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# GCSE FOOD PREPARATION AND NUTRITION

8585/C Non-Examined Assessment  
Report on the Examination

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8585/C  
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## GENERAL

This was the first year of delivering both NEA1: Food Investigation and NEA2: Food Preparation since 2019. There were no changes to the requirements of both non-examined assessments as outlined on the task sheets released to centres on the 1<sup>st</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> November.

The following report highlights the main observations in 2022/23. It was encouraging that the marking in most centres was generally accurate and fell within the tolerance set by AQA. The Teacher Online Standardisation materials supported centres in marking work to the AQA standard. Teachers delivering the Non-examined assessment are strongly encouraged to use the [teacher guide](#) when planning the delivery of both tasks.

### NEA1: Food Investigation

The task involves investigating the working characteristics and the functional and chemical properties of ingredients through practical investigations. The tasks are based on the food science element of the specification: pages 18-21. The assessment is a report of 1500-2000 words. NEA1 has not been delivered in centres since 2019 and it was evident some centres found the teaching, planning and delivery of the Food Investigation task challenging. Students found linking the food science element to their investigations difficult and this is an area centres need to focus on when delivering the specification throughout the two-year course. Where elements of the food investigation had been explicitly taught, through the delivery of the specification, students used these key skills and applied them to the non-exam assessment. It is essential that students have practice with elements of NEA1 before the live tasks are launched.

#### Section A: Research

There was good evidence of the use and application of prior knowledge gained through the learning activities taught during the specification. When all the titles were presented this resulted in a less formulaic approach to the work. Evidence of concise and focused research was seen. Diagrams were used well to explain the working characteristics, function and chemical properties of the ingredients. There was some excellent research generated for the choux pastry and starch-based sauce tasks. When students used a range of different sources to explain the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients, the work produced was impressive. It was encouraging to see evidence of students carrying out further research during the report, the research does need to be front loaded. When students understood the research, the planning of the investigations was done well with clear links to the hypothesis and research. There was good understanding of how to produce a hypothesis and this had developed from previous years. There was more evidence of students justifying the hypothesis. There was however a disconnect between the research and the investigations, in many samples of work, which demonstrated a lack of understanding of the working properties of ingredients. When the reports were teacher led/formulaic the hypotheses did not always reflect the findings of the research undertaken.

#### Recommendations

- When one task was presented, evidence was seen of a more teacher led approach this was particularly evident for the starch-based sauce task.
- Research should focus on the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of the ingredients detailed within the task. Some students went off on a tangent and therefore some of the research lacked focus and was irrelevant. When students include an aim for their research this helps to keep a clear focus.

- It is important that research is not copied directly from the source. Students need to reference their sources throughout the report or include a bibliography.
- The analysis of the research findings must be explicit. A review/analysis of the research is a method to be encouraged to ensure the findings are then used when composing the hypothesis.
- Students should be encouraged to produce a summary of the scientific principles underlying the chosen tasks and use the findings to guide the planned investigations and analysis. Adding clear justification for the investigations provides a direct link to the research findings.
- The research findings should be referred to throughout the food investigation tasks to be awarded the top mark band. In many cases there was a disconnect between the research and sections B and C.
- The planned investigations must relate to the hypothesis or the research findings when this was not done it was an indication that students had not understood their research, or the projects were teacher led.
- Where reports were teacher led/formulaic the hypotheses did not always reflect the findings of the research undertaken.

### **Section B: Investigation**

When students had studied the food science element of the specification in depth they could recall and apply the knowledge and understanding. This was then well used when planning and evaluating the investigations. When teaching the specification, it is good practice to carry out some examples of investigation work this supports students' investigative skills and guides them in how to write up an investigation, this can then be used as a template for the live tasks. Students who used a scientific approach to the the food investigations demonstrated a good understanding of the working, chemical and functional properties of the ingredients used. When students compared several variables, within each investigation, this allowed for indepth analysis of the ingredients and methods they were testing. There was a misunderstanding in several centres as to what constituted an investigation. An investigation is testing several Variables eg the types of flour to make choux pastry, the ratio of flour to liquid in a starch based sauce. The recommendations is that centres should be including 2/3 investigations in the report. Too many centres only produced one investigation eg tested three types of flour; yet were awarded high marks. Carrying out only one investigation prevents students from being able to provide sufficient evidence of a range of testing to achieve marks in the higher bands.

