

CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)

Moderators' report

APPLIED SCIENCE

05847–05849, 05879, 05874

Summer 2024 series

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Introduction

Our Moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on centres' assessment of moderated work, based on what has been observed by the moderation team. These reports include a general commentary of accuracy of internal assessment judgements, identify good practice in relation to evidence collation and presentation and comment on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Objectives. The report also highlights areas where requirements have been misinterpreted and provides guidance to centre assessors on requirements for accessing higher mark bands. Where appropriate, the report will also signpost other sources of information that centre assessors will find helpful.

OCR completes moderation of centre-assessed work in order to quality assure the internal assessment judgements made by assessors within a centre. Where OCR cannot confirm the centre's marks, we may adjust them in order to align them to the national standard. Any adjustments to centre marks can be viewed on the Interchange claim once processed by the moderator. Centres should also refer to their individual centre report provided after moderation has been completed. In combination, these centre-specific documents and this overall report should help to support centres' internal assessment and moderation practice for future series.

Online courses

We have created online courses to build your confidence in delivering, marking and administering internal assessment for our qualifications. Courses are available for Cambridge Nationals, GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016).

Cambridge Nationals

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General overview

Centres realise that a moderation visit date has to be agreed before a claim can be sampled. Before submitting a claim onto Interchange, centres should make sure the individual grade being claimed by a candidate is correct. Centres realise that they do not need to make a claim when the whole cohort have completed but are submitting when the candidate is ready. Centres should consider submitting claims well before OCR result deadlines, consequently internal candidate deadlines should follow to allow time for units to be internally assessed before a claim is made.

A strong centre Internal Verification system maintains the required assessment standards across the whole assessing team. Moderators will request evidence that Internal Verification takes place.

Most centres made sure the URS sheets were accurately completed. However, not all candidates numbered their portfolios pages, so when the assessor completed the URS sheet, they could not enter the page numbers for the different criteria onto the URS. This in turn hampers moderation as specific evidence is not easily located. Unit page numbering on the URS becomes more important when units are combined as a project.

Most assessor comments on the URS were personal to each candidate's quality of evidence. However in a few cases, comments were just a repeat of the criteria.

The assessors should annotate the appropriate evidence in the portfolios. This guidance will indicate if the candidate has achieved the relevant grade criteria it will indicate to the candidate that the evidence is either missing or needs to be improved. It also helps the moderator if the grades for the various learning outcomes are indicated on the portfolios at the appropriate place.

Verbal presentation by candidates would be useful, especially when carrying out investigations and discussions. A verbal presentation or viva would indicate whether AI has been used in evidence. A witness statement giving exactly the competences displayed by the candidate would evidence their practical ability. Again witnessed audit trails of candidates' online interactive activities could be used to show the breadth and depth of candidates' competence.

All research was well referenced throughout by candidates.

Comments on individual units

Unit 4 – Human physiology

For LO1, candidates had a sound understanding of the organs that make up the digestive system and how they enable food to be digested and absorbed. Candidates enhanced their information with relevant images. They were able to explain the symptoms of a common disorder related to digestive system and give a simple diagnosis if a patient presented symptoms.

The use of x-ray images supporting the explanation was used by a number of centres whose candidates were considering a career in Radiology.

For LO2, candidates had a good understanding of the role of the musculoskeletal system in maintaining the structure and movement of the body and were able to explain the importance of the role of bone marrow to both the skeletal and immune system.

A number of candidates used sequenced images to show the movement of sections of the body.

For LO3, candidates were to take and record basic cardiovascular measurements, although not all candidates recorded their measurements in a clear format. A method of evidencing the competence of a candidate was to present photographs of the candidates and witness statements.

For LO4, to show the practical nature of the learning objective, centres presented evidence for taking measurements related to the respiratory system in a number of ways such as a sequence of photographs, storyboarding or witness statement.

For LO5, centres tended to produce a straightforward 'texted' approach on why it is important to regulate body fluids. However this was balanced by the wide range of evidence formats used throughout the whole unit.

For LO6, candidates used detailed examples to explain how the immune system functions when a vaccine is administered thereby preventing infection by certain diseases.

