



## *National Proficiency Tests Council*

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# **CATEGORY BASED TEST IN ARBORICULTURAL OPERATIONS (A011)**

## **Specialist Pruning**

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## **RULES AND CONDITIONS FOR ARBORICULTURAL/FORESTRY AND RELATED MACHINERY OPERATION PROFICIENCY TESTS**

### **A APPLICATION**

1. The minimum age limit for Candidates taking proficiency tests is 16 years.  
  
There is no upper age limit.
2. Application forms must be completed (including employer's declaration, where relevant), and sent with the appropriate assessment fee to the Assessment Centre before the test.
3. Candidates failing to attend for an assessment without prior notice will normally forfeit the assessment fee.
4. Personal Protective Equipment suitable for the test must be used.
5. Before coming forward for assessment Candidates should have had sufficient experience to enable them to have a reasonable chance of success and in MOST CASES ALSO HAVE RECEIVED EITHER FORMAL OR INFORMAL INSTRUCTION.

### **B CERTIFICATION**

1. Upon the passing of an activity the successful Candidate will receive an acknowledgement.
2. Proficiency Test Certificates can be issued on request which may also act as certificates of competence for Health and Safety Purposes.

### **C ORGANISATION**

1. Assessments are carried out by industrially based Assessors approved by NPTC. Under no circumstances can either instructors involved in the preparation of Candidates for an assessment or their work place supervisors assess those Candidates in that test.
2. Assessment items have been grouped in the assessment schedule for convenience but the order of assessment may be varied.
3. In the more extensive activities, and activities where seasonal work is involved, the assessment may be taken in parts but no acknowledgements will be issued until all the necessary parts have been completed.
4. Common activities are interchangeable between categories, e.g. Tractor Driving (but see 5 below), Pedestrian Controlled Rotary Cultivator, Manure Spreader, etc.
5. The successful completion of the Tractor Driving assessment activity qualifies the Candidate in any category based assessment activity, defined as Tractor Driving, and listed in the current 'List of Category Based Proficiency Tests for Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry'.
6. Before taking an activity involving the use of a tractor the Candidate must normally have passed the Tractor Driving proficiency assessment activity.
7. It is strongly recommended that first aid equipment complying with the Health and Safety (First Aid) 1981 regulations be available during the assessments and their organisation.
8. Insurance - comprehensive insurance arrangements have been made to cover assessment; details of the insurance cover are available on request.

## **D STANDARDS**

1. Candidates will be assessed on a competent/not yet competent basis.
2. Assessors will ask questions and such questions will be of a practical nature and related to the assessment items concerned.

Questions must not be used as a substitute for performing a practical part of the assessment.

3. All assessments must be conducted with due regard to legal requirements and safety regulations. Any breach of safety regulations will constitute failure of the assessment. In the event of failure to observe reasonable safety precautions that may lead to damage or injury to persons, stock or equipment, the Assessor may, at his/her discretion, stop the assessment and fail the Candidate.
4. Provision of the correct facilities is normally the responsibility of the Assessment Centre; Assessors and Candidates have the right to refuse machinery/equipment which is not suitable or does not comply with safety regulations.

Candidates who provide their own equipment, do so on the understanding that if it is not of the required standard, they will forfeit their assessment entry fee.

5. Unless otherwise stated, options within any assessment or assessment activity are to be applied at the sole discretion of the Assessor who, in making the decision will take into account local practices.
6. Assessors may, at their discretion, stop the assessment and fail Candidates who exhibit such a degree of incompetence, in any part of the assessment, that would indicate their inability to operate the machine or perform the range of skills that the passing of the assessment would imply.
7. Where time standards are stated the Assessor may, at his/her discretion, vary these times when the circumstances make it necessary. In other cases the time allowed is at the discretion of the Assessor, according to the conditions and amount of work involved.
8. Where applicable an assistant may be allowed to assist the Candidate. No help may be given to the Candidate other than as instructed by the Candidate and approved by the Assessor.
9. In all cases where machinery/chemicals are involved the manufacturer's instruction book/directions must be made available to the Candidate.
10. Candidates failing up to 25% of an activity may, at the discretion of the Assessor and the Assessment Centre, retake only the parts failed; those failing more than 25% must retake the whole activity.

## SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

The following Activities list has been produced in line with the requirements of the Royal Forestry Society Certificate in Arboriculture

AO	1	Planting
AO	2	Individual Protection - Metal/Wooden
AO	3	Bracing and Supporting
AO	4	Fencing- Strained Fencing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Access</li><li>- Garden Fencing</li></ul>
AO	5	Tractor Driving ( <i>see the Certificate of Competence in Forest Machine Operations</i> )
AO	6	Brushwood Chipper
AO	7	Stump Grinder
AO	8	Chain Saw - Maintenance and Operation - Candidates must achieve CS Units 30,31, and 32 in the Certificate of Competence in Chain Saw and Related Operations
AO	9	Pruning Operations - Candidates must achieve CS Unit 40 in the Certificate of Competence in Chain Saw and Related Operations
AO	10	Dismantling Operations Candidates must achieve CS Unit 41 in the Certificate of Competence in Chain Saw and Related Operations
AO	11	Specialist Pruning
AO	12	Brushwood Cutters or Clearing Saws
AO	13	Machine Operations - Chain Saw Planking Attachment <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Mechanical Ditching (Candidates are assessed in the context of MO10)</li><li>- Mechanical Hedge Trimming (Candidates are assessed in the context of MO 10)</li><li>- Mobile Saw Bench</li><li>- Mobile Peeler</li><li>- Mechanical Weeding</li><li>- Mobile Sawmill</li></ul>
AO	14	Brushing and Pruning with Hand Saw
AO	15	Weeding and Cleaning - Hand Weeding and Cleaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Chemical Weeding and Cleaning</li><li>- Candidates should refer to the relevant modules in the Certificate of Competence in the Use of Pesticides</li><li>- Mechanical Weeding</li><li>- Candidates are assessed in the context of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AO 12 Brushwood Cutters or Clearing Saws or</li><li>- MO 7 Mowers Mounted or Trailed or</li><li>- MO15 Mowers Self Propelled</li></ul></li></ul>
AO	16	Machine Maintenance - Candidates undertaking this test are assessed in the context of MO 2 Machine Maintenance
AO	17	Marking and Volume Assessment
AO	18	Extraction (Skidder or Forwarder) ( <i>this has now been replaced by the Certificate of Competence in Forest Machine Operations</i> )
AO	19	Hand Draining
AO	20	Hedge Laying
AO	21	Mobile Elevated Work Platforms

## ACTIVITY AO 11 - SPECIALIST PRUNING

Candidates are required to complete Sections 1 and 2 **plus** 1 optional section from 3, 4 or 5

**A Risk Assessment relevant to the operations involved in this activity must have been conducted by the Candidate and any necessary control measures implemented before commencement of the test.**

Test Item	Guide Notes
<p><b>Section 1: Carry out Selection of Tools</b></p> <p>a) Select tools</p>	<p><b>Site:</b> Amenity area with young trees to be pruned from the ground or ladder or rope and harness</p> <p><b>Suggested time allowed:</b> 1½ hours</p> <p><b>FASTCo Safety Guides:</b> 401, 403, 215</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Where chain saws are to be used, Candidates must comply with FASTCo Safety Guides 301, 801 + 802 and must hold the relevant Units in the Certificate of Competence in Chain Saw and Related Operations.</p> <p><b>Key points include:</b></p> <p>a) - selection for specific purpose - hygiene measures - checks for serviceability - maintenance of tools - handling and storage (tlc)</p>

## Section 2: Carry out Formative Pruning

a) Prune trees - up to 3m in height

b) Prune trees - up to 6m spread

Candidate to complete **either** Section 3, **OR** Section 4, **OR** Section 5

### Section 3: Prune Shrubs

a) Demonstrate knowledge of shrub pruning

**OR**

### Section 4: Cut Hedge from Ground Level

a) Demonstrate knowledge of environmental considerations

Pruning objective to be stated by the Assessor

a) Six trees of the size shown should be available for inspection with not less than 3 needing attention applicable to the activities.

