

0174-512/514 – Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Forestry and Arboriculture (1080)

March 2025

Chief Examiner Report

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Theory Exam – March 2025.....	4
Grade Boundaries.....	4
Chief Examiner Commentary.....	5

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 2025** 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:

0174-512/514 – Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Forestry and Arboriculture - Theory Exam (1)

Theory Exam – March 2025

Grade Boundaries and distribution

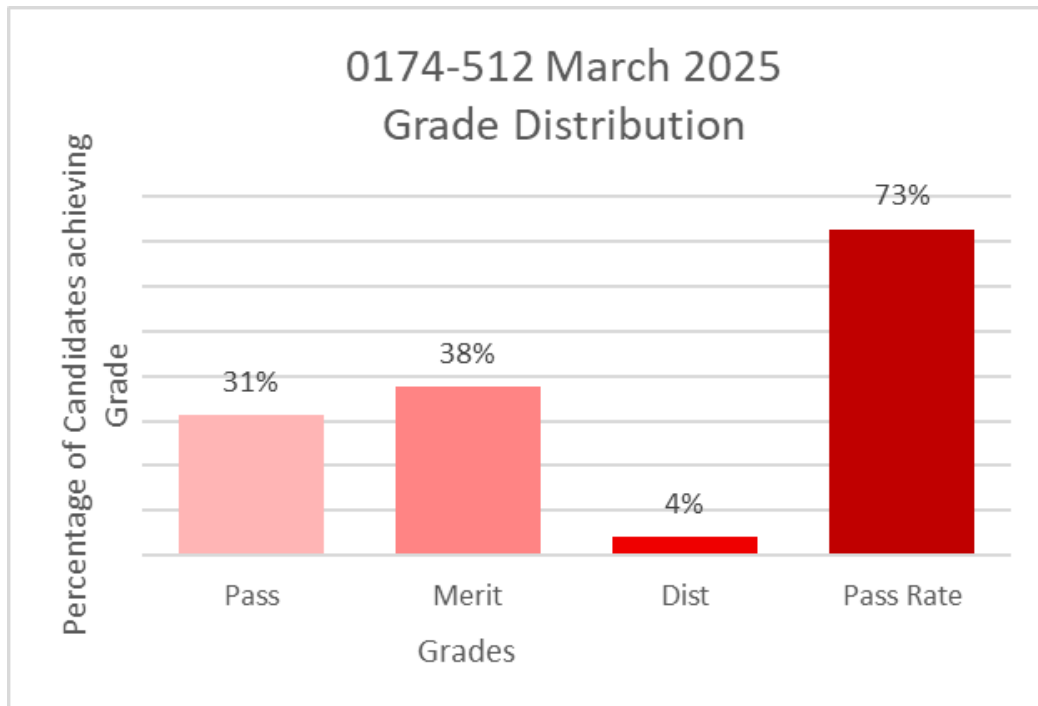
Assessment: **0174-512**

Series: **March 2025**

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 distribution of grades and pass rates for this assessment:



Chief Examiner Commentary

General Comments on Candidate Performance

Assessment component: 0174-512

Series 1 (March 2025)

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

Theory Exam – March 2025

Grade Boundaries and distribution

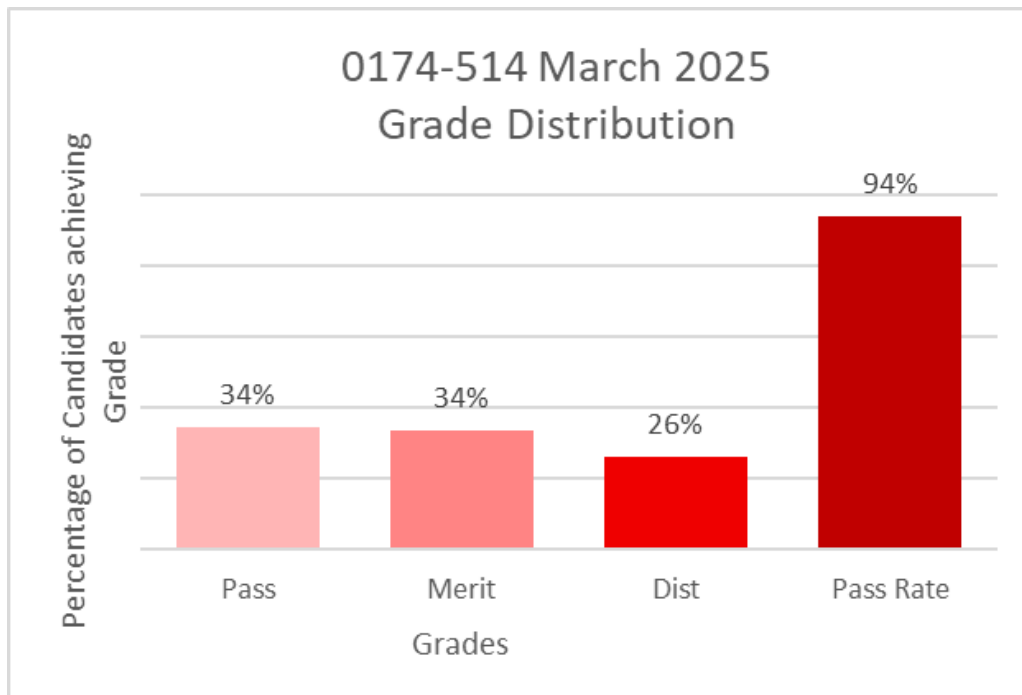
Assessment: **0174-514**

Series: **March 2025**

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

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

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



Chief Examiner Commentary

General Comments on Candidate Performance

Assessment component: 0174-514

Series 1 (March 2025)

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.

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/uk/qualifications/technical-qualifications/technical-qualifications-overview) under the 'Assessment Materials' tab.