

Home Economics (Food, Nutrition and Health)

Advanced GCE A2 H511

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H111

Examiners' Reports

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Chief Examiner's Report

Examined Units: G001, G002 and G004

There is still a need for certain basic issues to be addressed in order to ensure that all candidates are able to achieve the best possible overall grade. All the Principal Examiners make reference to the fact that many individual candidates failed to do themselves full justice in terms of their examination performance. In both the AS papers, candidates seem to struggle most with the application of knowledge and planning their responses. For the examined units, it was disappointing to note that issues identified and highlighted in previous Principal Examiners' reports remained this series. For both the AS and A2 examined units examination technique remains a significant issue, many candidates are misunderstanding command words describe, explain and discuss and, as a result, their responses are not demonstrating sufficient application, analysis and evaluation of knowledge to be awarded high level marks. Writing for 60 minutes on up to four different sections of the specification is a significant challenge for AS students. Candidates need practise at quickly interpreting the set question, identifying and selecting information for analysis and then using a written structure that fits with the marking criteria to maximise their potential. In addition, centres are advised to look at the published mark schemes in order to familiarise themselves with the four level of descriptors used when assessing the extended written responses.

There was some evidence of students repeating a 'mock' or past examination response in the exam. The tendency to write an answer which the candidate has been set before on a topic does cost marks. Candidates really do need to think before they write to plan their answer carefully and, once they have started writing, to stop regularly to check that they are still answering the question.

Investigative Study: G003

The Principal Moderator has submitted a detailed report on the issues identified by moderators for the Investigative Study. Centres are strongly advised to refer to this for guidance on the development of candidates' work.

Performance was similar to previous cohorts. There were some excellent Investigative Studies where candidates were able to demonstrate a broad range of investigative skills and detailed subject knowledge.

For those centres whose assessment decisions are not in line with the national standard, it is strongly advised that they consult the exemplar material published by OCR as guidance and take on board the comments made in the Principal Moderator's Report and their individual centre reports. Centres are also reminded that OCR offers a free coursework consultation service for clarification on delivery and assessment issues, details can be obtained from OCR's website. Specific advice on the assessment criterion follows later in this report and will be extended at OCR training events.

G001 Society and Health

General Comments

The paper was accessible to all abilities although there were some poor scripts with poor knowledge demonstrated by superficial answers. Section A was accessible to all candidates; however, there were a number of candidates who gave a very weak performance on Section B. Some candidates did not attempt any part of the paper.

All candidates followed the instructions on the paper correctly, answering just two questions from three in Section B.

It would be useful if Centres could take note of the fact that at this level, the section B answers are extended answers not essays. Candidates need to take note that the second part of each Section B question is worth 15 marks, therefore more time should be spent on answering this part of the question. It is advisable that candidates consider a full and clear explanation of each point raised to access the higher mark bands. Some candidates wrote answers to both parts of a Section B question as one piece of continuous prose. This was particularly apparent in Section B, Question 3, where each part of the question concentrated on a different aspect of poverty. This made mark allocation very difficult and was unlikely to have produced clearly focused responses from the candidates.

Many candidates wrote plans; the better ones were concise bullet points which guided the candidate's answers well. Handwriting was generally legible in almost all cases, although some candidates did not write in a suitable pen which again made the question papers difficult to read and mark. However, there were a small proportion of candidates where handwriting was virtually illegible.

There are still a small number of candidates requiring additional sheets, with many often leaving whole blank sheets between answers. This is not a practice that should be encouraged; it is purely a waste of paper. Entire responses should be contained within the examination booklet provided.

When deciding which questions to answer in Section B, candidates should be advised to read all parts of the questions carefully first to ensure they have fully understood what is being asked, and to decide whether they can answer all parts of the question.

It appears that centres are often using last year's papers as a mock examination. This often led to candidates using responses from previous examination sessions and as a result candidates lost marks because they did not answer the question.

On a positive note there was, in some instances, an excellent use of subject specific terminology eg marginalisation, burden of dependency. This is encouraging to see that candidates can remember and use correctly the relevant terminology appropriately.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

1(a) (i), (ii), (iii) These questions were answered by the vast majority of candidates correctly, with the correct use of the percentage sign being included by most candidates.

