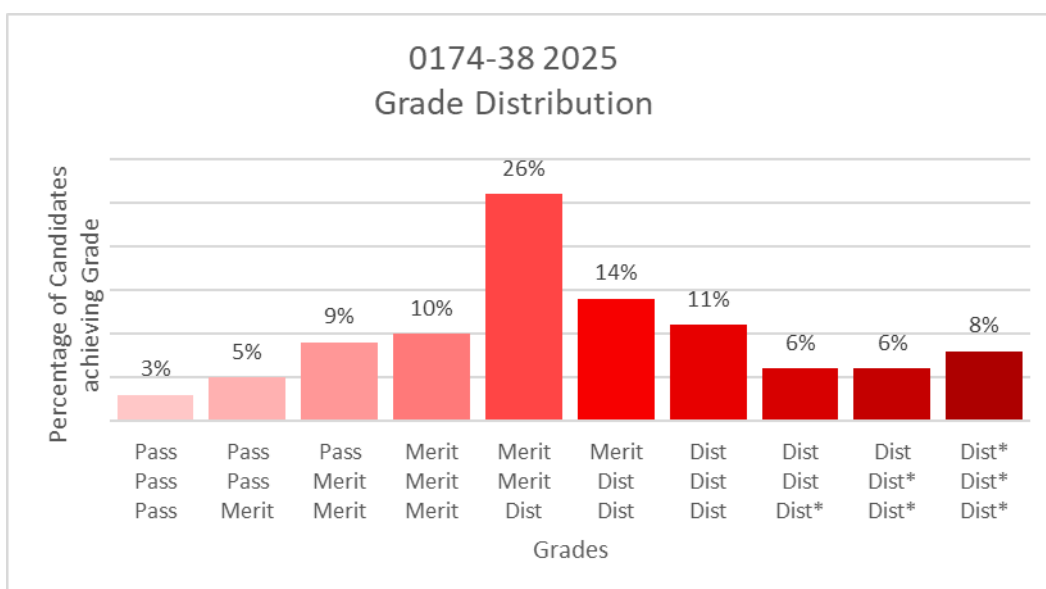
Qualification Grade Distribution

The grade distribution for this qualification is shown below:

Pathway 1 - Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Forestry and Arboriculture (Forestry) (1080)



Pathway 2 - Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Forestry and Arboriculture (Arboriculture) (1080)



