



External Assessment Report 2014

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

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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. Most of these centres made good use of the guidance documents from SQA, whilst others found either the dissertation or question paper challenging.

The overall standard of the dissertations improved, with more candidates achieving A and B grades than in previous years. Some really interesting and varied topics were chosen by candidates, eg Food waste. Many candidates used references that were current and relevant.

All the questions in the question paper were accessed. Some very able candidates provided detailed and accurate answers, but some candidates' answers were very superficial.

All candidates used bullet points when answering the questions.

Some candidates did not write a sufficient number of responses to the question, which obviously lowered the ability to achieve marks. This was much more evident than in previous years.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Dissertation

Introduction

- ◆ Candidates generally provided a good overview of the chosen topic, but some introductions were too long and strayed from the title of the dissertation.
- ◆ Most candidates provided three appropriate objectives with justification.
- ◆ One candidate did not provide any objectives.

Methodology

- ◆ Suitable methods of research were chosen by all candidates.
- ◆ One centre had introduced a different approach to methodology, practical work, which offered an interesting interpretation of the dissertation and gave real opportunities for more discussion and research.
- ◆ Some candidates identified and justified specific questions that were particularly relevant to age or gender, which allowed them to further develop and evaluate the results in the conclusion.
- ◆ All questionnaires were piloted with the relevant target groups.

Results

- ◆ In general results had been completed to a good standard. Graphs were in colour and easy to interpret

Question paper

Section A

- ◆ Most candidates achieved full marks, showing an understanding of the report content. Good simple changes were made which ensured the main issues were identified accurately.
- ◆ However, there is still a minority of candidates who copied the exact words from the report and made no attempt to outline the issues in their own words.
- ◆ Most candidates gave six responses. This often benefitted candidates and is good practice.
- ◆ More able candidates provided a good range of relevant answers which linked to the health implications of being overweight or obese.
- ◆ Less able candidates did not always relate their answers clearly to health implications.
- ◆ Some candidates did not have sufficient knowledge to give 10 points, therefore did not access the full marks.

Section B

Q2 This was a popular topic with candidates. The responses of the more able candidates addressed the topic of organic foods well and provided relevant points. Less able candidates who choose this question wrote very little and as a result could not be awarded marks.

Q4 This question was well answered. Some very good points of information related to the techniques used by food manufacturers. These were well explained and analysed by candidates.

Q5 One candidate who answered this question demonstrated an excellent grasp of knowledge about the beneficial effects of micro-organisms in food production. The key aspects were well developed.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Dissertation

Methodology

- ◆ Some questionnaires did not cover all objectives. Questions should be more searching so candidates can elaborate on their findings
- ◆ Some questionnaires were too long and included questions that were not relevant to objectives.
- ◆ Some methodologies lacked detail and so making it difficult to replicate the research.

Conclusion

- ◆ Candidates frequently did not include limitations or further research.
- ◆ Some limitations identified by candidates were not valid, such as time constraints, candidates' skills, or lack of books in school library (it may be possible to organise inter-library loans).
- ◆ In general, the standard of the conclusions varied. Some candidates repeated key findings and results, whilst others made a really good attempt to draw conclusions and use the evidence of primary and secondary research.

Question Paper

Section A

(c) Some candidates did not read the question correctly and included answers that still linked to diet instead of 'factors other than diet'.

Section B

Q1(b) Many candidates were not able to relate their responses to the role of the school, and did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge to gain marks. Too much focus was placed on the role of the school canteen/ Hungry for Success instead of looking at how the role of the school could meet the challenge of improving Scotland's diet.

Q3 Although there were candidates who provided good discussion of the factors that contribute to good health during pregnancy, some responses did not link specifically to pregnancy.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Dissertation

General

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

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

Candidates should check the dissertation title after they have undertaken the research and make changes if necessary so that the title reflects the research undertaken.

Ensure a blank copy of the questionnaire, if used, is in the Appendix.

'Hungry for Success' is outdated. Candidates should make use of more current reports/initiatives such as 'Better Eating Better Learning'.

Reference lists should be organised alphabetically by author; 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. The subject matter/title of a website should also be included, not just a list of websites

Use the SQA document AH Dissertation Specification. This document demonstrates grade boundaries for each section of the dissertation and so will give guidance to candidates.

Introduction

Candidates should be more selective with regard to the information they include in their introduction. Avoid including information that is not relevant to the title. This should ensure that the introduction is not too lengthy, and that the objectives link to the information in the introduction.

Methodology

If using a questionnaire, ensure that all the questions link to the objectives. Irrelevant questions should not be included as this makes the questionnaire too lengthy.

Questionnaires need to be sufficiently searching for candidates to be able to elaborate/evaluate findings. Questions that ask for only a Yes/No response do not provide sufficient evidence, and do not allow the respondent to provide information that can then be used in the conclusion. Multiple choice questions, with an option of 'other' for respondents to use if required, would give more evidence.

Results

The results of some answers should be collated in a concise format. For example, rather than separate bar charts for each age group they could all be collated into one set of results, which would be easier to interpret.

Conclusion

Candidates should try to analyse and evaluate the results of both secondary and primary research.

More able candidates should try to look at the results section 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 the research. The limitations should be pertinent to the dissertation and could include, for example, any problems arising from the choice of methodology/ target group. Limitations should not focus on time, number of words, or candidates' skills, as these are common to all candidates.

Recommendations for further research should be based on any area the candidates have researched and which could merit further investigation or expansion.

Question paper

General

Candidates should be made aware that they are expected to 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. The mark awarded to the question should be used as a guide.

Candidates must read the question and respond to what is being asked — underlining the key points in the question may help candidates to focus.

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

Exam preparation

Section A — (a) Candidates must not copy the exact words from the report when outlining the main issues. Minor changes are acceptable, taking care not to alter the information given in the report. No more than five or six answers should be provided.

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

The use of headings/ sub headings may allow candidates to give more focus to their answers. Candidates should use bullet points when answering as this could help prevent repetition of answers.

Use of past marking instructions will help candidates to be aware of the points they should include in their responses.

Centres should provide opportunities for 'timed' question to be completed. This will allow for good time management during the examination and allow more time for the candidates own choice from Questions 2–5.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	36
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	38
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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	15.8%	15.8%	6	140
B	28.9%	44.7%	11	120
C	31.6%	76.3%	12	100
D	7.9%	84.2%	3	90
No award	15.8%	-	6	-

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.