

GCSE
**FOOD PREPARATION AND
NUTRITION**

8585-CE Non-Examined Assessment
Report on the Examination

8585
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General Comments

To support teachers and students, changes were made to the GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition Non-examined Assessment for 2021-22 in response to lost teaching and learning as a consequence of remote learning and centre closures. NEA1: Food investigation was removed for one year only, and modifications made to the NEA2 content. The assessment of NEA2 remained the same and the work was assessed to the specification marking criteria. JCQ reminded teachers to mark students' work according to the standard of the published mark schemes, as in a normal exam year. Exam boards also moderated the NEA in the usual way.

There was some excellent work produced by students and the standards of practical outcomes remained high. Teachers had worked hard ensuring students had the required skills to meet the demands of the NEA.

The Teacher Online Standardisation materials supported centres in marking work to the AQA standard.

The following report highlights the main observations seen in 2021/22. It was encouraging that the marking in most centres was generally accurate and fell within the tolerances set by AQA. Many thanks to teachers for their planning, delivery and assessment of the NEA during this extraordinary period.

NEA2: Food Preparation

In this task, students prepare, cook and present dishes to meet the needs of a specific context. This year, in recognition of the lost learning and the difficulties of enabling practical work over the past two years, students had to prepare, cook and present two dishes within a single period of 3 hours.

Section A: Researching the task

It was encouraging to see many centres presenting all three tasks to students allowing for a greater range of work to be produced. Students produced very good analysis of the task resulting in clear research plans.

Research was generally well executed and many students produced a wide range of interesting and relevant information. It was pleasing to see most centres not devoting excessive time to Section A but instead allowing the required time to focus on all sections of the NEA. There was evidence of concise research being produced with strong links to the chosen task.

Students mainly used secondary research sources to gather purposeful research to help select appropriate dishes. Primary research is only beneficial if it produces tangible results to help with the selection of relevant dishes. There was evidence of some good primary research in the form of interviews for the young children and cardiovascular health tasks.

Good practice was seen when clear aims were set for each piece of research, allowing for focused and concise research which related explicitly to the task. There was some very effective research produced for the cardiovascular health task. When recording the possible dishes to make it is

essential to consider the technical skills within the dishes. When there is a nutrition/health focus, to the task, it is important that appropriate dishes are chosen which reflect the outcomes of the research. There was evidence of some very good understanding of nutrition produced as part of the research.

Recommendations

- Set clear aims for each piece of research allowing students to have focus to their research.
- Primary research should only be carried out if it has a clear aim and will be used to select a range of relevant dishes.
- Often students failed to clearly state what they had found out from the research and how they would use the information. It would be helpful to include some analysis after the research to show the link between the research and the choice of dishes.
- It is important that the research has purpose and is used to select the dishes to be made. When selecting ideas, the dishes were not always relevant to the task. This was particularly the case for the young children task, ideas were offered that were that were not suitable/did not meet the nutritional needs or healthy eating guidelines.
- When selecting the dishes, students need to select and justify a range of technical skills used in the making of the dishes. Full recipes and methods should not be included.
- Students need to consider the dishes they make carefully to enable them to demonstrate a good range of technical skills and avoid the repetition of skills e.g. making pasta

Section B: Demonstrating technical skills

When students were aware of different technical skills - basic, medium and complex, which are exemplified throughout the teaching of the specification, they selected some very good dishes. Ambitious dishes were attempted and executed well. There were some impressive practical outcomes evidenced through photographic evidence.

There were too many centres this year not providing the mandatory photographic evidence for this section. Authenticated photographic evidence must be provided to exemplify the technical skills. When students reviewed their technical skills, this generally resulted in appropriate and justified final dishes. There was evidence of some teacher led work in this section – all candidates filleting fish, making pasta etc. This is not how this section should be delivered. It was pleasing to see the increase in the number of vegetarian/vegan dishes being produced including complex skills.

