

Edexcel Biology GCSE

CP08: Quadrats and Transects

Practical notes



Field investigation

Aim

- A. Use random sampling to estimate the population size of a plant species.
- B. Use continuous sampling with a transect line to investigate the effect of variation in a factor on the distribution of a plant species.

Equipment

- Frame quadrat (25 cm by 25 cm)
- Tape measures
- Clipboard
- Pen
- Paper

Method for part A

1. Use a random number generator to obtain 2 numbers, which are to be used as coordinates to find a location on the 2 tape measures set up.
2. Set down the quadrat at the coordinates.
3. Count and record the number of the required plant species in the quadrat.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 to take 9 more samples.
5. Estimate the population size using this formula:

$$\text{total area} / \text{area of quadrat} \times \text{mean number of individuals in a quadrat}$$

Method for part B

1. Write down a hypothesis of the effect of a change in an abiotic factor (eg. light intensity) on the distribution of the plant species.
2. Lay down a tape measure from the base of a tree to an open area of ground (ecological gradient of shaded to unshaded area).
3. Place the quadrat along the '0' end of the tape measure, with one corner touching the '0' mark.
4. Count the number of plants and record it in a table as seen below.
5. Place the quadrat 5 m up the tape measure and repeat step 3.
6. Repeat step 4 at 5 m intervals until you reach the end of the transect line.
7. Gather data from your class to find the mean number of plants at each point along the transect.
8. Plot a graph of 'number of plants' against the ecological gradient that is observed as the distance along the transect line increases. Compare your results to your hypothesis.

Distance along the transect line in m	Number of plants	Light intensity



Controlled variables

- Size of quadrats
- Number of repetitions in each site
- Method of counting
- Coordinate system at each site

Extension

Consider factors other than the one you have measured which may affect the distribution.
Consider how results may differ at different times of the day, or at different points in the year.

Sources of error

Certain species may be too small to see or difficult to identify.
The sample size may be too small to be representative.

Risk Assessment

Certain plants may cause allergic reactions or cuts, wear gloves when handling. Low risk.