Unit 5 – Genetics

Centres had a good understanding of this unit. A limited range of evidence formats such as text and images tended to be used.

Candidates were introduced to a range of scientific meanings.

Centres used a variety of resources to explain a range of genetic principles.

OCR support



This OCR resource can be used to guide centres through a project approach for this unit: [A project approach to delivery developing a genomics pipeline.](#)

For LO1, candidates were able to describe and explain of the importance of the process of meiosis in inheritance using extended prose to provide sufficient detail to cover the requirements of the assessment criteria.

For LO2, candidates were able to discuss the relationship between genotypes and phenotypes at a molecular and biochemical levels. They were able to demonstrate the chi-squared test (χ^2 -squared test) to compare expected and observed progeny in a cross.

Candidates were able to identify epistasis and were aware that with advances in DNA sequencing and having produced genomes for many species, it is now possible to produce physical maps of the genome.

For LO3, candidates were able to give good descriptions of the principles and advantages of DNA sequencing and the principles of genetic profiling and could evaluated the significance and limitations of genetic profiling techniques.

For LO4, candidates could assess the impact and implications of a DNA sequencing project and its impact, such as the Human Genome Project and then produce a report in terms the public will understand.

Unit 6 – Control of Hazards in the Laboratory

Centres have a good understanding of the requirements of this unit but did not always recognise the overall aim of the units consequently the evidence tended to be compartmentalised.

Assessment for learning



Consider the order of delivering LOs/criteria.

Initially you may consider introducing LO3, then candidates will realise the relevance of LO1 and LO2 when designing a biolab.

As candidates will have only had experience of a school laboratory, the introduction of the design and procedures of Level 2 or level 3 containment laboratories will broaden candidates' knowledge of the designs of biolabs.

For LO1, candidates should explain how organisms reproduce and so cause disease. They also need to know how pathogens are transmitted to be able to reduce risks in a laboratory as this is pertinent to the candidates equipment and procedures within a laboratory. Candidates did not always focus categorising hazards in a laboratory situation.

For LO2, a risk assessment is required for a laboratory procedure, candidates should be aware of how risk is determined.

Assessment for learning



A risk assessment is simply a means of determining the risk associated with work with a particular hazard. In the workplace, this is most often broken down into five steps.

The methods chosen to control the risks identified by the risk assessment should follow the hierarchical approach which is common to both MHSWR and COSHH.

Candidates should consider how laboratory acquired infections can be prevented as well as the legislation and guidance for working with biological agents and how it influences procedures and practices.

D1, D2: when evaluating the effectiveness of current legislation and procedures for D1 and D2 candidates could analysis data from infection in various types of laboratory rather than use examples outside of the laboratory.

Candidates do not always realise the detail required for a Level 3 qualification evaluation.

They should consider are there still incidents happening, if so are there more incidents or fewer incidents happening.

An approach might be to research the accident incidents before 2011 (when a regulation change occurred due to the Pirbright Foot and Mouth incident) and those after. Candidates could use examples to support their evidence.

For LO3, an initial introduction examining the different level of containment laboratory might enhance candidates' approach to compiling evidence.

Some candidates' laboratory designs varied with some tending to be general and lacking detail. As well as an explanation, on occasions a sketch is presented with no idea of scale; candidates need to remember a laboratory should have adequate space to allow for safe movement, and therefore giving an idea of scale is important. The types of material used could have been included. There needs to be more detail of the materials that would be used for the furniture, flooring, work benches and so on, and how the design could minimise risks.

Other designs were more detailed, as a scenario had been set so the laboratory was designed with a specific purpose.

It is best that candidates decide on a specific containment level laboratory to design.

Assessment for learning



Make sure assessment of P4 evidence includes comments relating to the design specification of the equipment/materials used in construction to control risks i.e. does the candidates' design control risks, which then leads onto procedures needed to reduce risks.

For D3, by listing containment control regulations and control of diseases in a laboratory, the relevant legislation will introduce candidates to the idea that in most career situations there are relevant regulations and legislation.

Unit 7 – Nutrition

Centres have a very good understanding of this unit and used a wide variety of formats when presenting evidence.