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 Exams – Year 1

Grade Boundaries

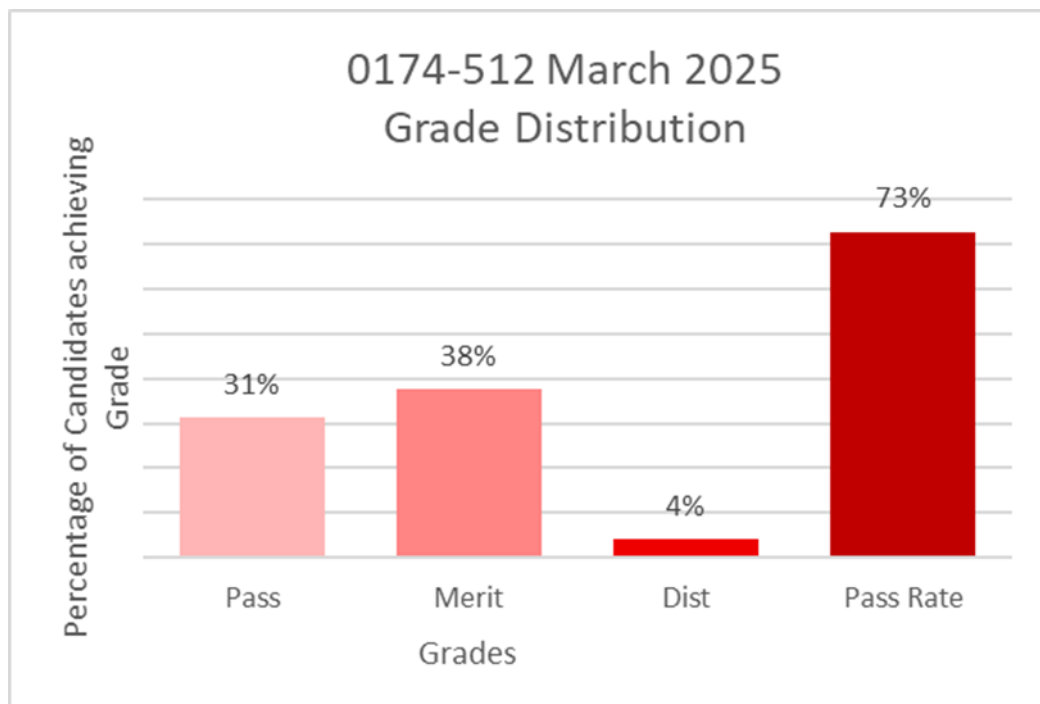
Assessment: **0174-512**

Series: **March 2025 (Spring)**

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

Total marks available	60
Pass mark	28
Merit mark	35
Distinction mark	42

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

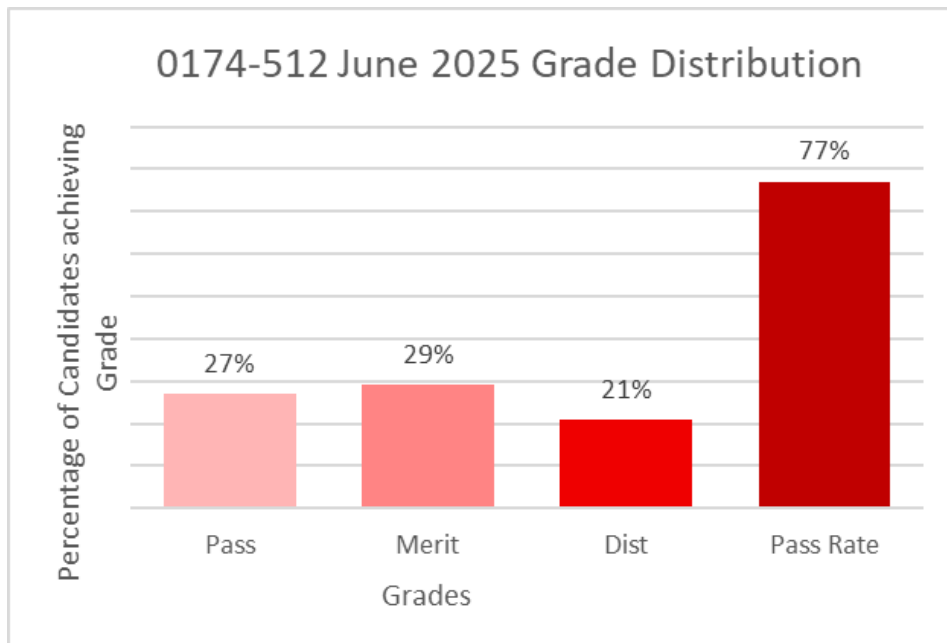


Assessment: **0174-512**
Series: **June 2025 (Summer)**

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

Total marks available	60
Pass mark	28
Merit mark	35
Distinction mark	42

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



Chief Examiner Commentary

0174-512 Level 3 Forestry and Arboriculture - Theory exam

Series 1 – March 2025 (Spring)

Candidates demonstrated a varied range of knowledge across the exam and produced a wide range of responses within the core units being assessed. Most questions were answered with some degree of accuracy and varying levels of depth.

Candidates scored better where questions were related to the practical unit on the qualification, with candidates consistently scoring well when highlighting how to resolve issues relating to a chainsaw. Candidates performed less well with the specific question relating to a dog-tooth cut, with the majority of candidates giving too general and vague a response, not linked enough to the specialised cut.

There has been a trend over previous papers that candidates overall performed poorly on questions relating to plant and soil science consistently well. Candidates struggled to answer questions relating to germination well, with many candidates unable to pick up a mark for a stage of germination. Some candidates lacked knowledge regarding to germination. Questions related to transpiration were answered better, with many candidates knowing factors that affect the rate of transpiration, but follow-on marks were lost when they then had to explain it in more detail. A question relating to soil cultivation was answered to varying levels of depth, with some candidates losing marks for poor exam technique, not linking their answer to the effect on the soil.

The Extended Response Question (ERQ) provided a scenario for candidates to write in depth about a realistic arboricultural scenario. The question provided an appropriate level of differentiation between candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject. The ERQ provided a wide range of answers, with many lower-scoring candidates focusing on management techniques that were not wholly appropriate. Higher-scoring candidates were able to provide more in-depth answers that covered the range of management techniques and used appropriate technical terminology in their answers.