- 1 (b) This was generally answered well by the majority of candidates. The most common answers identified the fact that most elderly women are living longer than men and that divorce are the main reasons for the increase in single person households.
- 1 (c) Many responses identified that candidates understood the term 'social care services.' They answered clearly and gave relevant examples. However, there were some candidates who misinterpreted the question incorrectly and gave responses that related to various other health services, for example, doctors and dentists or that described various community issues such as playgroups and leisure facilities.
- 1 (d) This was generally answered well with candidates correctly identifying the housing options available to students.
- 1 (e) Candidates often gave four correct strategies by which a household could save energy consumption in the home but the descriptions of these strategies were often weak, with the same point- saves energy- frequently repeated as a description. Full marks will not be awarded if the response is repeated for every answer.

Section B

2 This was the least popular question.

- (a) This question was not answered particularly well with candidates often identifying liver or heart disease and cancer as the health problems associated with excess alcohol consumption and very little other knowledge was demonstrated. Answers were often muddled with little evidence of planning demonstrated. This resulted in many candidates not accessing the higher mark bands. Candidates should have made reference to the other possible issues including neurological problems, obesity, high blood pressure, depression and the many other problems associated with excess alcohol.
- (b) Candidates often misread the question and discussed government campaigns relating to health issues and current dietary trends. Far too many candidates reproduced last year's answers on Government health issues and not how current dietary issues influence the health of the nation. Candidates should have made reference to issues including those relating to high fat and sugar diets, the increase in the consumption of convenience and processed foods and eating foods in the incorrect proportions.

3 This was the most popular question.

This question was generally well answered although far too many candidates mis-read the question and discussed homelessness, in great detail, and did not explain the causes of poverty. Many candidates often gave detailed descriptions of relative and absolute poverty which is not a requirement of the question. Candidates must focus upon the needs of the question and hence the response required.

Many candidates often repeated their answers from part (a) in part (b). This part of the question referred to the effects of poverty on individuals and society. Those who scored highly on this question were able to describe fully a range of the effects of poverty on both individuals and society. However to access the higher mark band, candidates were required to focus equally on the effect of poverty on both individuals and society.

4 This was a popular question.

Candidates often gave detailed descriptions of the many factors that influence population trends, including the role of women, birth, fertility and mortality rates. However, there were many candidates who made reference to these factors, such as birth and mortality rates, but then failed to make any link between them and how they influenced current population trends.

This question was well answered by the majority of candidates, who were able to explain in detail, with a good use of subject terminology, the effects of changing population trends on society. Candidates quite often correctly used and explained terms including marginalisation, deprivation and social exclusion.

G002 Resource Management

The question paper was accessible to all abilities. Candidates were well prepared for their examination with the majority confidently demonstrating their ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to the questions asked. Subject specific terminology was generally used accurately although some candidates continue to struggle to spell technical words correctly.

Not reading the question thoroughly before writing the answer created problems for a few candidates and limited their ability to access the marks available. Where low marks were recorded it appeared to be the result of a lack of specific knowledge, a failure to read the question stem with accuracy or poor examination technique. Occasionally, poor presentation of the response and a lack of clarity of expression contributed to a lower mark. Good responses were factually accurate and successfully applied to the question.

Candidates must read the question and respond according to the command word. In Section A the command words 'state' or 'give' require short basic answers whereas more demanding questions carried the 'describe' or 'explain' command words and provided the opportunity for candidates to give more extended answers in order to show the depth and breadth of their knowledge. Candidates must ensure they make full use of this opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in these questions and not give short or repetitive responses.

In Section B, many candidates still write out the question (not always correctly) at the beginning of each written response. Undoubtedly, this helps some candidates to structure their responses. However, effective time management is crucial for success in the examination and the use of other methods to identify the key words in a question could save time and help the candidates to frame their response.

There is evidence that some candidates have learnt a previous mark scheme on a topic and then attempted to apply this knowledge to any question set in this area of the specification. Candidates need to carefully adapt their knowledge to the question set.

Section A

1 (a) (i) The majority of answers were correct but a few candidates quoted '1200' or 'higher'.

