RHS Qualifications

Examination:	RHS Level 3
Unit:	Unit 2
Examination date:	February 2025

General Introductory Comments

Examiners' comments are produced by RHS Qualifications following each examination series.

There have now been multiple papers for the Level 3 examinations and all stakeholders are now familiar with the format, structure and demand of the papers.

The Examiners' comments included in this report are intended to help candidates and centres to develop an understanding of the requirements of the RHS Level 3 examinations. This is achieved through a review of candidate responses indicating key areas of strength, while also considering areas where candidates demonstrated a weaker understanding of Topic areas, or where there was evidence of gaps in their knowledge.

The RHS Level 3 examination papers are designed to assess the contents of the Qualification Specification according to Ofqual's level descriptors for Level 3:

- demonstrate factual, procedural, and theoretical knowledge
- be able to interpret, evaluate, and apply information and ideas
- be able to discuss a range of perspectives and approaches
- demonstrate the ability to resolve complex and non-routine problems
- review how effective methods and actions have been
- demonstrate responsibility for supervising or guiding others.

These Level 3 descriptors are embedded in the Qualification Specification as shown below:

- demonstrate factual, procedural, and theoretical knowledge (AO1)
- interpret, evaluate, and apply information and ideas (AO2)
- discuss a range of perspectives and approaches (AO2)
- resolve complex and non-routine problems (AO2/AO3)
- demonstrate and apply holistic/integrated knowledge of the four Qualification-wide outcomes and the four Topic areas considered in Unit 1.

To gain higher marks candidates should be able to demonstrate mastery in the above areas.

Overview of Examination

Levels of demand

Questions were set at three levels of demand within this paper.

Questions that require a recall of basic factual, procedural and theoretical knowledge are classified as being low demand.

Questions that require the interpretation, evaluation and application of knowledge are classified as medium demand.

Questions that require integrated thinking across topics, the resolution of complex and non-routine problems, and discussions on differing perspectives or approaches are classified as high demand.

General comments

While some candidates scored higher marks, many candidates failed to get the marks that reflected their horticultural knowledge due to poor examination technique, for example through missing or ignoring key demands within questions. These responses often contained advanced horticultural knowledge and concepts, which were however, outside the scope of the question, and so marks could not be awarded.

To further support candidates this report discusses and identifies good examination technique, to help future candidates to secure marks that more accurately reflect their horticultural capabilities.

Candidates scoring high marks on this paper:	Candidates scoring lower marks on this paper:
▪ demonstrated a wide range of reading and research to equip them with the factual information required at Level 3 study ▪ provided full and accurate answers to all questions ▪ demonstrated sound knowledge of horticultural principles and practices ▪ provided responses that contained significant detail, which was relevant to the theme and demand of the question ▪ produced sustained lines of reasoning ▪ could provide holistic answers that demonstrated knowledge across topic areas including the qualification-wide outcomes.	▪ relied on their own knowledge and understanding, rather than research and reasoning when responding to questions ▪ failed to provide responses to all of the questions in the paper, in particular in Section B ▪ produced responses that were undeveloped, lacked depth, or which did not respond to the command word* within the question ▪ provided fragmented responses that failed to demonstrate holistic understanding of topic areas ▪ provided section C responses that were consistent with the Band 1 and Band 2 descriptors, in particular with regard to the breadth and depth of horticultural knowledge.

*RHS Qualifications shared the list of approved command words for Level 3 examinations in the Qualification Guidance Document. This list is shown in the table below to help candidates to prepare for future examinations.