Themes where most candidates did well:

- Most candidates scored well in questions relating to chainsaw maintenance and felling aids.
- Many candidates performed well in the more open questions relating to effects of ill health in trees.
- Most candidates were able to identify factors that effects the rate of transpiration.

Themes where most candidates struggled:

- Candidates performed poorly n the question relating to germination.
- Candidates generally were unable to explain how soil cultivation techniques effect soil structure.
- Candidates gave too general an answer to the question relating to a dog tooth cut.
- Most candidates lost some marks in the AO2 questions, where they could not fully explain or describe something as expected from the intention of the question.

The higher-scoring candidates performed well across all areas. They read the questions carefully and gave appropriate responses.

Centres should continue to:

- Encourage candidates to read the questions carefully
- Work with candidates on exam techniques to understand the active verbs of the questions
- Concentrate on plant and soil science knowledge and understanding
- Work on the development of the Extended Response Question

Series 2 – June 2025 (Summer)

Candidates picked up marks across the paper, with the bulk of the marks coming from the more practical-based questions relating to tree felling and chainsaw use, this has been a consistent theme across previous exam series.

The science-based questions were a mix between plant science and soil science, with candidates generally attaining less marks in the plant science. This has been a recurring theme across exam series from previous years. The questions relating to soil science were answered better, with most candidates able to pick up marks linking soil condition to plant growth.

The Extended Response Question (ERQ) provided an opportunity for candidates to write about an open scenario where a wide range of management options could have been discussed. Most candidates did not approach this question in a holistic way and focused on narrow management options; in some cases, these would not have been beneficial to the site and the tree.

Themes where most candidates performed well:

- Knowledge recall was strong in areas such as identifying pests, soil characteristics, and safety procedures.
- Candidates showed good awareness of practical issues, such as guide bar maintenance, tree work safety, and common causes of tree ill health.
- Many responses used appropriate terminology and reflected hands-on experience or training.

Themes where candidates had lower attainment:

- Depth and breadth were often lacking in extended response questions. Candidates tended to focus narrowly on one or two points without exploring the wider context or implications.
- Some candidates struggled to link causes to effects, particularly in questions requiring explanation or discussion (e.g. soil damage, abiotic stress).
- A few responses included inaccurate or invented information, especially in questions about legislation or pest management.
- There was occasional confusion between biotic and abiotic factors, and between symptoms and causes of tree ill health.

Centres should continue to:

- Encourage candidates to read the questions carefully
- Work with candidates on exam techniques to understand the active verbs of the questions
- Concentrate on plant science knowledge and understanding
- Work on the development of the Extended Response Question

Candidates are also strongly advised to practice examination techniques when preparing for this exam to fully understand the requirements of the question before attempting to answer, particularly those that require candidates to demonstrate reasoning. The use of 'explain' as a command verb requires candidates to demonstrate reasons and justifications or cause and effect to support any statements made.

Past papers and marking schemes are available on the City and Guilds website which should be used for exam practice.

City & Guilds also offers a technical exam guide to support on exam technique.

Centres should be familiar with the range of sample and past papers, and the exam guide, available to support exam readiness. These are available on our website here [Technicals in](#)

[Horticulture and Forestry & Arboriculture qualifications and training courses | City & Guilds \(cityandguilds.com\)](https://www.cityandguilds.com) under the 'Assessment Materials' tab.