1 (a) (ii) Mostly correct but some candidates gave the answer as 6 or 9 kg.

1 (b) (i) Some candidates gave the correct abbreviation but found it difficult trying to quote the full title of the organisation.

Clearly from the range of responses many candidates were not familiar with the Kitemark symbol.

1 (b) (ii) Most candidates were able to state at least one advantage of purchasing a product that carries the Kitemark symbol. The product having been tested for safety being quoted frequently.

1 (c) (i) Most candidates were able to achieve one mark but few were able to describe fully what was meant by the term Fairtrade. A significant number of candidates did not refer to farmers and workers in the developing world.

- 1 (c) (ii) Whereas there were some very good responses gaining full marks, some candidates assumed fairtrade products to be organic and wrote about the benefits of no additional chemicals. Others candidates made reference to people having a higher disposable income but did not link this specifically to the purchase of fairtrade products.
- 1 (d) The most popular advantages were the environmental benefit of reducing 'food miles' and the support for the local economy. However, a few candidates assumed local produce to taste better or be fresher just because it was local without an adequate explanation. Generally, the advantages were explained better than the disadvantages. Many candidates seemed to accept that a reliance on local produce would result in less choice as only seasonal food would be available without an adequate explanation.
- 1 (e) (i) Few candidates were able to define the functional food accurately.
- 1 (e) (ii) Generally, those candidates who had given a correct definition in part (i) were able to give a suitable example of a functional food.
- 1 (f) The majority of candidates were able to provide well developed explanations of the reasons why eating outside the home is becoming popular. A few candidates stated reasons without offering an explanation.

Section B

Centres should remind candidates that they will be awarded marks for the quality of their written communication in the responses to the questions in Section B. A few candidates completed their responses in Section B as one long paragraph with very little punctuation. There were also some responses presented as a list of bullet points or in the form of a table.

- 2 (a) Few candidates achieved full marks. Many candidates did not confine their answer to describing the factors that may influence the selection and purchase of a microwave oven but wrote about the benefits of microwave ownership. Higher achieving candidates were able to identify a range of factors including price, aesthetics and features and describe how they would influence decision making. There were frequent references to energy efficiency and labels by candidates who did not realise that the scheme does not apply to microwave ovens.
- (b) This question produced a range of responses. Higher achieving candidates were able to explain, often with examples, the advantages and disadvantages of a range of different sources of information available to the customer when purchasing goods and services.
- However, many candidates referred to only a limited number of sources of information and confined their response to explaining advantages only. The reliability of the information was frequently overlooked. A few candidates misinterpreted the question and explained the advantages of the sources of information available to the manufacturer/retailer not the consumer.
- 3 (a) All candidates were able to describe a number of sources of income available for individuals and households. Some candidates focused mainly on the welfare benefits available to individuals and households while others made no reference to this possible source of income. It is disappointing that reference is still made to family allowances, old age pensions and unemployment benefit. There seems to be a misconception that child benefit is only available to single parents too.

- (b) There were a few excellent responses enabling the candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the ways in which a student household can effectively plan their finances. Many candidates, however, confined their responses to budgeting for food explaining ways of saving money when planning and preparing meals and shopping for food. References to installing loft insulation and cavity wall insulation were irrelevant to the situation but a few candidates suggested choosing to rent a more modern property because insulation would probably be installed thus savings for them on energy bills.
- 4
- (a) Few candidates achieved high marks. The majority had not read the question carefully and so did not focus on the issues that a busy family with young children should consider when managing their food resources but referred to ways of saving money when planning meals or shopping without consideration of the lack of time. Nutritional issues associated with young children were frequently omitted.
 - (b) There were some very good explanations of the advantages and disadvantages of different retail outlets available for purchasing food. However, there was a tendency to describe rather than explain the advantages and disadvantages of the different outlets.

Many candidates did not seem to understand the difference between the two types of market – street and farmers'. Good responses also considered a range of different retail outlets and avoided repetition in their answers.

G003 Investigative study

General

A wide range of work was submitted. A small minority of centres used the design and technology route for their practical work. Nearly all work was nutrition based. There was a variety of themes used as task titles, and much of the work was interesting to read. A small minority of centres picked inappropriate themes which were more project-like eg 'Party Foods'.

