

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

**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:

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

## Theory Exam – March 2026

### Grade Boundaries and distribution

Assessment: **0174-512**

Series: **March 2026**

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 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: 0174-512**

#### **Series 1 (March 2026)**

Candidates demonstrated a varied range of knowledge across the assessment and produced a wide range of responses within the core units being assessed. Most questions were answered with some degree of accuracy, although depth of response varied. Candidates performed better where questions related directly to the practical unit of the qualification, with many consistently scoring well on practical topics such as guide bar maintenance, tree work safety, and common causes of tree ill health.

Some candidates struggled to link causes to effects, particularly in questions requiring explanation or discussion (for example, soil damage and abiotic stress). A small number of responses included inaccurate or invented information, most notably in questions relating to legislation or pest management. There was occasional confusion between biotic and abiotic factors, as well as between symptoms and causes of tree ill health.

The Extended Response Question (ERQ) presented candidates with a realistic arboricultural scenario and required an in-depth written response. This question provided an appropriate level of differentiation, enabling candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Responses varied widely, with many lower-scoring candidates focusing on management techniques that were not wholly appropriate or, in a limited number of cases, inaccurate.

Higher-scoring candidates were able to provide more detailed and balanced responses, covering a wider range of appropriate management techniques and using correct technical terminology throughout. These candidates approached the scenario holistically and produced well-considered and highly suitable answers.

#### **Themes where most candidates performed well:**

- Most candidates scored well in questions relating to the practical aspects of the qualification.
- Many candidates performed well in the soil science question relating to effects on plant growth.

#### **Themes where most candidates performed poorly:**

- Many candidates did not perform well in the question relating to photosynthesis.
- Many candidates struggled with the question requiring knowledge of monitoring methods.
- Most candidates lost marks in AO2 questions, where they were unable to fully explain or describe concepts to the depth expected by the command words used in the questions.

Higher-performing candidates were successful across all assessment objectives. They read questions carefully and provided responses that directly addressed the requirements of the question.

**Centres should continue to:**

- Encourage candidates to read questions carefully.
- Support candidates in developing exam technique, particularly in understanding and responding to command verbs.
- Strengthen plant science knowledge and understanding.
- Develop candidates' ability to respond effectively to the Extended Response Question, including writing about tree management in a holistic and structured manner.

## Theory Exam – March 2026

### Grade Boundaries and distribution

Assessment: **0174-514**

Series: **March 2026**

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

<b>Total marks available</b>	<b>60</b>
Pass mark	24
Merit mark	33
Distinction mark	42

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: 0174-514**

**Series 1 (March 2026)**

#### **Candidates**

Candidates displayed a variable range of knowledge across the assessment and produced a range of responses within the core units being assessed. Most of the questions were answered with some accuracy, although the range and depth of response was variable.

Questions on practical knowledge such as seasonal identification of trees, and equipment for woodland habitat management were better performing, with candidates achieving high marks across the cohort. More detailed questions involving scientific terminology and application were less well answered. Recall questions were generally answered well but for many candidates the A02 responses were undeveloped, with a number of candidates focussing on only one aspect, or misinterpreting terms such as “ameliorant” “pruning convention” and “colonisation”.

The topical and relevant scenario of the Extended Response Question (ERQ) in this paper provided an appropriate level of differentiation and presented an excellent opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Responses varied, but many did not develop the necessary breadth and depth required to gain higher marks, lacking technical terminology and links. Some focused on limited areas, better candidates provide a depth and breadth of response with clear and accurate references to legislation and environmental issues.

#### **Themes where most candidates performed well:**

- Practical based questions on seasonal identification of trees, equipment for woodland habitat management, and methods for visual tree assessment were answered well by most candidates.
- Question on historical development and structures and features within woodland ecosystems were answered generally well.
- CODIT knowledge was good in certain groups of candidates.

#### **Themes where most candidates performed poorly:**

- The terms “conditioners” and “ameliorants” proved difficult for some candidates.
- Many candidates struggled with the question on planting considerations by failing to interpret the context.
- Many candidates failed to gain marks in the question on tissues found in wood.
- Most candidates did not perform well in the questions on fungal colonisation strategies and pruning strategies.
- Many candidates lost marks in AO2 questions, where they were unable to fully explain or describe concepts to the depth expected by the command words used in the questions.

Higher-performing candidates were more successful across all assessment objectives. They read questions carefully and provided responses that directly addressed the requirements and command words of the question.

**Centres should continue to:**

- Encourage candidates to read questions carefully.
- Support candidates in developing exam technique, particularly in understanding and responding to command verbs.
- Reinforce knowledge of technical terms across all areas.
- Strengthen tree science knowledge and understanding including definitions and terminology.
- Develop candidates' ability to respond effectively and holistically to the Extended Response Question, including writing in a planned and structured manner.

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.