



OCA

Examination series: June 2023

1013 candidates sat this assessment on June 28th 2023.

The mean mark achieved by candidates in the OCA was 80.91%.

Candidate results are tabulated below:

Fail	Pass
4.9%	95.1%

This is the first examination series for the new RHS Level 2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture. It is not possible to make valid comparisons between candidate

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This is, in part, due to the new qualification

recognising candidate achievement at pass, merit and distinction, while the qualification it replaced simply recognised candidate achievement at pass/fail.

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The first OCA was held in June 2023.

Assessment	Candidate pass rate
OCA	96.8% of Candidates achieved a minimum of 70% to pass this section. Of those who passed, 1.5% achieved 70%, 5% achieved 80%, 12.5% achieved 90% and 81% achieved 100%.

Section B of the OCA is considered below:

Candidates were presented with a series of forced answer questions.

The forced answer questions had varying mark values and were clustered around different topics.

100 marks are

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Candidate responses to questions varied from a pass rate of 61.3% to 91.5%.

Question	Average candidate score	RHS Qualifications feedback to candidates and centres
Propagation by leaf lamina	84%	Questions are authored against the qualification specification, which states in Topic 3, Element 5 Cutting types and techniques to include leaf lamina.
Growing media preparation	98% highest scoring question. 55% lowest scoring question.	The question was made up of 4 parts. The question with the highest candidate score, required candidates to correctly identify the purpose of handling growing media prior to filling pots. The question with the weakest score asked candidates to identify module containers and explain their advantages.

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Question	Average candidate score	RHS Qualifications feedback to candidates and centres
associated plant knowledge		<p>The first two parts asked candidates to respond to questions relating to propagation technique.</p> <p>The third part of the question related to the timing for taking semi-ripe cuttings.</p> <p>The final three questions assessed candidates plant knowledge to the standard set in Topic 1, Element 1, AO2.</p> <p>In this case <i>Salvia rosmarinus</i> was selected as it is in the Level 2 specimen list.</p>
Legislation	75.5%	<p>There were two questions on legislation, which were worth a total of two marks.</p> <p>The first related to a risk assessment for spring potting, the second to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>The Health and Safety Qualification-wide outcome states in bullet point 1, knowledge and compliance of current legislation as it relates to horticulture.</p> <p>The Equality and diversity Qualification-wide outcome states in bullet point 1, knowledge and compliance with all current legislation as it relates to horticulture.</p> <p>These questions therefore directly relate to the published Qualification Specification and are appropriate within the OCA.</p>

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Question	Average candidate score	RHS Qualifications feedback to candidates and centres
Weed identification, and associated plant knowledge.	81%	The image provided to candidates was of high quality, tnt

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Question	Average candidate score	RHS Qualifications feedback to candidates and centres
		<p>Topic 1, Element 1, AO2 requires candidates to be able to select plants to meet a range of criteria including hedges.</p> <p>This is an example of a higher demand question.</p>
Management of grassed areas	70.86%	<p>This cluster of questions was worth a total of 7 marks.</p> <p>Questions related to a number of areas, with integration into the qualification wide outcomes. Examples include the use of boards when laying turf, the sustainable use of water when establishing turf, types of mowers, user adjustments that can be made to mowing equipment, and a final question, rated as high demand, which required the candidate to consider mowing from a sustainability perspective.</p> <p>This final question attracted comment from candidates, expressing concern that they had not been taught this mowing technique. This was a high demand question which required the candidate to apply and integrate their horticultural knowledge to be able to review 4 possible responses, and through a process of elimination arrive at the correct answer.</p> <p>With regard to the final question, the term forb is included in the Qualification Specification in Topic 1, Element 1, Topic 8, Element 1, and Topic 8, Element 5.</p>
Soils and scented plants	91.5%	This cluster of questions related to soil texture, and plant knowledge with reference to scented plants.
Hanging basket	73%	This was a high demand question, that required candidates to use their horticultural knowledge to respond to a statement determining if the statement was true, or false.

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Question	Average candidate score	RHS Qualifications feedback to candidates and centres
		<p>The questions on fencing were basic requiring candidates to identify trellis, and fencing types.</p> <p>A basic knowledge of fencing types is required within the use of timber features, and the maintenance of timber features. If, for example a replacement fence panel was to be required as part of maintenance, the type of panel would need to be specified.</p> <p>It is however accepted by RHS Qualifications, as a result of candidate comments, that further guidance is required relating to breadth and depth throughout this Topic. This will be available in late summer/early autumn of 2023.</p>
Obelisk	86.5%	<p>There was a cluster of questions worth 4 marks related to an obelisk, and a range of suitable plants assessing both Plant knowledge (Topic 1) and Garden features (Topic 7).</p>
Paving and PPE	70.2%	<p>Following a careful review of the Qualification Specification RHS Qualifications can confirm that the question relating to cement mixes for pointing was included in error. The syllabus states 'A knowledge of cement and concrete mixes is not required'. An exams officer email was sent to centres once this issue was identified. All candidates were credited with 1 mark regardless of their response, to ensure that no candidate was disadvantaged by this error.</p> <p>The remaining aspects of the question were a fair method of assessing an integration of candidate knowledge from Topic 7, and the Qualification-wide outcomes.</p>
Planting	84.5%	<p>There was a cluster of questions worth 7 marks related to planting operations.</p>

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Question	Average candidate score	RHS Qualifications feedback to candidates and centres
Calculations	61.3%	<p>This is a further example of a higher demand question.</p> <p>The online platform used by RHS Qualifications includes a built-in calculator to assist with calculations. RHS Qualifications will issue further guidance and clarification on using the online platform prior to the next OCA.</p> <p>The wording of the question was clearly assessing the candidate's skill in calculating for quantities of hedging in three different scenarios, single row, single row to include additional plants in case of plant failure and a double row.</p>

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