The format of the work has greatly improved and it was obvious where centres have attended INSET, or used the text book to support their candidates in the production of the study.

There were some excellent Investigative studies where candidates were able to demonstrate a wide range of investigative skills and extensive subject knowledge. These investigations progressed logically and used a wide selection of primary research methods.

Generally the presentation of work for moderating was good. A great deal of work was presented in a very professional manner eg use of spiral bindings, dividers, excellent use of ICT skills.

Centres used various methods to show how the marks had been awarded and those that had taken the time to fully annotate the work were usually far more accurate. Many centres provided additional paperwork with a break down of all the assessment criterion, others highlighted the pages from the specification and made additional comments.

Some annotation was unfortunately haphazard and rarely linked to the three assessment bands L, M or H, this tended to lead to inaccurate and over generous marking.

Unfortunately once again many centres over marked their candidates' work.

Administration

A small minority of centres failed to submit centre declaration sheets and there were some mathematical errors. The work was very prompt to arrive this year.

Assessment Criteria 1

- 1 (a) Many candidates included mind maps in this section for selection of topic but very few candidates then went on to discuss issues raised. Mind maps are an excellent starting point but need following up with a discussion, which includes a reference to the opportunities and issues.
- 1 (b) Most candidates were able to select an appropriate context and title giving reasons for their choice. Some candidates failed to identify a context for their investigation. When a context was identified the discussion and justification was usually too brief. Initial research was variable. It was encouraging to see effective use of the internet, information collected was analysed and discussed by more able candidates. Some centres encouraged candidates to include too much initial research instead of focusing on selecting good quality research and scrutinising it carefully. Other candidates failed to complete any initial research.
- 1 (c) Most candidates produced a table showing the scope of opportunities with a range of different practical and investigative methods. Even the weaker candidates managed to produce a good table.

- 1 (d) Most candidates selected an appropriate number of aims, which offered scope for primary research. Some candidates were a little too ambitious and devised an aim, which would take much longer than the allocated time to realistically achieve. Objectives were linked to aims, further evidence of the impact of INSET.

Assessment Criteria 2

2(a) and 2(b) were the weakest areas with some centres marking aims as 2(b).

- 2 (a) The hypotheses were either excellent or very poor. Some candidates had more than one. Where the candidate had fully understood what they were trying to achieve this was reflected in a succinct hypothesis, which could be discussed when evaluating the work.
- 2 (b) The design specifications tended to be very general and many needed more specific information if marks are to be awarded from the high bracket.
- 2 (c) This was generally very well done. Many candidates provided tables with methods and lists of equipment in their practical work.
- 2 (d) This was sometimes unclear, because of the way the work had been carried out and much of the research had been put together and not fully discussed at this stage. Centres need to ensure that decision-making is evident in the report. The choices made by the candidate should evolve from the initial research and knowledge acquired.
- 2 (e) Planning was sometimes completed retrospectively and often quite brief with very few changes/problems highlighted. Generally though the plans of action were good and contained realistic timescales however, some candidates gave only a cursory statement of 'completed' next to each activity. There was a significant amount of lenient marking with this section.

Assessment Criteria 3

The implementation provides the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate a range of skills. The success of the implementation depends upon the nature of the task.

Over marking usually took place in the implementation section. Candidates were often credited in the higher band when, in fact, the work should have only been in the middle band.

- 3 (a) Background information was variable and some candidates are still downloading far too much information and including it in their folders – often just highlighting references that they think are relevant. This could all be condensed. Too many centres used the internet as their only source for secondary information.
- 3 (b) Photographic evidence was very useful to support marks awarded by the centre.
- 3 (c) Most candidates were able to complete the relevant time plans with generally accurate timings.
- 3 (d) Many candidates completed a wide range of investigative methods. The most popular being questionnaires and surveys. More candidates included interviews this year.
- 3 (e) Photographic evidence in this area helped identify the food activities that had taken place and was really interesting to look at. There was a wide variety of skills evident in the practical work, however candidates must be careful to make sure that they include skills of a high order to get into the high band.