There was evidence of students having a good understanding of the controls when carrying out scientific investigations, it is good practice to include some of the controls when recording the investigations.

Sensory analysis continues to be the most popular testing method. However, an increased range of recording methods should be included eg, graphs, charts, annotated photographs etc. Students were able to identify the controls to ensure fair testing and apply throughout the food investigations. The majority of centres followed AQA guidelines and produced photographic evidence of practical investigations and included name and student numbers in the photographs. Centres that provided strong photographic evidence assisted moderation greatly.

### **Recommendations**

- The investigations must link to the research analysis and hypothesis, investigations often showed no relation to the research.

- The investigation work must be fully explained, and the research used to explain the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of the ingredients. Section B was overrewarded in many centres.
- Centres need to teach students the different methods of recording practical investigations which can then be applied to the NEA. Students need to be taught the skill of recording the results and how to link back to the properties of ingredients rather than just focussing on sensory areas. Students are unable to access very high marks without this evidence.
- When students only carried out one/two investigations, or tested one or two variables, there was often a lack of breadth and depth of investigation work. Where centres only want to pursue two investigations, they must be very detailed and thoroughly explored.
- Small-scale group investigations are permitted to reduce costs and waste; however, it is not permitted to carry out whole class food investigation tasks. Students must independently plan the food investigation tasks.
- There was a lack of the mandatory photographic evidence to authenticate the investigation work in a minority of centres.

### **Section C: Analysis and Evaluation**

There was evidence of good understanding of the underlying principles in food science and the functions of ingredients related to the individual tasks. Photographic evidence helped with the evaluation of practical outcomes and there was some excellent annotation evidenced by lower attaining students. Very good examples of analysis and evaluation were seen with clear understanding and explanation of what happened and importantly why it happened. When students related the findings back to their research, they could explain the working, characteristics, functional and properties of the ingredients. There was evidence of very good use of ICT to communicate the reports and findings. The majority of centres adhered to the word count of 1500-2000 words.

### **Recommendations**

- Links between the research, hypothesis and planned investigations need to be explicit throughout the report.
- To achieve the top mark bands, students must include high level understanding and interpretation of the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients.
- To achieve the top mark bands there must be subject specific terminology/vocabulary used throughout the report.
- To use the key subject vocabulary from the research when analysing and evaluating the results.
- To reach the higher mark band students must explain how the food investigation results will be used when preparing and cooking food in the future. This continues to challenge many students.
- When reviewing their work students should be encouraged to remove any irrelevant text and repetition and edit their work to fit within the word count.
- A bibliography or alternative referencing of sources must be included in the report. This does not contribute to the word count.

### **NEA2: Food Preparation**

In this task, students prepare, cook and present three dishes within a single period of 3 hours to meet the needs of a specific context. Centres produced some very good work. AQA were mindful of the challenges to families and centres with the increase of prices for ingredients and appreciated the lengths teachers/centres had invested in supporting their students. Centres thought creatively

about how to include complex technical skills within the lesson time. It is appreciated that centres have different time allocations which can impact on what can be achieved. The NEA2 tasks allowed the students good scope and they took advantage of this and produced some imaginative practical work.

### **Section A: Researching the task**

Section A was generally completed well and accurately marked by centres. It was encouraging to see centres presenting all three tasks to students allowing for a greater range of work to be produced. The most popular tasks were the North/South American cuisine and calcium-based task.

Research was generally well executed, and many students produced a wide range of interesting and relevant information. 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 less irrelevant primary research eg, questionnaires.

