



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Health and Food Technology
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Dissertation

The dissertation is a challenging piece of work, as is shown by the wide range of marks achieved by candidates. The more able candidates had well researched dissertations, and completed each step to a good standard.

All candidates followed the steps of the dissertation logically, with the steps 'methodology' and 'conclusion' causing the most difficulty.

Candidates should proofread their dissertation before submission — candidates need to check spelling, use capital letters appropriately, and avoid the use of personal pronouns.

Candidates should be encouraged to select new areas for research as, again, familiar topics such as obesity and food choices were chosen.

Question paper

Overall, candidate response to the question paper was much improved. Candidates are becoming more aware of the depth and range of answers that are required at Advanced Higher level. There were some very good candidates whose work showed a real understanding of the Course content.

All candidates used bullet points when answering, and this has resulted in less repetition. Some candidates mind-mapped their responses initially, and this helped to give more focused responses. Some candidates completed the question of their own choice well, but it appeared that a few candidates may have run out of time and did not provide sufficient responses to gain the full mark allocation.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Dissertation

Introduction

It was evident that many candidates had read widely, and gave a good overview of the selected topic.

Methodology

There had been some attempt to improve this step by some candidates, but overall it is still an area that requires improvement. Generally, an appropriate number of respondents completed questionnaires. Those candidates who accessed 100 respondents found collation of results easier.

Most questionnaires were piloted.

Appropriate methods of research were chosen by all candidates.

Results

Results were clearly and accurately presented by candidates.

Conclusions

The more able candidates demonstrated good analytical skills, and obviously had spent some time completing this step.

Referencing

Referencing had improved in many candidates' dissertations, though in some cases references were heavily dependent on online and newspaper sources.

Question paper

Section A

- ◆ Question A: well answered. Candidates are now avoiding lifting the answer exactly from the report, and managed to outline accurately. Good reference to the report was made by candidates. Many candidates gave six responses to the question. This often benefited the candidate, and is good practice to continue.
- ◆ Question B: well answered by most candidates, but in some cases the link to health was weak. This resulted in marks not being attained.

Section B

- ◆ Question 1 (a): generally well answered, with candidates displaying sound knowledge. Better candidates showed good analysis and covered a wide area of reasons for low consumption of fruit and vegetables. Other candidates tended to list reasons rather than offer full explanations.
- ◆ Question 4: the majority of candidates gave well explained answers. The steps of product development were discussed in a logical, systematic order.
- ◆ Question 5: generally well done, with the majority of candidates demonstrating good background knowledge and understanding of GM. Candidates gave in-depth responses and covered a wide range of answers.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Dissertation

Methodology

This area is worth 30 marks. Candidates who submit between half and one and a half pages for methodology gave information so limited that it would not allow the research to be repeated.

Candidates who determined age and gender in their questionnaires did not always use this information to follow through to the conclusion.

Questions used within the questionnaire should focus on proving or disproving the objectives only. Some candidates included superfluous questions, which then resulted in too lengthy a questionnaire.

This section in particular was frequently lacking in supporting references.

Conclusion

Some candidates are still providing repetition of results with little analysis, discussion of findings, and drawing of conclusions.

Limitations and recommendations for further research are often not appropriate. Candidates tended to focus on 'time' as the only limitation, and recommendations for further research tended to be just new topics.

Question paper

Section A

- ◆ Question (c): some candidates demonstrated a lack of breadth of knowledge. Some candidates focused mainly of the provision of food in school, and did not link their responses to the wider role that school can play in contributing to the diet of school children. Candidates' knowledge of the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007 was often inaccurate and vague. Better candidates did provide critical discussion of both the positive and negative role played by schools.

Section B

- ◆ Question 1 (b): candidates' responses often lacked critical discussion. There was a tendency to list the implications to health but no further attempts to discuss or analyse.
- ◆ Question 3: some candidates experienced problems with this question. There was a lack of accurate detail in candidates' responses. Less able candidates tended to list nutrients with little explanation or reference to their importance during pregnancy. Some candidates included the foods that should be avoided during pregnancy and not the nutritional content of the diet during pregnancy.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Dissertation

General

Candidates must check that the **title** and **objectives** of their dissertation reflects the research undertaken. The topic for the dissertation must relate to the Course content of Higher or Advanced Higher Health and Food Technology — candidates are therefore advised not to select anorexia as a dissertation topic.

Candidates who use quotes should be reminded that discussion should be provided to link the quote naturally within the text.

Candidates should not over-rely on the internet for sources of information.

For correct referencing of resources, candidates should refer to the guidance notes for candidates.

Candidates should take time to ensure that reference lists are alphabetically organised, dates and publishers are stated, and dates of when online references were accessed are included.

Introduction

There should be evidence of wide reading using credible sources. Overuse of online resources may result in a lack of academic background in the introduction.

Candidates should justify the objectives. If quotes are used as part of the justification, there should still be discussion to support the choice of objectives.

Methodology

Candidates should check that the research they have undertaken is what was originally intended by the objectives. If not, the objectives need to be revisited.

Interviews may not contribute any new information to the results, but any information gained could be incorporated in the introduction.

Sufficient detail must be provided in the methodology to allow repetition.

Results

Candidates should only identify the key results under each result. Discussion or conclusions should not be included in the results section.

Conclusion

Candidates should ensure that the conclusion is not merely a repeat of the results. There is a need to develop the conclusion more fully, ensuring that the skills of analysis and evaluation are evident. More able candidates should try to look at results overall, and where appropriate try to cross reference and link results from the questionnaire to give more depth to the conclusion.

Candidates should show a clear understanding of the limitations encountered during their research. This could include any problems encountered during the research that required changes to be made to the methodology, or any issue that affected the results of the questionnaire, etc.

Recommendations for further research could be based on any area investigated during the course of the dissertation that deserves further investigation or expansion.

An overall summary paragraph is good practice.

Question paper

It is obvious that candidates made good use of the Essential Knowledge pack. However, centres are reminded that candidates should undertake independent research to extend and update the Course content. Candidates must be made aware that current research/reports must be accessed.

Exam preparation

Centres should provide opportunities for timed questions to be completed by candidates. This will allow for better time management during the examination.

Candidates should be encouraged to develop greater discussion skills within responses, and link to the key word of the question, eg 'pregnancy', 'health', etc.

Critical discussion should include both positive and negative points.

The practice of using bullet points when answering is advised.

Candidates should access the marking instructions available on SQA's website.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	20
Number of resulted entries in 2010	34

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 200				
A	14.7%	14.7%	5	140
B	20.6%	35.3%	7	120
C	41.2%	76.5%	14	100
D	11.8%	88.2%	4	90
No award	11.8%	100.0%	4	–

General commentary on grade boundaries

While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Head of Service and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as Arrangements evolve and change.