For LO1, candidates had a sound understanding of the components of a healthy balanced diet and produced a variety of formats that would appeal to the public. Candidates could be more specific and focus on specified professions as well as designated groups

For LO2, candidates understood that energy expenditure is the sum of the basal metabolic rate, the thermic effect of food and the energy expended in physical activity. That metabolic processes require energy and the minimum amount of energy your body requires to carry out these chemical processes is called the basal metabolic rate (BMR).

Both practical investigations finding energy content of a carbohydrate food and calculating the BMR of groups of people were supported by tabulated results, photographs of candidates undertaking investigations and witness statements.

For LO3, candidates produced a wide range evidence and detailed examples of conditions relating to dietary needs.

A number of candidates produced booklets and leaflets targeting the public, which demonstrated a detailed and sympathetic understanding of the subject.

D1 required candidates to recommend and justify nutritional requirements for a specific group of people; some candidates drew on their understanding of prior criteria and created a summary based on it.

For LO4, a number of centres approached this as a practical investigative activity collecting, analysing and then evaluating food labelling. Some centres also produced and justified labelling for a food product that targeted a specific group of people, which summarises the whole unit.

Unit 8 – Cell Biology

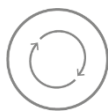
Those centres that presented Unit 8 had a good understanding of this unit. A limited range of evidence formats such as text and images tended to be used.

For LO1, centres tended to produce evidence in the form of a PowerPoint presentation which focused on biological membranes, how they are involved in the movement of substances into and out of the cell, and the role of endomembrane systems. Candidates were able to explain how different types of cell chemical and electrical signalling systems work in the human body and how it might become defective.

For LO2, candidates used photographs and labelled images to demonstrate that they could carry out cell staining techniques, and the use of a haemocytometer and oil immersion microscopy. This was supported by witness statements as to the competency of the candidate's skill.

For LO3, candidates used a text format to describe and explain the stages of mitosis and cytokinesis, and what happened if mitosis did not proceed properly.

Assessment for learning



Explaining the importance of mitosis

A good starting point would be to examine the processes microscopically, either with some prepared slides or a video sequence from the internet. Basic estimations of the duration of the respective stages can be made by counting the cells in each phase. Candidates could describe the stages and events during mitosis. Following the teaching of the stages, candidates can demonstrate their understanding of the processes on the work bench, assembling poppet beads as chromosomes (different colours can be added to illustrate genes), string as spindle fibres, and a board marker to illustrate degradation and then re-formation of the nucleus.

For LO4, candidates used a text format in describing the process of cellular differentiation and how genes are involved in this process. Again, using text candidates explained the use, and potential use of stem cells in medicine, explaining the techniques used in the collection and culture of stem cells and how they are then used in stem cell therapies.

Unit 10 – Testing consumer products

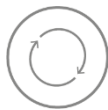
Centres carried out the practical investigations within the unit very well. A number of centres approached this unit with a project with linkage between learning objectives, whereas some centres treated learning objectives independently.

For LO1, candidates considered carefully which product they researched so that they were able to obtain information so as to fully cover the grade criteria. They appreciated how regulation affects the quality imposed on their product. A number of candidates presented generic information over a range of products and then focused on a specific product.

For LO2, when candidates consider the tests in P2, they should consider the sensitivity, accuracy and reliability of each test then this would link into M2 as well as support the development of regulations in LO1.

For LO3, in D1 some candidates linked the results in M3 to establish the comparison of results. Again candidates can link to P2 (test selected) when considering the accuracy of their results. It is expected that a range of titrimetric techniques are used by the candidate.

Assessment for learning



The approach should be that all measurements and observations should be recorded, in tabular form where appropriate. Measurements should be recorded to the degree of accuracy of the equipment used. Candidates should be careful in the use of significant figures and decimal places, with their evaluations needing to have depth with a reasoned opinion based on the evidence collected.

Candidates should look carefully at using correct science in the evaluations and should also include comments on the validity and reliability of the investigation as well as how it could be improved. A percentage accuracy should also be considered against a given value.

For LO4, candidates carried out the investigations well with good supporting results. Centres should always carry out risk assessments before carrying out practical activities and be aware of chemicals that are not suitable for use in a school laboratory.

For LO5, centres used a range of products from biological washing powder to antimicrobial solutions to test for their effectiveness.