- 3 (f) Candidates who had selected appropriate primary research tended to produce better work. Surveys and the disassembly of products were also evident. It was encouraging to see the level of sophistication towards sensory testing adopted by some centres. The way in which sampling and measurements were recorded displayed a good level of skill.

Nutritional analysis was frequently disappointing, it was often a print out without any comments and it was frequently not compared back to the relevant age group. For example school meals work where the actual age of the child had not been decided and the nutritional print out showed all ages as well as adults. Many candidates seem to lack the skill to analyse the charts. Similarly where candidates calculated the costs of their practical work it often lacked detailed analysis.

- 3 (g) Most candidates were able to meet their objectives.
- 3 (h) There was some original and creative work but all too often teachers are giving very high marks in this section even if candidates were only producing graphs and scanning in photos.
- 3 (i) Students producing leaflets were not always completing them to a high standard, with gaps and two sides of paper being glued together. ICT skills were variable. All candidates need to ensure that they use ICT competently. Some graphs had no labelled axis or title. The use of three dimensional cone graphs and polo mints graphs were not appropriate for recording the results. Candidates could be more selective in the choice of question to analyse and to the choice of graph to present their findings.

Evidence of the use of digital cameras and scanners was pleasing.

Assessment Criteria 4

This was probably the weakest area for all candidates as candidates struggled to analyse what they had done and tended just to state what they have done rather than be analytical about it. Many centres were too generous in allocating marks to the evaluation.

- 4 (a) Most candidates could evaluate their practical work and relate what they had done in their investigative tasks. Candidates were very good at writing descriptively about their investigation and discussing the outcome. They also made valid judgements about the value of research methods they had used.
- 4 (b) Some candidates recognised how their aims had been met but not to what extent.
- 4 (c) Analysing their strengths and weaknesses was generally weak and some of the comments made tended to be superficial.
- 4 (d) Most candidates could produce a general evaluation but it was harder for them to be critical and again superficial comments were made. In the better investigations candidates referred to the original aims and hypothesis.

Word Count

The vast majority were within the correct word limit and where the word count was significantly lower it was reflected in the mark achieved.

Appendices

Appendices were well referenced in the vast majority of cases. Many candidates had placed a detailed evaluation into an appendix. In the majority of centres the appendices were set out in a logical fashion following the assessment criteria. Just a few centres had overly large appendices.

G004 Nutrition and food production

Overall, examiners saw a wide range of candidate performance both between and within individual centres. There were no rubric errors and the vast majority of candidates attempted to answer all the Section A questions and two questions from Section B. This indicates that the questions were clear and accessible to all and that centres are familiar with the format of this examination paper.

Most candidates used their time effectively, spending more time on section B which is worth two thirds of the overall marks. The majority of candidates wrote between 4 and 6 pages of the answer book. The answer book provided sufficient space for responses in virtually all cases. There was a clear centre effect on this paper. Candidates who had been prepared well, even those who were clearly of weaker ability, managed to pick up marks on all section B questions. Most candidates had obviously been well prepared for answering the long essay questions with evidence of clear planning and well structured answers. Some excellent essays were seen in Section B.

Section A was more challenging and some candidates struggled to recall information with accuracy. There were a few candidates' responses in Section B that were in the format of a list of bullet points, not an essay, thus reducing the quality of written communication.

Quality of written communication is a concern for some candidates. Poor spelling and handwriting has, in a small number of cases, affected the flow of a candidate's work to the point where it is difficult to even see what the candidate was attempting to say.

Section A

The majority of candidates were able to attempt all of the questions – there were very few NRs. However, very few candidates achieved very high or full marks.

- 1 (a) (i) Some candidates did not read the question carefully and they inaccurately named a good food source of beta carotene instead of retinol. A significant number of candidates suggested that red meat is a good source of retinol.
- 1 (a) (ii) Generally, this was answered correctly with carrots being the most popular response.
- 1 (a) (iii) Most candidates were able identify at least one dietary function of vitamin A. Higher achieving candidates were able to refer to the role of vitamin A in the formation of rhodopsin (visual purple) or its role in maintaining mucous membranes. However, some candidates referred to the function of vitamin A to improve not aid vision, with no reference to dim light.
- 1 (a) (iv) Generally, candidates could identify one possible symptom of vitamin A deficiency. Night blindness being the most frequent response.
- 1 (b) There were some very good explanations of the relationship between vitamin C and iron. Most candidates gained at least 1 mark for saying vitamin C aids the absorption of iron. Higher achieving candidates referred either to the reduction of ferric to ferrous iron or the haem and non-haem form of iron.