Command word	Definition
Annotate	Learners should be able to apply labels and supporting information on diagrams
Assess	Learners are required to give a statement relating to the overall quality of the issue being considered. This could include an argument about an issue (for and against). The statement should provide evidence, with appropriate use of examples, and express an opinion about the merits of each side considered
Calculate	Learners should be able to carry out basic calculations, or estimate quantities of materials
Choose	Learners should be able to select from a range of alternatives
Compare	Provide a response that identifies similarities between things
Compare and contrast	Provide a response that both identifies similarities and identifies and evaluates differences between things
Complete	Learners should be able to provide short responses, or complete statements and tables
Critically	This word is often used before a command word, for example 'Evaluate' inviting an examination of an issue from the point of view of a critic with a particular focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the points of view being expressed
Deduce	Come to a decision based on information provided in the question
Define	Learners should be able to state formal definitions
Describe	Learners should be able to recall facts or applied processes in an accurate way
Discuss	Identify key points, explore all aspects, provide a conclusion
Evaluate	Learners should be able to use information supplied, as well as their own knowledge and understanding, to consider evidence for and against when making basic decisions
Examine	Carefully consider a topic, and provide a detailed account
Explain	Learners should be able to make clear, short, reasoned statement to explain a process or similar factor
Explain how and why	Learners should be able to make clear, short, reasoned statement to explain a process or similar factor The 'how' asks about the procedure or process The 'why' asks about the purpose of something
Give (a reason)	Learners should be able to clearly state reasons (facts) as directed
Identify	Name or characterise, for example the identification of type of plant tissue, or floral part of a plant
Interpret	Explain the meaning of information that has been provided

Command word	Definition
Justify	Learners should be able to provide evidence to support an answer
Label	Apply information to diagrams
Name	Learners should be able to provide a single word or short phrase answer
Outline	Learners should be able to provide short descriptions, for example the stages that make up a task
Predict	State what you think will happen, based on a given scenario and your own knowledge
Show that	Prove the statement in the question is correct
Suggest	Learners should be able to apply their knowledge and understanding to make recommendations for actions
Summarise	Reduce an argument to provide a brief account of the relevant information
To what extent	Examine the evidence available to include different sides of an argument, then express a view as to the merit or validity of a view or statement
Use	Learners should be able to use information provided within the question, sometimes in conjunction with their own knowledge, to carry out a task
Write	Learners should be able to provide a short answer as directed

Terminology used within questions:

Term	Explanation
Horticultural situation	Candidates may be required to state a horticultural situation. This allows the candidate to focus their response to the situation and allows the examiner to calibrate their thinking.
Horticultural setting	Candidates may be required to state a horticultural setting, this would include garden areas, for example a productive garden, or an herbaceous border. This allows the candidate to focus their response to the setting and allows the examiner to calibrate their thinking.
Growing system	Candidates may be required to state different growing systems to add context to their responses. Growing systems can be traditional, raised beds, container growing, organic, biodynamic as appropriate.

Additional guidance is provided with regard to the wider geographic location of candidates.

Candidate responses to examination questions should relate to UK horticulture.
It is appropriate for candidates to bring their own knowledge to questions; however, the core knowledge being assessed in this qualification relates to the cultivation of gardens and designed landscapes within the UK.

Qualification specification and Guidance Document

The Qualification specification outlines the curriculum that candidates will be examined on.
A Guidance Document is freely available from Quartz and RHS Qualifications. This document was developed to provide centres with additional guidance with regards to the interpretation of the Assessment Outcomes in terms of breadth and depth that is appropriate to a Level 3 qualification.

It should be noted that the Guidance Document is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to teaching and learning. Instead, it is designed to provide examples of some of the key areas contained within an Assessment Outcome. As an example, where an Assessment Outcome in the Qualification Specification formally lists five areas that should be included, the Guidance Document may only unpack one of these areas as an example. The centre is then expected to apply the same level of breadth and depth provided in the exemplar to the other areas defined in the Assessment Outcome.

This document is updated annually each autumn.

Section A

Questions 1 – 20

General comments on Section A

Forced answer questions are designed to test candidate's knowledge and understanding of the concepts covered in the four Topics and the four Qualification-wide outcomes that make up this unit.

At Level 3, these questions particularly relate to:

- the assessment of theoretical knowledge
- the ability to read and interpret information
- the ability to recall factual information
- the ability to apply knowledge to a range of simple scenarios
- the demonstration of procedural knowledge.

