



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Home Economics: 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

This year, there was a marked improvement in the quality of the dissertations with very few candidates achieving less than half marks. A number of candidates produced well researched dissertations which showed a very good understanding of the process. An increased range of dissertation topics was evident this year. New topics included: osteoporosis, athletes' diets, and consumers' awareness of labelling. All candidates followed the steps of the dissertation logically, but the methodology and conclusion again caused the most difficulty.

Pages of the dissertation should be kept loose to facilitate cross-checking during marking. Candidates should be reminded of the following points when compiling their dissertations:

- ◆ use double spacing
- ◆ do not exceed 3000 words
- ◆ do not write it in the 'first person'

Question Paper

Overall, the question paper was less well answered than in previous years. The more able candidates provided the depth and range of response required at Advanced Higher level. Several candidates lost marks through lack of focus on the key words of the question and by providing insufficient responses.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Dissertation

Introduction

Most candidates had read widely on their chosen topic.

Methodology

Candidates chose appropriate methods of research. Questionnaires used appropriate numbers of respondents and all were piloted.

Results

Most candidates provided clear results with key points stated underneath. Results were mostly presented in percentages which made for ease of interpretation.

Conclusions

Most candidates ensured that the conclusion covered all the results and attempted to make a link to the secondary research.

Question Paper

Section A

(a) Most candidates were able to outline the main issues of the report accurately and in their own words.

Section B

Question 1

(a) Those candidates who systematically worked their way through the Scottish dietary targets in relation to fast foods gave well thought-out and logical answers, and as a result performed better than the candidates who provided less structured responses.

Question 3

Some candidates gave a wide range of responses linked to food preferences and provided good discussion.

Question 5

Candidates generally answered well with a wide range of points being discussed in detail.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Dissertation

Introduction

Although all candidates had provided three objectives, some were investigations — rather than objectives — attempting to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Some candidates experienced difficulty trying to justify the objectives

Methodology

Some candidates had difficulty providing sufficient detail in the methodology, which would allow someone else to repeat their research. Candidates who provided only 1½ pages were not able to give enough detail to access the 30 marks available.

Results

Some candidates included sweeping statements/assumptions in key results. Only key results should be stated. Colour printed results are preferable; if this is not possible then results should be clearly labelled so that they can be easily interpreted. Some wording in the graphs was too small, making them difficult to decipher.

Conclusions

Once again, some candidates tended to repeat results with little discussion and analysis of the research. References to support the conclusions drawn were often omitted. Relevant limitations and further research were not provided by all candidates.

References

Some candidates omitted the date when online resources were accessed. American references were used by some candidates; references should be Scottish or UK-based sources.

Question Paper

Section A

(b) A number of candidates demonstrated a lack of basic knowledge of vitamins as their answers were not linked to the correct vitamin. The functions of the Vitamin B group of vitamins in relation to the elderly were not explained in depth. At this level, candidates are expected to have knowledge of each specific vitamin in the B group and should not merely provide a general overview of the function of the B group of vitamins. Some candidates did not read the question carefully and included protein, carbohydrates and fats in their response.

Section B

Question 1 (a)

Some candidates experienced difficulty with this question as they failed to make the link between the two key areas of this question — fast foods and Scottish dietary targets. The introductory stem of the question was ignored by a number of candidates.

Some candidates did not know the Scottish dietary targets accurately. The targets were discussed in vague terms and not linked to fast foods. Many candidates who attempted this question wrote about the fat, sugar and salt content in fast foods with no link to Scottish dietary targets.

Question 1(b)

Many candidates did not supply sufficient responses to gain the 15 marks awarded.

Candidates mainly focused on the role of manufacturers in their responses and made little reference to the role of producers and retailers.

Question 3

In their answers, candidates tended to repeat the same point in different ways and as a result a limited range of points were provided. Repetition was particularly evident in responses relating to advertising and available income. Few responses linked to the area of food issues.

Questions 2 and 4 were not attempted by candidates.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Dissertation

It is important that the title of the dissertation should reflect the work that has been undertaken. Candidates should review the dissertation on completion and if necessary reword the title to fit. Candidates must be reminded to proofread dissertations and check spelling prior to submitting it.

Introduction

Candidates must ensure that the literature review is not solely composed of facts with little or no linking discussion. The objectives should focus on what the candidate is trying to prove or disprove and must be measurable.

Methodology

Candidates should check that the research they are undertaking will prove or disprove the objectives appropriately. If using a questionnaire then the questions should cover the objectives. Questions which are not relevant to the objectives should be omitted as they will not provide appropriate evidence to prove or disprove the objectives.

Candidates should ensure that the questions are appropriate for the age of the respondents.

Questionnaires are unlikely to be the best way to establish nutritional deficiencies — a food diary or a nutritional analysis is more likely to give reliable results.

Questionnaires must not be taken away for respondents to complete at home as this reduces the reliability of the results. Unsupervised completion of questionnaires allows respondents to research answers and increases the possibility of someone else completing the questionnaire.

Results

Results should be in percentages — this makes them easier to interpret. Candidates should ensure that dual axes on graphs are clearly labelled.

Conclusions

Candidates should be encouraged to draw together all the information from secondary and primary research in order to draw credible conclusions.

Candidates should ensure that the conclusion does not just include a repetition of the results but shows the skills of analysis and evaluation of the results of the research.

Candidates should use 'may' or 'could' when writing the conclusion to avoid making assumptions.

'Time' is not a relevant limitation as all candidates are subjected to the same time limitation for completing the dissertation. Relevant limitations could include, for example, difficulties with access to the relevant target group which may have influenced the results of the questionnaire and so necessitated a change to the methodology.

Recommendations for further research should arise from results/ information/ issues discovered during the course of the dissertation and which could merit further research.

References

Candidates should take time to ensure that reference lists are organised alphabetically with dates and publishers stated. Dates when online resources are accessed must be included.

Candidates should ensure that the 'SQA Dissertation — Guidance Notes for Candidates' are followed. This will ensure that information/quotes are correctly referenced, allowing them to be verified during marking.

Question Paper

Candidates should be reminded that independent research should be undertaken in order to update and extend the Course content.

Exam preparation

Candidates should read each question carefully and underline key words. Some may benefit from mind mapping or bullet-pointing before starting their responses. Responses should show a link to the key words in the question. Repeating the same answer in different ways will result in all available marks not being accessed. Candidates should be aware that a range of answers are required to demonstrate a width of knowledge.

Candidates should access the previous marking instructions, available on SQA's website, for examples of what is expected when answering questions.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	34
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	33
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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	12.1%	12.1%	4	140
B	21.2%	33.3%	7	120
C	51.5%	84.8%	17	100
D	6.1%	90.9%	2	90
No award	9.1%	100.0%	3	-

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.