



GCE Examiners' Report

Built Environment

A Level

Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.¹

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.²

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ *This is the full and final report. There is no interim report for this qualification.*

² *Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.*

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

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Executive Summary

Both the unit 1 examination paper and the unit 2 assessment brief were of a similar level of demand to the previous examination series.

The unit 1 examination paper featured AO1, AO2 and AO3 questions. Whilst the majority of candidates were able to demonstrate a reasonable degree of subject knowledge, AO2 questions, requiring an applied response to a given context, were often answered in an overly generic way.

The majority of candidates attempted all of the questions; however, some were unable to provide appropriate responses by misinterpreting the question focus, misunderstanding the command verb or by simply providing insufficient detail.

In addition to teaching the unit content, centres are advised to carry out examination 'walk through' exercises and provide an explanation of command verbs with a view to ensuring candidates do not lose marks as a result of an unfamiliarity with the nature and requirements of examination questions.

For unit 2, candidates undertook the practical project based on the contextualised brief set by WJEC. The summer 2024 brief described a proposal for a sheltered housing development of 14 – 16 one or two-bedroom apartments. As is typical for the unit assessment, the brief included details of the site selected for the development, information on the location and site plans. The brief also provided details of an existing house on the site which was to be retained as part of the proposed development.

The brief sets out the tasks in a series of stands – (a) – (e), and the majority of candidates addressed the requirements of all stands reasonably well, however, a number of observations can be made.

- (a) Requirements and constraints – there was some lack of specificity in the responses to environmental, social and construction management considerations.
- (b) Initial project briefs – candidates would benefit from identifying the details that will assist in the design of the project.
- (c) Producing designs – candidates would benefit from identifying and including any stated project requirements.
- (d) Virtual modelling – 2D work was generally reasonable, 3D modelling skills could be developed further.
- (e) Planning and evaluating construction methods and techniques – the specifications could benefit from the inclusion of some graphic content.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
<p>General approach to unit 1</p> <p>Question type familiarity</p> <p>Command verb comprehension</p>	<p>Digital Resources – KS5 Unit 1 focused resource:</p> <p>Knowledge organisers</p> <p>Examination Walk through with resource (Student)</p> <p>Digital resources (Student) – glossary and tasks</p> <p>AS/A Level Built Environment WJEC</p>	<p>Student and Teacher bespoke resources hosted on the WJEC Digital platform accessible via the main WJEC website.</p>
<p>General approach to unit 2</p>	<p>Digital Resources – KS5. Unit 2 focused resource.</p> <p>AS/A Level Built Environment WJEC</p>	<p>Student and Teacher bespoke resources hosted on the WJEC Digital platform accessible via the main WJEC website.</p>

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

GCE

Summer 2024

UNIT 1 - OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Overview of the Unit

The unit 1 examination for summer 2024 follows the assessment weightings as set out in the specification with 56 marks available for AO1, 16 marks for AO2 and 8 marks for AO3. The paper covered all 10 areas of the specification with a mixture of short and extended response questions, in line with previous papers and sample assessment materials.

This examination features a number of questions which are context driven requiring a focused, rather than generic, response. Most candidates were able to address all 9 questions with some demonstration of subject knowledge within the specification. However, some candidates provided written responses which did not directly address the questions, whilst others failed to gain potential marks by providing responses that lacked the depth required at AS Level.

It is advised that candidates should be encouraged to provide a reasonable amount of detail in their responses as a significant number of candidates failed to gain potential marks by providing too short or limited answers. Candidates should read the command verb and be able to interpret what is being asked of them so that they are able to read the question and provide a suitable response. There were instances where candidates provided inadequate written responses which simply did not address the question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1 – Life cycle of buildings and structure

The majority of candidates were able to describe the term “building life cycle” with the identification of most stages. Responses showed a good level of knowledge across the job roles and responsibilities, although very few candidates achieved full marks often due to not identifying that the process begins with strategic definition. Where candidates were less successful this was often due to a lack of detail provided.

A limited number of candidates were able to accurately answer question 1b on activities during the operation stage of the building, with the majority of candidates providing answers linked to a different phase of the building life cycle or not providing a developed outline.

Question 2 – Professional and technical careers

The first part of question 2 asked about the role of an architect which allowed most candidates to demonstrate a secure knowledge in this area of the specification. Where candidates were less successful this was due to lack of detail provided in answer.

Question 2b required candidates to outline two benefits of RIBA membership. A limited number of candidates were able to accurately answer this question and where candidates were able to outline the benefits this was completed with brevity which lacked the detail required for accessing the higher marks.

Question 3 – Designing and constructing substructures

This question explores designing foundations and retaining walls.

- a) The majority of candidates provided a reasonable response describing building load requirements for foundation design. Few candidates discussed soil classification and/or water levels.
- b) Most candidates were unable to demonstrate a depth of knowledge on retaining walls, with the majority of candidates providing the answer for design requirements for cavity walls. Very few candidates were able to successfully provide answers relating to the indicative content in the mark scheme.