This section was well attempted by the majority of candidates, with a secure level of knowledge being displayed.

Candidates and centres are reminded of good examination technique with regards to forced answer questions:

- carefully read the question
- underline any key or important words
- score through inappropriate answers
- select the correct answer to be recorded on the response grid.

Section B

Each question is considered separately.

Question 1

This question required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge with regards to community engagement.

Part a) of the question required candidates to suggest a suitable event that would be suitable to engage the public in a community allotment.

Stronger candidate responses often included the suggestion of a food festival. Other strong responses included open events, creative (art based) events, along with events that support the creation of habitat.

Weaker candidate responses were either vague, or demonstrated limited knowledge of understanding with regards to community engagement.

Part b) of the question required candidates to explain how the event stated in part a) would help the allotment to engage with the local community.

Stronger candidate responses provided technically correct responses to justify the event suggested in a). Examples included concepts of inclusion, for example discussing activities around food or crafting for children, or the linking of a community BBQ to the food produced on the allotment, cultural diversity and cultural stories. Other strong responses suggested looking at the crops grown on the allotment, and linking these to their country of origin. Any explanation that was consistent with the event, and which demonstrated good practice with regards to community engagement was awarded full marks.

Weaker candidate responses were often either vague, incorrect of discussed community engagement, but were unrelated to the event suggested in part a) of the question.

Question 2

This question required candidates to discuss the range of factors that garden managers should take into account when setting maintenance standards.

Open questions of this nature allow candidates to bring a wide range of knowledge to the question, from either their studies (informed by the Qualification Specification) or from their own knowledge and horticultural experiences. All relevant and correct points were credited with marks.

Stronger candidate responses were planned to include either six short points, or three key points which are then developed to gain a second mark.

Examples of strong candidate responses include:

"The style of the garden and any particularly notable heritage elements will dictate some expectations e.g. a formal garden will increase the number of times hedges or topiary are scheduled to be clipped and lawns to be mown, and tend to give tighter specifications for the standards to be achieved. In contrast, an ecological garden will require lower levels of intervention for appearance.'

'Health and Safety Best Practice, especially in gardens open to visitors, will determine some standards, such as the height of a paving defect that can be designated as a trip hazard and how often certain activities such as leaf blowing to clear paths are to be carried out.'

'Garden managers need to take into account public expectations of the garden area, for example if it is a recreational area, public will expect it to be well maintained, if it is an area being managed for biodiversity and a little unkempt, the public may need to be made aware of this to prevent unnecessary negative feedback.'

'Whether maintenance standards are being Benchmarked with other similar gardens and whether feedback evaluated is being considered when writing a maintenance plan.'

Weaker candidate responses were often vague or were undeveloped, for example containing statements such as, *it is necessary to comply with health and safety*, or ensuring specific service standards are met. Such statements were credited with one mark, but as no development was offered the second mark could not be awarded.

Question 3

This question set candidates a scenario:

“You have just started work in a large garden where a wide range of powered horticultural equipment is in constant use.

Your job description states:
Responsible for developing and implementing maintenance schedules for all powered horticultural equipment.

You are starting to develop the maintenance schedule by producing a list of actions, as follows:

1. What equipment do we have on site?
2. Is the equipment ‘high use, critical machines’, ‘moderate use essential machines’, or ‘low use non-critical machines’?

Candidates were then required to complete the list started above.

Candidates were able to bring a wide range of knowledge to the question. This could either be from their studies (informed by the Qualification Specification) or from their own knowledge and horticultural experiences.
All relevant and correct points were credited with marks.

Strong candidate responses continued the list with points to include:

- what is the manufacturers recommended service interval?
- what time of the year is the equipment used?
- what maintenance operations can be carried in house, and what maintenance operations should be carried out by the dealer?
- develop a rolling maintenance schedule to ensure all equipment is maintained during down time where this is possible.