- 1 (c) A significant proportion of candidates answered this question well and there were some excellent descriptions of the reasons why foods may be fortified which included specific examples. A few candidates confused fortified foods with functional foods and food additives.
- 1 (d) (i) Most candidates were able to give at least one reason why sensory analysis tests are used in food production although some responses referred to establishing a shelf life for a product and assessing the nutritional value.
- 1 (d) (ii) A range of responses were seen but only a few candidates demonstrated an accurate knowledge of sensory analysis tests. When two tests were correctly identified often their descriptions were vague or muddled. The terms rating and ranking were often confused. Some candidates appeared to have only a limited knowledge of sensory analysis referring to 'taste testing', 'blind taste testing' and 'comparison tests'.
- 1 (e) Generally, answered well with many different methods used to advertise and launch new food products in a supermarket described. Price promotion, product placement and tasting sessions were popular responses. Some candidates misread the question and their responses were not confined to methods used in a supermarket such as TV, radio and newspaper advertising.
- 1 (f) Few candidates achieved full marks because the majority of responses referred only to a deficiency or excess/imbalance of nutrients without explaining fully the adverse effect on health and wellbeing.

Section B

Question 4 was the least popular question and was generally answered the least well of the three questions.

- 2 Whilst all candidates were able to demonstrate at least superficial knowledge of the nutritional and dietary needs of pregnant women, a common tendency was to respond to the question in an unbalanced way with a greater emphasis being placed on pregnancy than lactation.

There were a few outstanding responses where detailed and precise understanding was shown of the nutrient requirements and the dietary considerations during pregnancy and lactation.

The recommendations regarding folic acid were generally known but very few candidates referred to the foetus' need to build up an iron store for the first 6 months of life. Most candidates were able to refer to and give reasons for at least some of the foods to avoid during pregnancy. When giving reasons candidates who gave specific details were awarded credit. Some candidates wasted time by going into detail about the harmful effects of smoking and drug taking during pregnancy. In weaker responses, candidates did not distinguish between the differing needs of pregnant and lactating women.

- 3 There was a wide range of responses to this question. In very good responses candidates were able to demonstrate an accurate knowledge of the nutritional value, choice and use of eggs. A key differentiator in marking this question was the candidates' reference to the performance characteristics of eggs as highlighted in the specification. There was a good understanding of coagulation, emulsification and foam formation and responses were structured well with explanations of how each of these can be utilised in food preparation.

Reference to an egg's nutritional value varied considerably from a list of the nutrients supplied by a hen's egg to a description of the function of each of the nutrients. A significant minority of candidates provided information explaining the choice of eggs but there was some confusion between barn and free range methods of production. In some responses there was too much emphasis on just one aspect of the question eg uses of eggs with the nutritional value and choice of eggs being only addressed superficially. In this type of question, to achieve the higher mark band, a balance needs to be achieved and a plan would be helpful.

- 4 Whilst most candidates who chose this question demonstrated at least a superficial knowledge of the reasons for the changes in the availability and supply of food products in the UK, there were few outstanding responses. On occasion, knowledge and understanding was generalised, failing to directly apply to the question set. Higher achieving candidates chose to explain issues such as globalisation, bio fuels and overfishing etc; however, they did not always link their explanation sufficiently to the effect on the availability and supply of food products in the UK.

Answers tended to be rather narrowly focussed with some candidates concentrating on just one or two reasons such as the impact of climate change or immigration. There were some rather confused ideas about the impact of the recession on food prices and changes in eating habits although the terms 'deskfast' and 'dashboard dining' were frequently used. Changes brought about by technological advances were often stated but often showed a lack of understanding – eg bio fuels being better for the environment and cheaper, rather than the effect on reducing crops for food.

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