Recommendations

- The dishes made need to be justified with a review of the technical skills when awarding high marks for this section. There was limited review of the technical skills.
- Photographic evidence must be provided for this section. Moderation was difficult when no photographic evidence was available and limited qualitative commentary added to the Candidate Record Form. If students do not clearly list the dishes made within the written evidence it is important that centres list them on the Candidate Record Form.
- Technical reviews for Section B were often over marked. It was clear that centres had awarded marks based purely on the skills demonstrated and omitted to realize that the quality of the written review should also be considered.
- It is important that complex technical skills are executed to a high standard. Just because a student attempted to fillet fish/joint a chicken, this does not automatically result in high marks. It is important that centres appreciate that other complex skills can be carried out to achieve the top mark boundaries. Cost of ingredients should be an essential factor when selecting dishes.

- The dishes need to include a range of skills, and repetitive skills avoided e.g. the Italian cuisine task, the selection of three pasta dishes prevented some students from executing a wide range of skills.
- For Section B projects do not need to include methods of making, costing or nutritional analysis, this is unnecessary and does not feature in the marking criteria.
- Further clarity on what constitutes different technical skills can be seen on the [Skill levels in Food Preparation resource](#). Teachers and students were claiming some dishes included complex skills e.g. pizza when this is not the case.

Section C: Planning for the final menu

There was very good evidence of time plans that were detailed, realistic and logical. It was clear that students had spent time learning how to dovetail tasks, only making two dishes this year helped students to successfully dovetail the stages of making. Very effective examples were seen when colour coding was introduced.

Documenting food safety considerations continues to be an area for development. Many students interpreted safety as 'not cutting yourself' or 'using oven gloves'. Key food safety temperatures were often omitted and students did not always refer to cross contamination, storage or personal hygiene in their time plan. The use of key terminology, taught through the specification, is essential to be awarded the top mark band.

When students were able to clearly justify the choice of dishes, this allowed them to access the higher mark bands. Explicit links to the skills in Section B must be outlined. Justification was strong when students related back to their research and referred to nutrition, cooking methods, food provenance and sensory properties. It is essential that there are some links between the work carried out in Section B and the dishes chosen in Section C. Many students failed to justify why they were making the dishes for Section D.

Recommendations

- There continues to be some misinterpretation of the specification and the same dishes made in sections B and D – this was particularly evident when the Italian cuisine tasks was chosen.
- Students should not produce identical dishes and use Section B as a practice for the making of the final dishes – this is explained on page 44 of the specification. However, it is acceptable and encouraged to use some of the same skills, whilst introducing new skills in the making of different dishes.
- There must be clear links between each section of the NEA. Students were not always able to fully justify their recipe choices for the final dishes.
- Understanding of nutrition is a key element of the Food Preparation task and therefore this should be considered when selecting the dishes to make. The young children and cardiovascular health tasks had a nutrition and health focus – yet many dishes made did not relate back to the research findings.
- When justifying the final dishes, students could refer to: research findings, technical skills and processes, cooking methods, sensory properties, presentation of the final dishes, nutritional value/healthy eating, food provenance and the cost of ingredients/portion size. Centres may find that students are able to clearly present this information if they use tables or charts. There was a notable lack of evidence in relation to these areas from a number of centres whilst high marks were awarded.

- To achieve the top marks bands key food safety terminology and a wider use of key food safety temperatures should be included when producing the time plan.
- The time plan formats that many centres used were self-limiting and did not support students in ensuring food safety was included. A headed 'food safety considerations' should be encouraged.

Criterion D: Making the final dishes

There was some excellent evidence of students working hard in the 3-hour practical session, demonstrating very good technical skills and presenting their dishes with an excellent level of finish and decoration. Centres and students had clearly gone to great efforts to present their dishes to a high level. There were some creative and imaginative practical outcomes. Students were most successful when they had researched the dishes, developed their technical skills in Section B and then planned the three-hour practical session.

Making offering both complexity and demand was evidenced well when making the final dishes. The attention to detail for some dishes was very professional in style and had clearly been well thought out. Flavour combinations and inventive accompaniments made some unique dishes this year; with students pushing themselves to demonstrate their skills.

Making was often supported by excellent photographic evidence. Centres that provided detailed and qualitative comments on the Candidate Record Form supported their students and this greatly assisted the moderation process. Several centres appeared to have used Section B as a trial run for Section D.