Weaker candidate responses were often vague or outside the scope of the question, for example focusing on the replacement of worn-out equipment, or focusing on the development of contingency plans should a piece of equipment fail and be beyond economic repair rather than developing and implementing maintenance schedules as required by the question.

Question 4

Part a) of this question required candidates to state how minimal cultivation (no-dig gardening) improve soil health.

Stronger candidate responses related to soil health and included:

- minimal cultivation benefits the soil ecosystem, by preserving mycorrhizal filaments which allow plants to access water and nutrients
- minimal cultivation avoids damaging or destroying earthworm channels by digging, and so aids soil health through drainage and percolation of oxygen
- Minimal cultivation includes the use of deep organic mulches, which Increase levels of organic matter, which in turn, leads to increased levels of micro-organisms, which in turn result in improved ped structure
- digging damages soil structure by breaking up peds, no-dig avoids this.

Weaker candidates discussed the no-dig movement and the role of Charles Dowding rather than responding to the requirements of the question, other weaker candidate responses included incorrect information, for example, *microorganisms in the soil have not been disrupted and can take nutrients down to the plant root systems*. Other weaker responses were over simplistic and so not appropriate at Level 3, for example stating *soil health and biodiversity is improved as not disturbed and broken down*, which does not answer the question which was focused on how soil health is improved.

Part b) of this question required candidates to state how minimal cultivation (no-dig gardening) can benefit the environment.

Stronger candidate responses related to environmental benefits and included:

- in its natural state soil stores carbon very effectively, when you dig this carbon is released, no-dig avoids this
- soil can degrade when unprotected through for example erosion. No-dig often includes the use of cardboard and an organic mulch, which protects the soil
- herbicide usage is reduced, as weeds are easily removed or supressed by the mulch mentioned above
- synthetic fertiliser usage is reduced in no-dig, as the increased micro-organism activity breaks down the organic matter in the mulch layer, making nutrients available to the plant.

Weaker candidate responses often contained incorrect comments including *no-dig improves air quality through the release of oxygen*, or were vague, suggesting no dig improves soil biodiversity as an environmental benefit, without supplying the level of detail required at Level 3.

Question 5

This question required candidates to explain four distinct impacts that trees can have on garden visitors. One mark was awarded for a basic point with the second mark being allocated for the explanation of impact on garden visitors.

Candidates were able to bring a wide range of knowledge to the question. This could either be from their studies (informed by the Qualification Specification) or from their own knowledge and horticultural experiences (see bullet point number 2 below)
All relevant and correct points were credited with marks.

The word distinct in this question is defined in the rubric on the cover of the paper as: *'when the word 'distinct' is used within a question, it means that the items have different characteristics or features.'*

Stronger candidate responses were distinct and included:

- a planting of *Fagus sylvatica,* would provide shade in a garden which can benefit visitors by providing cool areas in the heat of summer. This could include cool areas to picnic or the provision of shade in a car park.
- trees can have significance, for example the apple tree *(Malus domestica*) in Sir Isaac Newton's Garden. This tree can help people to feel connected to the past and generate an interest on history.
- trees can improve wellbeing and create lasting memories. Trees can have a powerful impact on people due to the feelings they invoke, for example the awe of seeing a mature *Davidia Involucrata* in flower, or the cherry blossom at the entrance to RHS Garden Wisley.
- trees can create a range of risks, either from fallen leaves which can be a slip hazard, or from falling branches or surface roots, which require management.

Weaker candidate responses were often correct, but lacked the development required for a second mark to be awarded. For example, stating trees can offer shade, without explaining the impacts of this shade on garden visitors, or stating they increase biodiversity without explaining either how, or the impact on garden visitors. Other weaker candidate responses fell outside of the requirement of the question by stating, for example, that trees can be used in productive gardens, without stating the impact on garden visitors.

Question 6

This question assessed candidate knowledge relating to modernist gardens.