Theory Exams – Year 2

Grade Boundaries

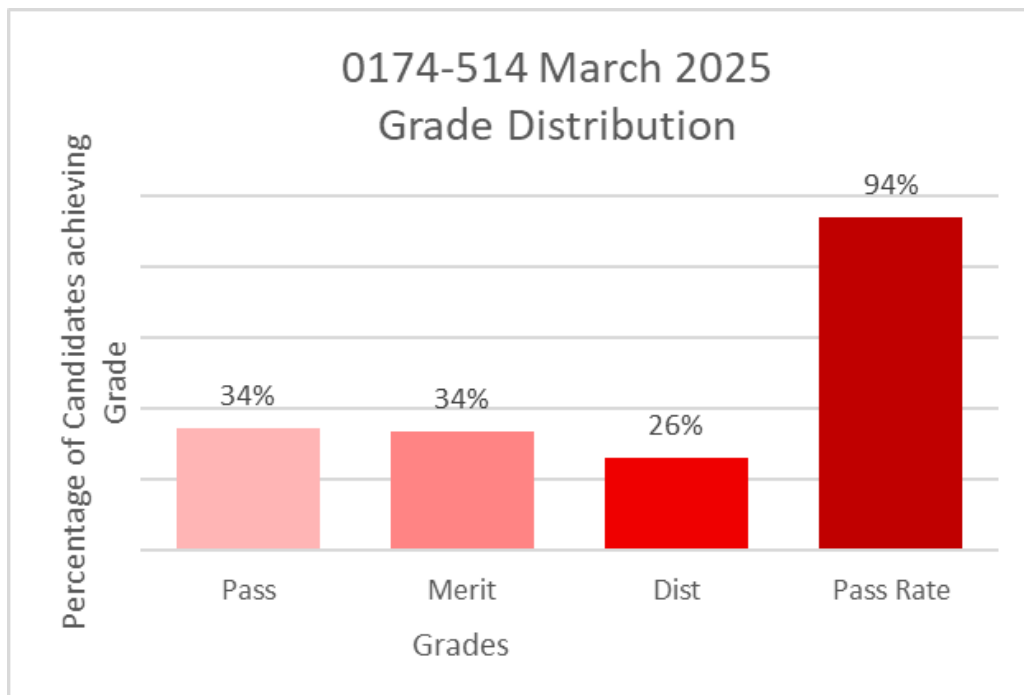
Assessment: **0174-514**

Series: **March 2025 (Spring)**

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

Total marks available	60
Pass mark	24
Merit mark	33
Distinction mark	43

The graph below shows the approximate distribution of grades and pass rates for this assessment:

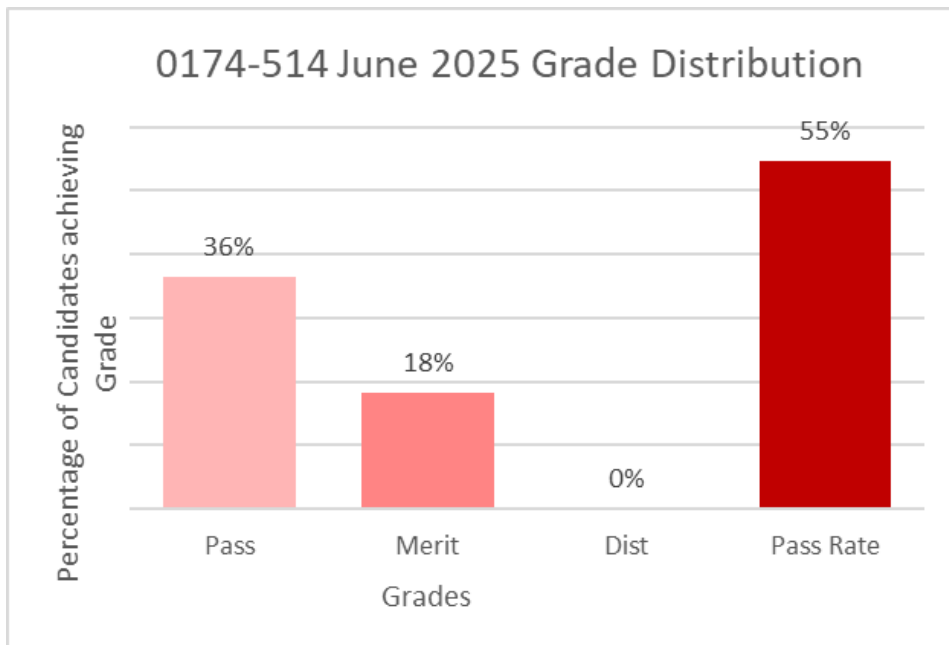


Assessment: **0174-514**
Series: **June 2025 (Summer)**

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

Total marks available	60
Pass mark	24
Merit mark	33
Distinction mark	43

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



Chief Examiner Commentary

0174-514 Level 3 Forestry and Arboriculture - Theory exam

Series 1 – March 2025 (Spring)

Most candidates attempted all questions, with greater success achieved in the technical knowledge – based questions, in areas of woodland management and in questions linked to practical applications rather than those requiring more detailed evaluation and understanding, where some candidates failed to provide the depth required.

