

The most important question, after completion of the last exams of the former Report 550 subjects, is probably as follows: What can we expect from the coming outcomes-based approach?

Section A

Section A of the exam paper will probably stay more or less the same. The present HG candidates (2007) performed quite well in general in this part of the question paper. We can therefore continue to prepare candidates in a similar way.

Try to built more variation into short questions. Candidates must learn to read questions carefully and be sure of what is asked. This was done reasonably well in this question paper. Some candidates, however, used the words in the provided answers rather than letters A to D.

In Section A questions should not be left out. Questions in this paper are not marked negatively. Candidates should respond to a question in a way which makes the most sense – it could be the correct answer.

Section B

In the 2007 question paper various questions were included that tested the skills of the candidates. These included calculations, case studies, interpretations of data, drawing of graphs and deductions from data. Candidates responded very well to these questions.

The key is to study the question, to make sure that you understand what is being asked and then to study the available data and make sure it makes sense. In their responses, candidates must make sure that their answers address the question in a direct way, e.g. if two aspect have to be compared then include both the negative and positive sides of this comparison. Both aspects have to be discussed. Candidates are inclined to mention only one side of this comparison, and lose marks in the process.

Many of the present content topics are still relevant for 2008. The HG candidates of 2007 were, in general, well prepared for the exams. However, the following shortcomings were detected in the responses of some candidates:

- Definition of soil structure: There were candidates who did not know what was meant by soil structure.
- The role of climate in the forming of soil structure: Candidates indicated how climate destroys soil structure.
- The difference between gravitational potential and osmotic potential: Candidates battled with this.
- Questions on the different clay minerals were poorly answered.
- We need to inform the candidates that we talk about "soil families", rather than "soil series".
- How fertilisers, like ammonium sulphate, can acidify soil: This question was poorly answered.
- Parthenocarpy: Candidates battled with this explanation.

- The question on in-depth discussion of growth stimulants in animal production was poorly answered.
- The question on differences between juicy roughage and dry roughage was, generally speaking, poorly answered.
- A number of candidates made mistakes in Question 2.4 with the calculation of the digestible coefficient of hay.
- Reasons given for the lower production in a cow that is pregnant, as compared with a cow which is not pregnant, were not sufficient (Question 3.1.6).
- Only a small number of candidates could describe in full the advantages of using the synchronisation of oestrus.
- The question on the irrigation scheduling was not systematically approached.