To assist candidates and to differentiate modernist from modern the question provided additional guidance to the candidate, explaining: *Modernism became the single most important new style or philosophy of architecture and design, starting in 1918 and being developed until the 1950s.*

Part a) of the question required candidates to name one designer associated with modernist gardens.

The majority of candidates were unable to name a designer associated with Modernist gardens, indicating a gap in teaching/knowledge. Some candidates incorrectly suggested Geoffrey Jellicoe. Jellicoe embraced many different styles during his career but never lost his appreciation of Classicism and never became a Modernist. His career is best understood as Postmodern.

Correct candidate responses could have included Frank Lloyd Wright and Patrick Gwynne.

Part b) of the question, which required candidates to name one example of a modernist garden. This part of the question was also poorly answered. Many candidates followed the Jellicoe route and suggested the JFK memorial garden at Runnymede.

Correct candidate responses could have included Fallingwater, or Homewood.

Part c) of the question required candidates to respond to the question, what are the key design principles that define modernist gardens?

Candidate responses often identified some key design principles, however many responses also included significant incorrect material.

Correct candidate responses could have included the following key design criteria:

- asymmetric design
- planting is architectural, but is not necessarily the focal point
- simplicity is applied to all design decisions
- the use of clean lines, geometric shapes, along with compression and release
- a rejection of the old, e.g. the urns and statues of classical gardens
- the presence of outdoor rooms
- function over form, with simplicity applied to all garden features
- there is often a juxtaposition between a modernist house, and associated garden rooms and the more natural/organic grounds around the house
- a restricted colour palette.

Question 7

This question required candidates to analyse how discrimination law impacts on the recruitment of staff within a garden.

Stronger candidate responses often contained some relevant points, but few candidates scored high marks, indicating a lack of knowledge and possible gaps in teaching.

Stronger candidate responses included:

- legal impacts on advertising: employers must not state gender in job advertisements
- legal impacts on use of language: the garden cannot use discriminatory language, i.e. groundsman/waitress
- shortlisting and interview records: the garden should be be able to demonstrate that decisions are made without discrimination
- auditing of the process: the garden must be able to justify why they gave a job to a particular applicant.

Weaker candidate responses often included relevant factual information, however this was not related to the requirements of the question.

Question 8

This question required candidates to summarise the key arguments relating to the ban of horticultural peat from a productive growing perspective.

Stronger candidate responses were carefully planned, to include a range of key arguments, that related to the use of peat in productive growing.

These responses included varying different approaches, perspectives and opinions:

- factual discussions relating to the extraction of peat and the direct negative consequences on the environment
- peat extraction contributing to the loss of valuable habitats, the disruption to ecosystems, and the significant negative impacts on water quality
- the roles peatlands play in carbon sequestration, acting as carbon sinks that help mitigate climate change
- new concepts such as the introduction of the concept of legacy peat
- the growing awareness that not all peat is bad, i.e. reclaimed peat from filtration of water from bogs
- the impact of a peat ban on specialist growers producing plants that cannot be grown in other media.

Weaker candidate responses often relied on information that was out of date, was over simplistic, was incorrect, or did not relate to the requirements of the question.

Section C

Section C candidate responses are graded against the assessment ladder, which is on the next page of this report. (This is the same ladder that is used in the Level 2 examinations.) Candidates and centres are advised to review the ladder as this indicates how the assessment decisions are made, when grading long form responses.

Candidate performance in Section C ranges from those candidates who:

- demonstrated their factual, procedural and theoretical knowledge
- were able to interpret, evaluate and apply relevant information and ideas
- were well prepared and able to produce long form responses
- could discuss relevant points from a range of perspectives
- could discuss a range of approaches
- approached the question logically
- demonstrated a full and holistic knowledge of the topic areas and Qualification-wide outcomes
- demonstrated mastery of the areas being assessed.

through to candidates who:

- produced brief responses which lacked the required level of detail
- provided responses which were unplanned and unstructured
- provided responses that gave a framework, but which did not provide the required level of detail
- picked up on certain words in the question, and wrote all they knew about these words, rather than answering the question.