The mean mark for this series was slightly less than for Spring 2024 and slightly more than for Spring 2023, though the level of variance was comparable.

Strengths and weakness

Strengths of the cohort included recall knowledge of the fundamental requirements for tree growth and in areas of woodland habitat management where questions on historic features, woodland surveys and ecology were answered generally well, though some candidates struggled to respond to the specific wording in the question and lost marks accordingly.

Questions based on describing practical tasks, such as using whips to establish new hedgerows and methods to systematically assess trees for potential mechanical failure were also answered to a good standard by many candidates.

In a similar pattern to previous versions of the paper, answers for questions on tree science were answered better for practical descriptions rather than those requiring an explanation. A question on the spread of decay was answered generally well, perhaps due to an increased emphasis on this topic at the moment.

Weaknesses of the cohort included, similarly to past exams, questions on plant taxonomy and classification which were answered poorly with over half of the cohort struggled to provide a correct answer for a basic recall question on plant classification. Questions based on common practical tasks were answered more fully with but questions evaluating a practical task were only given a limited response form many candidates.

Extended Response Question (ERQ)

The ERQ proved challenging for a number of candidates, which has also been a feature of the previous papers. The ERQ question this year was slightly more open than previous years and gave good opportunities for candidates to plan and compose a structured and detailed response.

However, the mean mark obtained was only just above the top of the Band 1 grade. This was largely due to the brevity of responses, which lacked detail, depth and technical terminology. Only 11.8% of the candidates achieved Band 3 for this question. A small number of candidates planned their responses, using bullet points, lists or mind maps which is good to see, although some failed to subsequently develop these plans when writing their responses.

Candidates are also strongly advised to practice examination techniques when preparing for this exam to fully understand the requirements of the question before attempting to answer, particularly those that require candidates to demonstrate reasoning. The use of 'explain' as a command verb requires candidates to demonstrate reasons and justifications or cause and effect to support any statements made.

Series 2 – June 2025 (Summer)

Candidates' performance showed that there were areas of strength and weakness in line with previous papers. A good introductory A01 question was answered well. Soil science questions were generally answered poorly and failure to react to the (clear) wording of question 4 resulted in poor marks in an area which is usually well-answered. Questions on woodland management were answered relatively well, but questions on Tree Science generally poorly, indicating a limited theoretical knowledge from the cohort. The ERQ responses lacked depth and detail.

Underpinning theoretical knowledge should be reinforced in key areas to back up the generally good practical knowledge. Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions in full before attempting an answer, and practice in constructing and developing a response to ERQ questions would be a valuable exercise for many candidates

Past papers and marking schemes are available on the City and Guilds website which should be used for exam practice.

City & Guilds also offers a technical exam guide to support on exam technique.

Centres should be familiar with the range of sample and past papers, and the exam guide, available to support exam readiness. These are available on our website here [Technicals in Horticulture and Forestry & Arboriculture qualifications and training courses | City & Guilds \(cityandguilds.com\)](https://www.cityandguilds.com/qualifications-and-training/courses/technical-qualifications) under the 'Assessment Materials' tab.

