

Scholarship

2012 Assessment Report

Agricultural and Horticultural Science

COMMENTARY

In 2012, 27 candidates sat the examination with seven achieving 'Scholarship' and one candidate achieving 'Scholarship with Outstanding Performance'. While these numbers were slightly down on the 2011 figures, the actual level of performance of those who did achieve Scholarship was higher. The 'cut score' was set at 13 and five of the eight successful candidates achieved scores of 16 or greater. The indication was that previous examiners' reports had been acted on by teachers and the better prepared candidates reaped the rewards.

Central to an answer at this level is the ability to back-up an opinion or perspective with fact/data/information and to be able to consider different sides to an 'argument'. 'Brain-dump' style responses may be rich in this data/information but often lack the detailed discussion and therefore fall short.

As mentioned in the 2011 report, this examination requires candidates to draw upon widely dispersed learning resources and within the context of the question, interpret, critically analyse the information/perspectives and construct a logical, well-structured response. The wider understanding of sustainability and the different perspectives of different groups in different contexts/situations is also an area where there is scope for improvement. Few candidates are able to effectively discuss the wider social considerations and fall back on the economic and environmental aspects.

With the alignment of standards candidates will be able to see a stronger link between Agricultural and Horticultural Science Scholarship and Level 3. Candidates who are well prepared for Level 3 should be able to do some further reading and critical thinking on the same topics and issues and complete the Scholarship exam well. The assessment specifications for both Scholarship and Level 3 will reinforce the closer alignment.

Question 1 – Buy Local

A couple of excellent answers but most expressed the view that buy local was 'unfair' rather than seeing it as a market reality that exporters needed to accept and work with. Buy local is proxy for a range of 'good' motives like sustainability, good agricultural production practices, supporting local industry, avoiding products with high carbon footprints, food miles etc, but has been embraced by many farmers/growers as a non-tariff barrier. New Zealand needs to respond to the challenge and adopt different strategies like an information campaign to demonstrate the good environmental credentials of our production systems, rather than simply 'bad-mouthing' the locals.

Question 2 – Social and Environmental Sustainability of Irrigation

Most candidates showed little evidence of wider reading, most picked up the environmental considerations and as usual, most hardly mentioned the social aspects. Some candidates cited specific schemes, most did not. Water remains a cornerstone issue to this course and all candidates are expected to be well versed in the topic – not just on a local basis but nationally.

Question 3 – Contemporary Issues

Most responses were on Carbon Footprint and Country of Origin Labelling, some on Animal Welfare but few responses on Changes in Land Use and Foreign Ownership. Most candidates showed little evidence of wide reading – despite the high profile of some of these issues.

SCHOLARSHIP WITH OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:

- effectively discussed the question with a high level of perception and critical understanding
- structured all three answers to provide an articulate, coherent answer.

SCHOLARSHIP

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship but not Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:

- showed planning of their response for each question
- chose nationally significant primary products that are typically exported
- answered questions on two primary products
- provided a well-structured series of paragraphs
- effectively linked their product(s) into the question by using clear, correct statements and appropriate data
- demonstrated a depth of understanding of their chosen product(s), that was both relevant and current.

OTHER CANDIDATES

Candidates who were not awarded Scholarship or Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:

- did not follow the instructions properly
- chose primary products which were not exported, were not nationally significant or for which suitable information was not readily available
- provided brief, superficial statements without specific examples about the primary product
- explained attributes using simple qualitative terms e.g. “large”, “sweet” etc. or explained quantity using simple qualitative terms e.g. “large amount”, without providing clarification or evidence of real knowledge
- stated data or information that was significantly incorrect
- gave rote-learned answers that were out of date or not relevant to the question
- wrote answers that indicated a poor awareness of actual social, political or economic implications
- answered one or two questions well but either ran out of time or were weak on the third question.