In addition to the assessment ladder, candidate responses are also reviewed against the criteria set out below:

Indicative content

- Strength of response
- Integration
- Horticultural knowledge.

Strength of response

Strong candidate responses:

- developed a logical argument to answer the question
- drew on reliable information sources
- were relevant to the question
- expressed clarity of thought
- demonstrated knowledge of horticultural practices.

Integration

Candidate responses should integrate with other relevant areas of the syllabus.

Assessment ladder (for information)

Band	Mark range	Summary	Description
4	12 - 15	Fully developed (Total)	**A highly detailed, comprehensive, fully relevant response, addressing all aspects of the question** ☐ No irrelevant or incorrect material or observations at the top end of the mark range: otherwise only very minor errors/omissions (which do not detract from an otherwise strong response) ☐ Full integration/clear links demonstrated with other appropriate topics as required: a holistic approach ☐ Advanced current professional horticultural knowledge/principles demonstrated (and evidence of advanced material beyond the specification at the top end of mark range) ☐ Consistent use of correct and appropriate technical language.
3	9 -11	Mainly developed (Solid)	**A reasonably detailed and fairly comprehensive response, with mostly relevant observations, addressing most of the key elements of the question** ☐ Some minor evidence of irrelevant or incorrect material or observations (in what is otherwise a good response), with occasional lack of detail/omissions at times ☐ Secure evidence of some appropriate integration with other topics but some linked topic areas are occasionally overlooked or incorrect associations are made: a partially holistic approach ☐ Current professional horticultural knowledge/principles demonstrated most of the time, with occasional errors, but largely appropriate explanations and application ☐ Correct and appropriate technical language demonstrated most of the time, with some minor errors.
2	6 - 8	Rudimentary (Basic)	**A largely basic response with some relevant observations, addressing some key elements of the question** ☐ Some significant evidence of irrelevant or incorrect material and frequent lack of detail, with some key areas overlooked ☐ Occasional evidence of correct integration with other topics, but many areas are overlooked and incorrect associations made: little evidence of a holistic approach ☐ Current professional horticultural knowledge/principles demonstrated some of the time, but with frequent errors, and only basic explanations or application ☐ Correct and appropriate technical language only partially demonstrated but limited. Some key errors.
1	0 - 5	Undeveloped (Unsatisfactory)	**A largely poor response with few relevant observations, addressing few of the key elements of the question** ☐ Material is largely irrelevant or incorrect and lacking in any detail, with many key areas overlooked ☐ No, or very little evidence of correct integration with other topics, with many areas overlooked and incorrect associations made: no evidence of a holistic approach ☐ No or little evidence of current professional horticultural knowledge/principles demonstrated, with poor or incorrect explanations or application ☐ Little (if any) technical language demonstrated. Often incorrect. Key errors.

Question 1

This question, which included an aerial image of the installation of the hard landscaping in the Oudolf Landscape, at RHS Garden Wisley. Candidates were required to respond to the following question: *If you were responsible for this project, how would you ensure that the hard landscaping represents current thinking with regards to sustainability?*

Stronger candidate responses often included a number of key considerations:

- an initial assessment of the design/landscape plan, to ask a range of basic questions starting with, does the area require hard landscaping?
- If the area does require hard landscaping, what are the full range of options available?
- what are the key requirements of the hard landscaping?
- are there formal standards that should be complied with?
- what is the carbon footprint of materials, are there low carbon substitutes to materials, for example, low carbon concrete.
- can reclaimed or recycled materials be used?
- are the materials porous, what SUDS principles can be applied?
- is drainage required; how could this be managed?
- can MOT or other base material be reclaimed?
- what edging is being used? Is this sustainable?
- how can the three pillars of sustainability be applied? For example, through the adoption of best practice with regards to modern slavery.

Weaker candidate responses often created a framework for their response through asking some of the above questions. However, these candidates then largely failed to answer these questions, and so their response was graded as largely basic.