Unit 13 – Environmental surveying

A number of centres combine the Units 13 and 14 into a 'project' based around an environmental practical investigation where environmental survey results supported both units.

The environmental investigation could be supported by the Environmental Model Assignment from Unit 6 which highlights the risks of fieldwork and how those risks can be minimised.

For LO1, by giving examples which were exemplified with images, candidates were able to describe the impact of both human activities and natural events on the environment and how a human activity has impacted on the environment.

Assessment for learning



Increased human activity has led to a range of effects on the environment, such as:

- water shortages
- pollution
- deforestation
- soil erosion and desertification
- loss of biodiversity
- climate change
- sea level rise
- flooding.

Agriculture is a major land use. Around 50% of the world's habitable land has already been converted to farming land. Overall, farmland covers 38% of the world's land area and so has a major impact on the environment.

For LO2, candidates carried out an environmental impact assessment on a local area such as a local park or river bank. There was a good use of photographs describing the location.

For LO3 and LO4, candidates explained how they would collect and analyse environmental data from soil and water and then carried out tests such as pH, mineral content, microorganisms.

For LO4, candidates presented outcomes from their environmental investigations and recommending actions to maintain a positive effect on the environment. Presentations tended to be a PowerPoint.

Unit 14 – Environmental management

A number of centres combine these units into a 'project' based around an environmental practical investigation where environmental survey results supported both units.

The environmental investigation could be supported by the Environmental Model from Unit 6.

For LO1, candidates compared the environmental characteristics of a natural environment to a built up environment. These tended to be areas near to the centre such as a park and town centre. They went on and presented their comparisons usually in the form of a leaflet.

For LO2, candidates carried out an environmental investigation, collecting data relevant to pollution control and producing a relevant analysis. This activity was linked to Unit 13.

For LO3, candidates produced PowerPoint presentations outlining environmental regulations on the areas that they had investigated which were mainly parks and town centres.

For LO4, candidates evaluated the techniques these used when collecting and analysing environmental data commenting on reliability and precision.

For LO5, candidates used their evaluations of the evidence and techniques from LO4 to produce a presentation, usually a PowerPoint presentation that gave conclusions and recommendations on the areas that they had investigated.

Unit 18 – Microbiology

Centres have a good understanding of this unit.

For LO1, centres tended to give detailed descriptions with downloaded images, but candidates did not always give a size or magnification of the images. A few centres approached the learning objective with a more practical approach where candidates were given a range of slides of microorganisms which they identified giving an analysis of their findings. This was linked to Unit 2 LO4 [Be able to examine and record features of biological samples], with candidates recording relevant data and making biological drawings while using a microscope. This approach gave a greater 'hands-on' scientific approach as candidates would be using Gram Staining and DNA extraction methods.

Assessment for learning



For LO1, the information should be sufficient for a second person to be able to identify an unknown microorganism.

For LO2, candidates gave good descriptions of the use of microorganisms in agriculture but their evaluation of the consequences of the introduction of GM crops tended to be lacking in detail and quantitative data. Their approach might be that they have to: 'convince a group to their held belief'.

Assessment for learning



Candidates need to identify the scientific benefits and possible pit falls then decide which out-weighs the other; evidence can be extended by considering ethical values.

Candidates could discuss:

do GM crops harm the environment; use of broad spectrum herbicides; possible loss of beneficial insects; effects on soil; escape of genes into weeds; survival of herbicide tolerant plants; cross-pollination; pesticide resistance; loss of biodiversity; help feed the poor; farming and trade policies; healthcare benefits; Increasing Yields.

For LO3, candidates gave a general overview of the four industries given in the specifications. The naming of relevant microorganism strengthens the detail.

The grade criteria require only one food to be produced – consideration could be given to linking with Unit 21 Product testing techniques. Centres produced a range of food products; however some foods allowed a greater depth of knowledge to be shown such as: yogurt, bread, beer, wine which was reflected in M4, with some candidates giving little when giving evidence for biochemical processes. Candidates did not always post- test their product to see if optimum conditions have been met.

For LO4, centres were able to give detailed evidence supported with images and the use of case studies to broaden their evidence with summaries from The World Health Organisation, England, the Health and Social Care Act 2008 Code of Practice. The higher performing distinction candidate was able to support their evidence with quantitative data and trends supported by graphical evidence.

