



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Health and Food Technology
Level(s)	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

A number of centres presented candidates for the first time in 2012. Some centres made good use of the guidance documents available from SQA, whilst others found either the dissertation or question paper challenging.

More varied and interesting topics were chosen for the dissertation. Some candidates produced dissertations which were far in excess of the recommended word count.

Overall, a weaker cohort was presented than in previous years. This was evidenced by the standard of English, especially in the Question Paper. Some candidates had poor discussion skills, with development of some key areas being very superficial.

Centres need to consider the appropriateness of presenting some candidates at this level, particularly those who would have difficulty achieving the required depth and range of knowledge. A number of candidates did not supply a sufficient quantity of responses and so could not be awarded marks.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question Paper

Section A

a. Most candidates addressed the report well and this resulted in a range of excellent marks. There are a minority of candidates who are still lifting the answers straight from the report and not expressing them in their own words.

b. More able candidates gave good responses. Weaker candidates discussed aspects of Fairtrade products in general, but did not focus on their impact on food choice. Some candidates provided vague answers which often repeated the same point.

c. A few outstanding responses from candidates who addressed the issues surrounding the choice of organic foods very well. Weaker candidates discussed organic food but were not fully aware of the issues.

Question 3

Candidates addressed this question well, giving detailed and accurate information about the properties of protein and their use in food manufacture.

Question 5

The more able candidates addressed all areas of food choice and developed these in detail.

Dissertation

Introduction: More able candidates gave a good overview of the selected topic, based on evidence from credible resources.

Most candidates provided three objectives and had made reasonable attempts to justify them.

Methodology: Many candidates did make a good attempt to include more of 'how' and 'why' methodologies were selected. More detail had been provided about the selection of target group and how the methodology was carried out.

Results: In the majority of cases results — bar/pie charts — were clearly displayed, but attention still needs to be paid to labelling of axes.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question Paper

Section B Question 1

Overall responses were disappointing, especially as this is a key area of the paper.

a. Candidates did not know the dietary targets accurately, and many made no or little link to how they could contribute to a reduction in coronary heart disease. Those candidates who worked their way systematically through the dietary targets, using headings for each target, achieved good marks.

b Weaker candidates wrote very little and had no real knowledge to expand their answers as to why the factor caused coronary heart disease. Some candidates did not read the question properly and included factors related to diet in their responses.

Question 2

Generally candidates displayed limited knowledge; answers were too general and did not link specifically to vegetarianism.

Question 4

Although some candidates gave good detailed responses relating to the main issues surrounding the use of food additives in food products, the quantity of responses was generally insufficient.

Dissertation

Referencing: Some references were not current and still not cited properly within the text. References used in the dissertation were not always included in the reference list at the end.

Introduction: Candidates should avoid including facts and figures which are related to England. Good quality current resources were used by many candidates but some candidates used American websites and Wikipedia as sources. Candidates tended to overuse Wikipedia as a reference source.

Methodology: Many candidates choose to use a questionnaire. Some questionnaires were poorly worded and did not allow sufficient evidence to be gathered to prove or disprove the objectives. For example, some candidates asked respondents 'Would you say you have a healthy or unhealthy diet? Yes or No', without any follow up questions to back up the opinion or to explore it further. This did not allow the candidate to draw in-depth conclusions. Some questionnaires were piloted with respondents who were not going to be the intended target group of respondents.

Some questionnaires included in Appendix were not exactly the same as those given out to respondents — the results section was therefore confusing.

Results: Some candidates repeated all the results under the charts/ graphs rather than just the key points.

Conclusions: The conclusion section in many cases was merely a reiteration of results with little or no development or analysis of findings. Some candidates provided sweeping statements which were not backed up by research or references. Some candidates provided little reference to either limitations encountered during the dissertation or recommendations for future research. Limitations were frequently not appropriate. Candidates tended to focus on time, number of words and their skills. These are not valid limitations as they are common to all candidates.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Question Paper

General

Candidates should be made aware that, as nutritional research is updated, they should undertake independent research to extend and update their knowledge.

Candidates must provide sufficient answers within each question to allow them to access the available marks.

At Advanced Higher level it is expected that answers provide good discussion and detailed explanations.

Section A

- a. Candidates should use their own words and only give a maximum of six responses.
- b. and c. Candidates may be able to use appropriate information from the report as a basis for some answers.

Section B

Question 1

As this question is predictably linked to an area of the Scottish diet, centres need to prepare their candidates in the techniques required to answer this question. Use of past marking instructions will alert candidates to the way in which they should respond. If the question is linked to Scottish dietary targets then candidates are expected to include accurate dietary targets in their responses.

Exam Preparation

Candidates should be encouraged to develop greater discussion skills within responses and link to the key words of the question eg coronary heart disease, vegetarianism.

Exam technique:

- ◆ The use of headings/sub headings will allow candidates to give more focus to their answers
- ◆ The practice of using bullet points when answering is advised.

Dissertation

General

The Guidance Notes for Candidates issued by SQA should be followed. Candidates should:

- ◆ keep within the word limit — approximately 3500 words excluding results, appendices and reference lists
- ◆ use double spacing
- ◆ avoid the use of personal pronouns
- ◆ check spelling before submission

Candidates should go back and look at the title and objectives after they have done research and change them if required so that the dissertation reflects the research undertaken.

All references within the dissertation should be included in the reference list.

Reference lists should be organised alphabetically by author, and dates and publishers should be stated. The date when an online reference was accessed should be included. The Guidance Notes for Candidates should be followed to ensure correct referencing of sources. Within the text of the dissertation, if the author of a source is unknown, candidates should, in the brackets containing the reference, cite the title of the work along with the date of the work.

Introduction

Candidates should include credible academic resources, such as books, reports, journals and avoid the use of too many online resources.

If quotes are used as part of the justification of an objective, there should also be some discussion to support the choice of objective.

Methodology

Questionnaires must be carefully constructed to gain as much information as possible to prove or disprove the objectives, allowing the candidate quality information for use in the conclusion.

If a questionnaire is used it should be piloted with the appropriate target group.

Methodology should also explain how distribution and supervision of the questionnaire are to be carried out.

If appropriate, candidates should consider using other methods of methodology, such as focus groups, food diaries, nutritional analysis and practical comparison activities to prove or disprove the objectives.

Results

Only the key findings should be under the results. It is not necessary to repeat all of the results.

Results should be in colour to assist interpretation.

Conclusion

Candidates should show a clear understanding of the limitations encountered their research. The limitations should be pertinent to their dissertation and could include, for example, any problems arising from their choice of methodology/target group. Limitations should not focus on time, number of words or candidates skills.

Recommendations for further research should be based on the research they have undertaken.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	33
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	35
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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	2.9%	2.9%	1	140
B	34.3%	37.1%	12	120
C	31.4%	68.6%	11	100
D	5.7%	74.3%	2	90
No award	25.7%	100.0%	9	-

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 SQA therefore 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 Business Manager 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.