Recommendations

- The final dishes must be presented and photographed together. Centres are encouraged to provide colour photographs of dishes as those presented in black and white often do not do justice to the student's work.
- To achieve high marks the practical work must be exemplary. There was too much over rewarding of medium and basic skills and /or poorly completed skills. Students were incorrectly assessed as being in the top band when a wide range of complex skills and processes were not evident.
- The practical work produced for the top band must be complex and challenging. To achieve high making marks, students need to show a comprehensive range of making skills.
- Teacher annotation must provide qualitative comments related to the making ability of students, not just copied statements from the marking criteria. It can be difficult for moderators to validate the centre marks without qualitative comments related to students' making skills.
- The dishes made by each student and the skills used to make them should be clearly stated in the work and/or on the Candidate Record Form. The quality of some of the Candidate Record Forms was disappointing and did not support the work students had produced. In some cases, the comments on Candidate Record Forms conflicted with the evidence in the folders and what was stated on the student time plans.
- When students repeated the same three dishes in Section B and Section D, this limited the marks that could be awarded for this section.
- Some dishes were poorly executed and/or finished, yet awarded high marks.

- It is important to stress that students do not need to fillet fish/portion a chicken to receive high marks. There were occasions when a chicken had been portioned just for the breast meat which could have resulted in waste. In some cases, these skills were listed on the Candidate Record Form but there was no evidence on the time plans or photographic evidence that the skills has been used.
- Photographs of students should not be included in the portfolio.
- Photographic evidence must be a suitable size to assess the quality of the finished dish. It was not easy to determine the quality of the finish when photos were presented in greyscale.

Section E: Analyse and evaluate

Sensory testing was carried out well with detailed analysis and evaluation included. The key element to this marking criterion is that students demonstrate an excellent knowledge of nutrition by fully explaining and drawing conclusions from the nutritional data. An area for development is the analysis and explanation of nutritional data. In many centres this was not given the priority this section required. Nutritional analysis was carried out with some brief analysis – yet high marks were awarded. This section is the opportunity to showcase the nutritional knowledge gained through the teaching of the specification.

Recommendations

- Students need to explain the nutritional data and costing. Marks were given for the production of data rather than analysis and evaluation. Some students provided detailed nutritional information and analysis as part of Section C when it is more appropriate to be included in Section E.
- To achieve the top band, accurate and excellent knowledge of nutrition is required. In many cases, a nutrition chart was presented with no reasoning/explanation yet was awarded marks in the top bands.
- When analysing the cost of dishes – students could consider how to reduce costs, link to food wastage and other food provenance issues.
- For the top mark bands detailed, relevant and creative improvements need to be suggested for the final dishes – this was a weak area.
- Timing was an issue for some centres and this section may not have had the time devoted to it that was required to ensure the marking criteria was sufficiently covered.

General points

Making both in Section B and D remained a strength of many students' work and it was pleasing to see that the majority of students rose to the challenge of both the technical skills challenge and the 3-hour final practical. The quality of work when demonstrating technical skills and the quality of finish of the practical work in the 3-hour exam was generally quite impressive.

There needs to be links between the sections, each section should not be seen in isolation.

High mark projects should be exemplary. All elements of each marking criterion should be comprehensively addressed. The portfolio must have rigour and fully justify all decisions made. The practical element should be inclusive of a range of complex skills finished to a high standard.

Many centres were awarding high marks but the quality of both written and practical work did not warrant such high marks.

There was an increase in the number of proforma/writing frames – these are not permitted under JCQ guidance and they can prevent some students from producing extended analysis and evaluation.

Reports with missing photographic evidence made it very difficult to moderate the samples. In some cases, there was no evidence of making in folders, no evidence on Candidate Record Forms and yet marks were awarded. It is important the photographs are clear and of a good size to showcase the technical skills and work.

Centres are recommended to view the exemplar materials on the Teacher Online Standardisation (TOLS) which are accessible through AQA Centre Services. This will help with the successful interpretation of the marking criteria and marking to the AQA standard.

Centres are reminded that NEA Advisers are available to fully support colleagues with the interpretation of the NEA requirements.

Administration and Assessment

Moderation was delayed in some cases due the number of administrative errors with the addition of NEA marks requiring correspondence with examination offices.

Many centres provided detailed justification of the marks for Section B and D of NEA2, unfortunately this was lacking in others.

A Centre Declaration Form must be included in the sample of work.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.