Unit 19 – Crop production and soil science

Centres have a good understanding of this unit.

For LO1, candidates were able to research and describe the crops grown across the UK focusing on their production cycle and yields and how production might vary monthly as climatic conditions alter. To maximise crop production farmers use a variety of techniques and farming methods, some of which can impact on the wider environment. They need to understand that there is a public debate on which farming methods should be used and whether food production should take precedence over stewardship of the environment.

For LO2, candidates researched how to maximise commercial plant growth as it is extremely important in ensuring our growing population has enough food. Their focus should be on how plant yields can be maximised and how the selection of the appropriate commercial plant variety is an important factor. Candidates should also consider maintaining the biodiversity of plant species for agriculture while keeping in mind genetic engineering in plants, and how it can be used to introduce desirable genes/characteristics into commercially grown plants.

Assessment for learning



Soil health, vital for crop production, is dependent on environmental conditions and farming practices. Candidates should appreciate how a range of factors can affect crop growth such as mineral nutrients:

- macronutrients :nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium , magnesium , sulphur
- micronutrients: boron, copper, iron, chloride, manganese, molybdenum, zinc.

For LO3, candidates grow a plant of commercial importance and monitor its growth. The choice of plant might be limited by the time that candidates will have on the timetable and a fast growing plant, such as radish, might be chosen.

For LO4, candidates carry out soil testing. This is important as crop production will depend on the quality of the soil. Chemical indicators can be used to produce data on the soil water and the nutrients within it; physical indicators produce data on the stability of the ground and how it will support the crop physically as well water drainage within it; biological indicators produce data on biodiversity in the soil (such as earthworms, pests), filtering of water as well as nutrients in organic matter.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should focus on:

- soil acidity (pH)
- soil organic matter
- mineral nutrients, such as P, K and M
- soil particulates
- soil compaction.

Unit 21 – Product testing techniques

Centres carried out the practical investigations within the unit very well.

For LO1, candidates considered carefully which product they researched so that they were able to obtain information so as to fully cover the grade criteria. They appreciated how regulation affects the quality imposed on their product. A number of candidates presented generic information over a range of products and then focused on a specific product.

For LO2, when candidates consider the tests in P2 they should consider the sensitivity, accuracy and reliability of each test; then this would link into M2 as well as support the development of regulations in LO1.

For LO3, in D1 some candidates linked the results in M3 to establish the comparison of results. Again candidates can link to P2 (test selected) when considering the accuracy of their results. It is expected that a range of titrimetric techniques are used by the candidate.

Assessment for learning



The approach should be that all measurements and observations should be recorded, in tabular form where appropriate. Measurements should be recorded to the degree of accuracy of the equipment used. Candidates should be careful in the use of significant figures and decimal places, with their evaluations needing to have depth with a reasoned opinion based on the evidence collected.

Candidates should look carefully at using correct science in the evaluations and should also include comments on the validity and reliability of the investigation, as well as how it could be improved. A percentage accuracy should also be considered against a given value.

For LO4, candidates carried out the investigations well with good supporting results. Centres should always carry out risk assessments before carrying out practical activities and be aware of chemicals that are not suitable for use in a school laboratory.

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Online courses

Enhance your skills and confidence in internal assessment

What are our online courses?

Our online courses are self-paced eLearning courses designed to help you deliver, mark and administer internal assessment for our qualifications. They are suitable for both new and experienced teachers who want to refresh their knowledge and practice.

Why should you use our online courses?

With these online courses you will:

- learn about the key principles and processes of internal assessment and standardisation
- gain a deeper understanding of the marking criteria and how to apply them consistently and accurately
- see examples of student work with commentary and feedback from OCR moderators
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Access the courses **anytime, anywhere and at your own pace**. You can also revisit the courses as many times as you need.

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- the purpose and benefits of internal assessment
- the roles and responsibilities of teachers, assessors, internal verifiers and moderators
- the principles and methods of standardisation
- the best practices for collecting, storing and submitting evidence
- the common issues and challenges in internal assessment and how to avoid them.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

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- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units
- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units
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We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

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