Question 2

This question included a quotation to provide scaffolding for candidate responses, *'productive growing involves careful planning and scheduling of crops for continuity of supply'*.

Candidates were then instructed to discuss how the concepts of planning and scheduling can be applied in a productive garden.

Stronger candidate responses considered:

- the advantages of planning
- the advantages of scheduling.
- key principles that relate to continuity of supply
- the use of Gantt charts, apps, spreadsheets and other planning tools
- a range of suitable crops for planning and scheduling are considered to include:
    - Cultivar selection
    - Early, mid and late cultivars
- the planning of cloches, and other techniques to extend the growing season
- planning to include dates of last frost, linked to frost protection
- basic concepts for example sow a little and often for specified salad crops, such as salad leaves, spring onion, and radish
- a range potential crops are considered
- harvesting and storage to extend the season.

Weaker candidate responses discussed productive growing techniques, for example crop rotations, or general cultivation practices, rather than responding to the requirement of the question.

Question 3

This question required candidates to respond to a scenario where a garden with certified organic status, requires a Garden Management Plan.

Candidates were required to take account of this scenario when discussing the key areas that should be included in the Garden Management Plan.

Stronger candidate responses discussed the following key areas:

- the impact of garden style on the Garden Management Plan, for example, formal gardens requiring higher levels of maintenance, or productive growing, woodland gardens etc.
- the impact of hard landscaping, with regards to maintenance requirements, from sweeping to ice clearance, pressure washing through to condition audits
- the identification of key points of intervention and what triggers these points of intervention, for example seasonal, or plant based, i.e. trim hedges in February, or trim hedges when 100mm of new growth is present
- the impact of owner/client/management expectations relating to standards, to include proximity to the main house, formal and informal areas
- the impact of trees, from the basics of leaf management, through to arborist's audits, and works that may be required
- the impact of the overall growing systems (organics) on all inputs, and on the management of differing areas
- the management of material resources, to include hand tools, through to irrigation systems, or sundries for example organic top dressings for turfed areas
- maintenance of plant health
- maintenance and development of soil health
- budgets and purchase of tools and equipment, to include servicing, etc.
- sustainability strategy how does sustainability in its widest definition impact on management decisions
- Health and Safety considerations are discussed
- Equality and Diversity implications, for example seasonal celebrations appropriate to different faith groups and observances.

Weaker candidate responses often confused sustainable horticulture with certified organic status, or provided some of the above points, but failed to discuss or expand on these points to demonstrate a more advanced horticultural knowledge.

Question 4

Candidates were set a scenario:
The owner of a garden is considering opening their garden to the public.
They have asked you to advise them on how to welcome and manage their visitors. They have particularly asked you what they need to do to ensure compliance with all relevant Health and Safety legislation.

Candidates were required to summarise the key points that they considered to be relevant.

Strong candidate responses included:

- listing key areas of Health and Safety Legislation, before moving on to discuss, consider and apply these to the scenario
- safe access and egress can be ensured through an inspection of all paved surfaces
- safety inspection of structures and buildings
- the development of Risk Assessment (and Method Statements) where required
- warning signage, for example on steps, slopes and uneven surfaces
- training of volunteers and owners to ensure a safe environment, and to ensure that everyone is trained in the event of an incident
- if a larger number of people are attending it may be wise to have a first aider on site
- ensure any highly poisonous plants are labelled, of in a roped off zone
- ensuring all materials and any chemicals are securely stored according to manufacturer requirements
- if staff are employed in the garden is the Health and Safety Poster displayed
- check to ensure all tools and equipment are locked and safely stored
- emergency exits should be identified.

Weaker candidate responses failed to take account of the health and safety requirement of the question, and discussed a range of horticulturally correct areas that were outside of the remit of the question. Other weaker candidate responses included bullet point listings, for example *Health and Safety at Work Act 1974* with no further information. While bullet points are totally acceptable, listing a piece of legislation with no further explanation of expansion limits the grade that can be awarded, as informed by the assessment ladder.