Synoptic Assignments – Year 1

Grade Boundaries

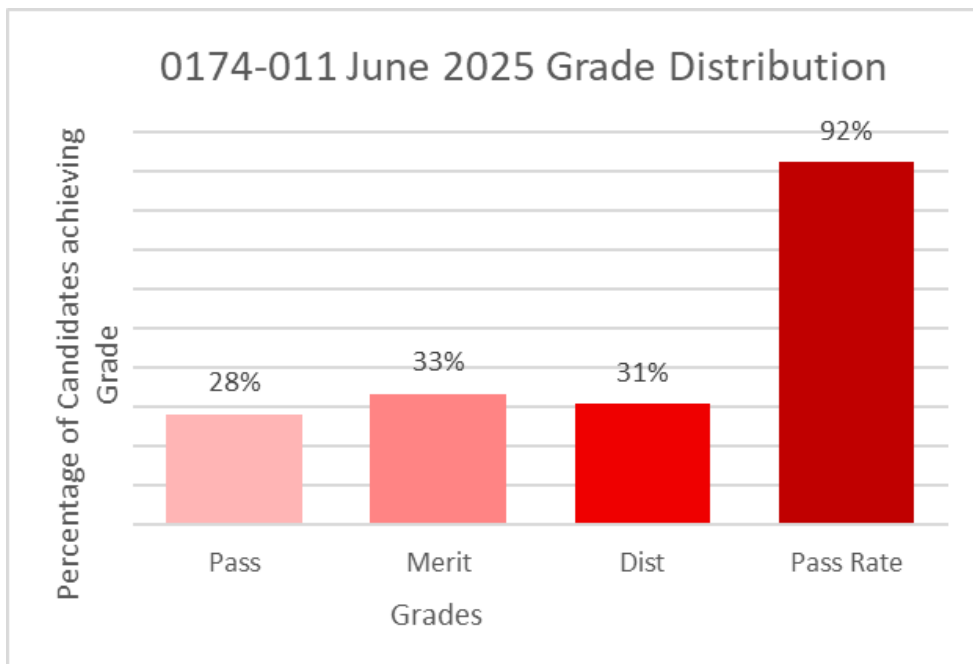
Below identifies the final grade boundaries for this assessment, as agreed by the awarding panel:

Assessment: **0174-011**

Series: **2025**

Total marks available	60
Pass mark	25
Merit mark	34
Distinction mark	43

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



Principal Moderator Commentary

Comments on Centre Administration.

Administration for all Centres was generally good, in particular regarding the prompt uploading of evidence and supporting documentation, although Moderators stated missing evidence was noted.

Overall performance of candidates compared to expectations.

The synoptic assignment for 2025 was identical to that set for the previous year, with candidates continuing to provide evidence appropriate for the task demonstrating expected levels of ability.

Appropriate range of tasks within the synoptic assessment enabling access for candidates to demonstrate the range of tasks expected within the workplace.

Provision of evidence for Moderation.

Annotation of photographic evidence had improved in quality; however, some examples were uploaded which did not support the evidence and indeed contradicted the comments within the POF and CRF.

A general improvement in the quality of upload, with the majority of Centres following the correct protocols with the use of Practical Observation Forms (POF's) and Candidate Result Forms (CRF's).

However, as a general reminder to Centres, the POF must not include grades and should only record observation notes from the practical assessment, which must not be recorded on a CRF, and must include sufficient detail to support the grades awarded.

The CRF should be completed using the notes from all practical observation notes.

It is also imperative that the candidates ULN number is used on all assessment records, not the Centres registration number. Similarly, the full Centre number must also be used, including the first zero.

The use of proformas by Centres had reduced, allowing access by learners to higher marks. Where they were used, lower marks had been awarded as a result of reducing the opportunity for individual work to be produced by candidates.

Stronger evidence was provided by Centres focussing on commentary being clearly linked to the Learning Objectives.

Whilst commentary was in the Third Person, ways in which the candidate could improve their work was irrelevant as this would not be read by the person concerned.

Task 2 Chainsaw maintenance and Task 3 Production of an information sheet was mostly completed to a good standard, with the application of practice to theory explored well.

Lower banded candidates struggled to provide a depth and breadth of detail.

General overview of assessor alignment.

As with the 2024 series, alignment between the marker and moderator in the majority of cases, was within tolerance with the exception of AO4 and AO5 where links across tasks and attention to detail was not consistent with some examples.

Performance against Assessment Outcomes (AO's)

AO1 Recall of knowledge related to the qualification LOs

A good level of evidence was provided across all tasks, with the majority of evidence being detailed and linked to the practical tree felling skills. Recall was demonstrated through Tasks 1 and 3 enabling candidates to highlight their knowledge through well written reports following appropriate research.

Comments on PO Forms were on the whole, accurate.

AO2 Understanding of concepts and theories relating to the LOs

The candidates ability to apply concepts and theories was embedded within Task 1 and 4, enabling causal links between theory and practice to be evidenced. Candidates were more successful with task relating to ground based chainsaw operations, where a the demonstration of a sound knowledge of relevant techniques was provided.

Justifications and the consideration of relevant alternatives however was poor with candidates in lower bands, with basic links and understanding evident.

Candidates within the higher bands demonstrated a higher level of understanding of key concepts and theories and their application practically.

