

2015 NZ Scholarship Assessment Report

Agricultural and Horticultural Science

Part A: Commentary

Comment on the overall response of candidates to the 2015 examination.

In 2015, 74 candidates attempted the examination – a significant increase on 2014, in spite of the fact that scholarship candidates were required to pay \$30/scholarship subject that they entered.

Overall, this year's examination's questions seemed to be interpreted well by the candidates. Most candidates allocated their time appropriately and completed the three questions. Those who used the planning section were often more able to construct answers that were more coherent/better written than those who did minimal planning.

Question 1 was quite broad and gave candidates the opportunity to choose two issues that they felt best suited their chosen products in terms of the relevant challenges and opportunities.

Question 2 was clearly signalled in the Assessment Specifications but many candidates failed to take the opportunity to show real perception in their answers and the various roles that regional councils have and how the focus may change from region to region.

Question 3 was similar in style to previous years and the overall results were perhaps was influenced by the time pressure that many candidates were facing at that point of the examination as many answers were quite shallow in terms of their content.

One feature that was very apparent was a number of schools/candidates seemed to base their preparation for this year's examination around the preparing of rote learnt essays – often using previous years exemplars or material from the published assessment schedule material for Ag Hort Sc 3.5. While practice essays are very useful for candidates to develop the structure and quality of their essay writing, they do not and should not be used as a means of developing a 'model' essay that can then be simply dropped into an examination context or question. Invariably, these responses contain some useful content/facts, but do not sufficiently illustrate the analysis, critical thinking, and evidence of integration or synthesis that scholarship answers require. One felt that a number of highly capable candidates missed out on achieving scholarship level marks (5+) on their questions because they were too focussed on reciting a prepared script and therefore did not read the questions and understand where the emphasis of the question lay.

Part B: Report on performance standard

Scholarship with Outstanding Performance	<p>Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussed the questions effectively with a high level of perception and critical understanding of what was being asked showed evidence of careful planning that resulted in an answer that was well structured, articulate, and contained evidence of a highly developed level of knowledge of the chosen primary production system or contemporary issue.
Scholarship	<p>Candidates who were awarded Scholarship commonly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> planned their response for each question to assist the construction of an answer that contained relevant and appropriate information chose nationally significant primary products that are typically exported and that related well to the selected contemporary issue/question provided a well-structured series of paragraphs within their answer used clear, correct statements and appropriate data to back up their statements/discussion demonstrated a depth of understanding of their chosen product(s) and contemporary issues.

Other candidates	<p>Candidates who were not awarded Scholarship commonly:</p> <p>Provided vague, shallow answers that lacked detail in either the information provided or the discussion of that information.</p> <p>Had not taken the guidance given in the Assessment Specifications when preparing for the examination.</p> <p>Relied on/gave rote-learnt answers that were out of date, incorrect or not relevant to the question and that allow the criteria of the Scholarship standard to be demonstrated.</p> <p>Wrote answers that indicated a poor awareness of the entire production systems that were chosen and the issues, implications, challenges and opportunities relevant to that production system.</p> <p>Failed to differentiate between general information/facts and those that are 'critical' or highly significant within the context of the product/issue/question.</p>
Standard specific comments	<p>Phrases in the performance standard like analyse, integration, synthesis, logical development, precision, and clarity of ideas need to be evident in candidates answers and therefore, candidates need to know what the phrases mean in the first instance and what it looks like within an answer.</p>