Question 4 – Context scenario with superstructure and service requirements

This question was based on a context of a five-storey mixed use development. It was in four parts, spanning three areas of the specification:

- a) This question provided candidates the type of frame required for the building and asked them to justify its use. Candidate answers included some material properties for steel and some basic understanding of framed buildings. Candidates were often unable to demonstrate a confident and thorough knowledge of superstructure choice.
- b) The answers provided to this question focused on intermediate floor types suitable to low-rise single occupancy residential properties and not large mixed-use buildings. Very few candidates suggested precast concrete but with no description or mention of hollow core plank floors.
- c) Cladding descriptions were provided by a minority of candidates, whilst most were able to name a cladding type which demonstrated some knowledge, this was not sufficient for the more developed description marks. Candidates would benefit from considering the number of marks available compared to length of answers provided.
- d) The majority of candidates were able to identify the service requirements for commercial buildings.

Question 5 – Structures of low-rise buildings

The majority of candidates were able to state at least three relevant advantages and disadvantages of prefabricated buildings. Many candidates lost marks by using generalised comments such as “it is quicker” or “it is expensive” compared with candidates stating time on site being less or that the factory setup was more expensive.

Question 6 – Change of use and low-rise domestic and commercial buildings

The first part of this question asked candidates to describe the differences between modern masonry construction and traditional masonry structures in relation to reducing damp penetration and heat loss. Candidates were able to describe a limited number of the differences in construction materials, although most candidates were unable to link this to damp penetration and heat loss.

The second part of the question related to material compatibility when extending an existing building. The majority of candidates identified the issue of matching materials but did not provide sufficient detail to warrant a second mark band level of response. Very few candidates discussed material size compatibility or weatherproofing.

Question 7 – External works

The majority of candidates were unable to describe the installation and positioning of water supply within footpaths, with a limited number of candidates identifying the requirements for a trench.

Question 8 and 9 – Organisations in the built environment

Both question 8 and 9 focused on organisations associated with the built environment and their roles and responsibilities.

Very few candidates were able to outline more than one function of the local authority planning department, with a number of candidates providing answers based on health and safety or building regulations. Candidates gained marks when answers were more developed and provided a fuller response to the question.

For question 9, the majority of candidates were able to identify that the CITB's role within construction industry was to support training and a significant number of candidates mentioned the CSCS card scheme. Very few candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding beyond the first mark band as answers were often limited in their explanation.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

GCE

Summer 2024

UNIT 2 (NEA) – DESIGN AND PLANNING PRACTICES

Overview of the Unit

For this unit candidates undertake a practical project for which a building design is produced in response to a contextualised brief set by WJEC. For this series the brief described a proposal for a sheltered housing development of 14 – 16 one or two-bedroom apartments. The brief included details of the site selected for the development, including location and site plans, and details of an existing house on the site, that was to be retained and refurbished as part of the new development.

A relatively small number of candidates were entered for this unit. Most of the candidates had addressed the requirements of the set assessment project to a reasonable standard and were able to demonstrate good skills in their use of software to present their design proposals.

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

The assessment of the project is divided into five strands. The following comments are put forward to identify areas that were addressed well and to offer suggestions for possible future improvement.

Strand (a). Requirements and constraints. Candidates should identify requirements and constraints that may influence the design process for the building project described in the project brief and avoid generalised content which is not directly relevant. Consideration of factors arising from Building Regulations, construction costs, the selected site and the existing building were often relevant and well described, but considerations regarding environmental, social and construction management aspects tended to be non-specific.

Strand (b). Initial project briefs. Most candidates identified the main accommodation requirements indicated in the project brief. At this stage it is suggested that candidates should focus on developing the given outline brief to identify details that will assist in the design of the project. In this instance an accommodation schedule for the apartments, specifying room sizes, relationships and the need to maximise use of external wall space / avoid layouts with internal living spaces, would have helped generate more workable layouts.

Strand (c). Producing designs. Most candidates produced design plans that covered the main elements required and that complied with the stated constraints on privacy distances. It is important that candidates identify and include any stated project requirements, such as, for this project, the communal garden to the front of the existing house, when developing their design ideas. Practical considerations, such as vehicle turning spaces and possibly furniture layouts for important internal rooms should also be evident and presented to a standard suitable for discussion with stakeholders.

Strand (d). Virtual modelling. The 2D base models were generally clear and well presented. The 3D versions of the model should be further developed to utilise the rendering capabilities of the software, place the design in context and illustrate how the project would look when built.

Strand (e). Planning and evaluating construction methods and techniques. Most candidates included reasonable outline material specifications for the construction work, although, in most instances, the specifications would have benefitted from some graphic content to illustrate ideas for building structure and construction detailing.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

- The uploading of work for this unit would benefit from the creation of individual candidate folders with a clear and consistent naming convention.
- It would be good practice to include, within the candidate folder, an extended PDF document presenting the candidate work, preferably featuring a contents page.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 02922 404 259

Email: Construction@wjec.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [AS/A Level Built Environment | WJEC](#)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

WJEC Qualifications

As Wales' largest awarding body, WJEC supports its education community by providing trusted bilingual qualifications, specialist support, and reliable assessment to schools and colleges across the country. This allows our learners to reach their full potential.

With more than 70 years' experience, we are also amongst the leading providers in both England and Northern Ireland.



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