AO3 Application of practical/technical skills

Practical ability and performance was clearly outlined, confirming the candidates competency in a range of technical skills.

Accurate marking was carried out, especially with the recording of a candidates' industry speed. Where it was recorded that a candidate was not yet at an industry speed, the correlation between practical sessions and previous experience was noted.

Safety considerations of a candidate were not always adequately recorded. Photographic evidence had improved, especially where detailed annotation had been carried out. Evidence of practical skills was wide ranging, with candidates showing a clear link between theory and practice being within the higher bands.

AO4 Bringing it all together – coherence of the whole subject.

The range of candidate ability in knowledge and understanding had been provided, with marker feedback confirming causal links had been observed. However, this was not been consistently accurate across all evidence sampled by Moderators. Stronger candidates performed well through Tasks 1 and 4, with the former allowing candidates to demonstrate a holistic knowledge and application of skills.

Candidates tended to struggle with the concept of how species react when being felled, or demonstrating sound tree identification skills.

AO5 Attending to detail/perfecting.

As with previous years, attention to detail and perfecting the evidence was achieved by candidates within higher bands, however those in lower bands struggled to achieve an acceptable level of attending to detail or reviewing their work continually and adapting where required.

Whilst comments were accurate within the POF's, this was not consistently considered within the CRF's.

Synoptic Assignments – Year 2

Grade Boundaries

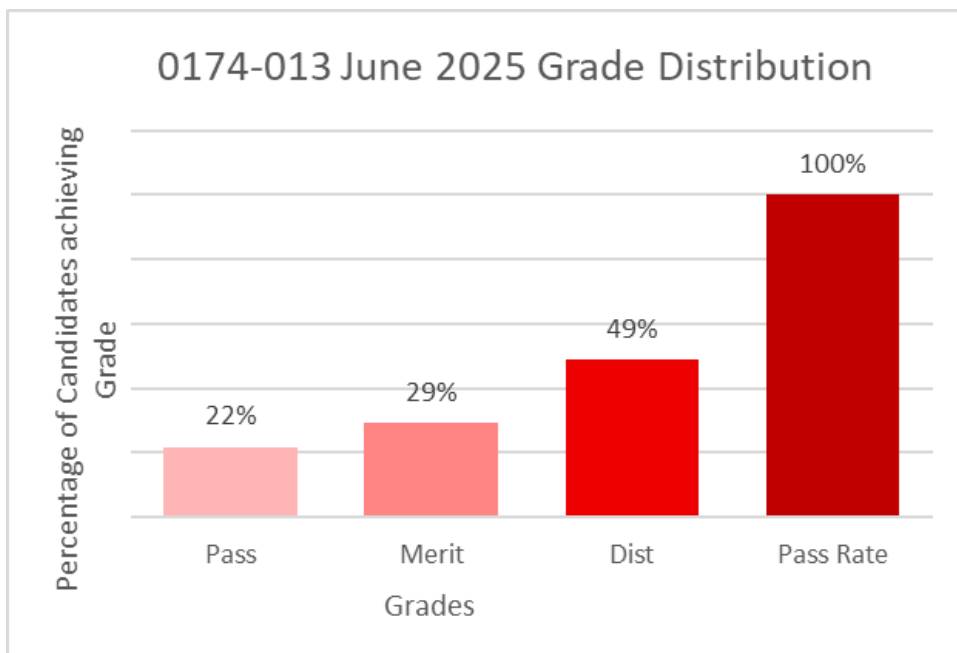
Below identifies the final grade boundaries for this assessment, as agreed by the awarding panel:

Assessment: **0174-013**

Series: **2025**

Total marks available	60
Pass mark	24
Merit mark	32
Distinction mark	41

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



Principal Moderator Commentary

Comments on Centre Administration.

Administration for all Centres was generally good, in particular regarding the prompt uploading of evidence and supporting documentation, although Moderators stated missing evidence was noted.

Overall performance of candidates compared to expectations.

The synoptic assignment for 2025 was identical to that set for the previous year, with candidates continuing to provide evidence appropriate for the task demonstrating expected levels of ability.

Appropriate range of tasks within the synoptic assessment enabling access for candidates to demonstrate the range of tasks expected within the workplace.

Provision of evidence for Moderation.

Annotation of photographic evidence had improved in quality, however some examples were uploaded which did not support the evidence, and indeed contradicted the comments within the POF and CRF.