#### **Key points include:**

- removal of dead, diseased, dying and damaged branches, pruning of leaders and selected wood to meet the pruning objective(s)
- position of final cut
- replace and/or adjust stakes and ties

#### **Key points include:**

b) - select leaders  
- remove unwanted or badly placed branches  
- shorten undesirable growths  
- lift crown if necessary  
- safe use of ladders  
position of final cut

#### **Key points include:**

a) - Candidate to demonstrate knowledge of pruning of at least **9** different species of shrub available on site.

ii) An area of not less than 10sq.m preferably *Ligustrum*, *Ilex*, *Prunus*, *Taxus*, *Fagus* or similar dense hedge to be trimmed.

#### **Key points include:**

a) - disposal of arisings  
- wildlife/stock considerations  
- seasonal considerations

b) Demonstrate knowledge of trimming hedge off the ground

**Either**

c) Trim hedge by hand

**or**

d) Trim hedge by machine

Check condition of machine and report

**Key points include:**

- b) - safe working practices
- platforms
- ladders

**Key points include:**

- c) - selection of correct tools
- Personal Protective Equipment used as appropriate
- hedge trimmed and shaped as indicated from previous work, or as specified
- finish smooth, even
- disposal of arisings

d) Electric or two stroke petrol models to be available

**Key points include:**

**Electric Models - Check:**

- weather considerations
- safety features
- damaged cables
- connections
- switches
- nuts and studs present and secure
- blades sharp and true
- machine lubricated and ready for use

**Petrol Models - Check:**

- safety features
- general condition
- nuts and studs present and secure
- blades sharp and true
- clutch engagement
- machine fuelled, lubricated and ready for use

Trim hedge

Candidate to continue until stopped by the Assessor

**Key points include:**

- PPE used as appropriate
- hedge trimmed and shaped as indicated from previous work, or as specified
- finish smooth, even
- disposal of arisings
- safe method of working appropriate to the machine used
- weather considerations

**Key points include:**

- machine left clean, safely stopped and/or disconnected
- oil, grease as per manufacturer's instruction book

Carry out end of day maintenance

**or**

**Section 5: Carry Out Fruit Tree Pruning**

A fruit tree 4-7 years old to be available.

**Either**

**Key points include:**

a) Prune a fruit tree cultivated for fruit

- a)
- select appropriate tools
  - tree pruned to improve fruiting potential
  - ability to recognise 1, 2, and 3 year old wood
  - diseased wood removed
  - tree shape maintained
  - cleanness of cuts
  - position of final cut
  - disposal of arisings

**or**

b) Prune a neglected fruit tree

- b)
- Tree to be pruned to improve fruit quality but to maintain an aesthetically pleasing form

**Key points include:**

Demonstrate knowledge of safety procedures

- equipment checked for serviceability
- site precautions:
  - warning sign/barrier (as appropriate)
  - number of operators appropriate to situation
- area clear of people and obstructions
- site organisation
- work planning



**OR**  
Use ladder

Prune tree

**Note:** Climbing Practice

If working from a rope and harness  
Candidates must hold NPTC  
Certificate of Competence: Unit CS38  
or CS22 and comply with safety  
guidelines laid down in FASTCo 401

**Key points include:**

- (REF: FASTCo 401)
- angle of ladder
- stability of ladder
- tying ladder to tree if applicable
- use of harness and strops

**Key points include:**

- remove dead, diseased, dying and damaged branches
- remove badly crossing branches
- prune leaders and selected wood to meet pruning objectives
- cleanness of cuts
- position of final cut
- disposal of arisings