A general improvement in the quality of upload, with the majority of Centres following the correct protocols with the use of Practical Observation Forms (POF's) and Candidate Result Forms (CRF's).

However, as a general reminder to Centres, the POF must not include grades and should only record observation notes from the practical assessment, which must not be recorded on a CRF, and must include sufficient detail to support the grades awarded.

The CRF should be completed using the notes from all practical observation notes.

It is also imperative that the candidates ULN number is used on all assessment records, not the Centres registration number. Similarly, the full Centre number must also be used, including the first zero.

The use of proformas by Centres had reduced, allowing access by learners to higher marks. Where they were used, lower marks had been awarded as a result of reducing the opportunity for individual work to be produced by candidates.

Stronger evidence was provided by Centres focussing on commentary being clearly linked to the Learning Objectives.

Whilst commentary was in the Third Person, ways in which the candidate could improve their work was irrelevant as this would not be read by the person concerned.

Whilst most candidates were able to identify features within a woodland, or area of amenity plantings, issues and proposals were not always fully justified or demonstrating a depth and breadth of understanding.

Plant nomenclature protocols were not always followed or understood.

Task 2 Planting trees and Task 3b Woodland Habitat or boundary maintenance, were both equally carried out well. Photographic evidence must however be fully annotated, and confirm the final result, rather than be a posed photo of the candidate. With Task 3b this must be before and after the task for each individual reflecting their progress.

Centres must also ensure that the proforma provided in the Record Forms Documents folder is used and not amended in any way.

The correct use of Practical Observation Forms and Candidate Result Forms has improved; however, some Centres continue to use the CRF when observing a practical task. Centres are reminded not to grade candidates during or at the end of observing a practical task. Grading must only occur once all Practical Observation Forms have been completed.

Full and correct ULN and Centre Numbers should also be provided on each form.

General overview of assessor alignment.

As with the 2024 series, alignment between the marker and moderator in the majority of cases, was within tolerance with the exception of AO4 and AO5 where links across tasks and attention to detail was not consistent with some examples.

Performance against Assessment Outcomes (AO's)

AO1 Recall of knowledge related to the qualification LOs

A good level of evidence was provided across all tasks, with the majority of evidence being detailed and linked to the practical tree planting skills. Recall was demonstrated through Tasks 1 and 3 enabling candidates to highlight their knowledge through well written reports following appropriate research.

Comments on PO Forms were on the whole, accurate.

AO2 Understanding of concepts and theories relating to the LOs

The candidates' ability to apply concepts and theories was embedded within Tasks 1a and 1b enabling causal links between theory and practice to be evidenced. Candidates were more successful with task relating to practical tasks and less with reports requiring detailed research, where the demonstration of a sound knowledge of relevant techniques was required.

Justifications and the consideration of relevant alternatives however was poor with candidates in lower bands, with basic links and understanding evident.

Candidates within the higher bands demonstrated a higher level of understanding of key concepts and theories and their application practically.

AO3 Application of practical/technical skills

Practical ability and performance were clearly outlined, confirming the candidates' competency in a range of technical skills.

Accurate marking was carried out, especially with the recording of a candidates' industry speed. Where it was recorded that a candidate was not yet at an industry speed, the correlation between practical sessions and previous experience was noted.

Safety considerations of a candidate were not always adequately recorded. Photographic evidence had improved, especially where detailed annotation had been carried out. Evidence of practical skills was wide ranging, with candidates showing a clear link between theory and practice being within the higher bands.

AO4 Bringing it all together – coherence of the whole subject.

The range of candidate ability in knowledge and understanding had been provided, with marker feedback confirming causal links had been observed. However, this was not been consistently accurate across all evidence sampled by Moderators. Stronger candidates performed well through

Tasks 1a and 1b, with the former allowing candidates to demonstrate a holistic knowledge and application of skills.

Candidates tended to struggle with the concept of how species react when being felled or demonstrating sound tree identification skills.

AO5 Attending to detail/perfecting.

As with previous years, attention to detail and perfecting the evidence was achieved by candidates within higher bands, however those in lower bands struggled to achieve an acceptable level of attending to detail or reviewing their work continually and adapting where required.

Whilst comments were accurate within the POF's, this was not consistently considered within the CRF's.