There was some very effective research produced for the calcium and plant-based tasks. It was encouraging to see students considering the healthy eating recommendations/Eatwell Guide throughout the research. When recording the possible dishes to make it is essential to consider the technical skills within the dishes. Several centres omitted the consideration of ideas stage moving straight onto the making 3-4 dishes this prevented students from accessing the higher bands.

### **Recommendations**

- Set clear aims for each piece of research allowing students to have focus to their research. When researching the cuisine-based task it is important that irrelevant information related to the country is not included. There was too much research copied from the source eg, Wikipedia, with little editing.
- Analysis of the research was a weaker area. It would be helpful to include some analysis after the research to show the link between the research and the choice of dishes.
- When selecting the dishes, students need to select and justify a range of technical skills used in the making of the dishes.
- 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 eg, pastry, pasta etc.
- Students must consider a range of ideas related to the research findings before moving on to Section B.

### **Section B: Demonstrating technical skills**

Ambitious dishes were attempted and executed well. There were some impressive practical outcomes evidenced through photographic evidence. 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.

Authenticated photographic evidence must be provided to exemplify the technical skills. Candidate Record Forms are vital evidence to support the evidence in the folders. A list of dishes made with qualitative comments can help support the marks awarded.

When students reviewed their technical skills, this generally resulted in appropriate and justified final dishes. There was misinterpretation of this section with centres just making component parts eg, puff pastry, pasta, portioning a chicken and not making complete dishes. This limits the amount of marks that can be awarded.

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## Recommendations

- Complete dishes must be made.
- The dishes made need to be justified with a 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.
- 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 eg the North/South America cuisine task, the selection of three mince-based 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. Students wasted time focusing on this element at the detriment of reviewing the technical skills.
- 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 eg pizza when this is not the case.
- It was encouraging to see the increase in vegetarian/vegan dishes with students accessing the higher mark bands.

## Section C: Planning for the final menu

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. In many cases there was limited link to the dishes made to the work completed in Section B. Justification was strong when students related back to their research and referred to nutrition, cooking methods, food provenance and sensory properties. Many students failed to justify why they were making the dishes for Section D.

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. Very effective examples were seen when colour coding was introduced. It was pleasing to see that the majority of centres are not

repeating dishes made in Section B to the final three dishes. There is an expectation that students will not simply re-make the same dishes, this is stated on the AQA NEA Food Preparation task sheet and the specification page 44. When this repetition occurs, it is not possible to be awarded marks in the higher bands for Section D.

Documenting food safety considerations continues to be an area for development. Many students interpreted safety as '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.

## Recommendations

- 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. Making all sweet dishes must be discouraged.
- 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.
- 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. To achieve the top mark band students should provide some justification of the food safety controls eg I am using a red chopping board for cutting raw chicken to prevent cross contamination, fish will be covered and stored on the bottom shelf of the fridge, 0°C to below 5°C, to prevent juices contaminating other foods.

### **Criterion D: Making the final dishes**

There was some impressive work completed for Section D. Student had clearly relished the opportunity to showcase their technical and presentation skills in the 3-hour assessment. 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. There was evidence of an increase in the number of standard components being used in Section D yet awarded marks in the top bands.

Making offering both complexity and demand was evidenced well when making the final dishes. 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. Repetitive skills were most prevalent in the culinary tradition task. In a few centres, students produced the same dishes in Sections B and D without any change, and in some cases, minimal modifications were made. Students must be guided in selecting the final dishes to minimise repetitive skills.

Students do not need to plan and produce a three-course meal including a starter, main course and dessert. This year there appeared to be a trend of producing two dishes with an accompaniment. In many cases this limited students from demonstrating a range of dishes.

### **Recommendations**

- 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. It can be difficult for moderators to validate the centre marks without qualitative comments related to students' making skills. It was disappointing that some centres left the Candidate Record Forms blank or added very brief commentary.
- When students repeated the same three dishes in Section B and Section D, this limited the marks that could be awarded.
- Some dishes were poorly executed and/or finished yet awarded high marks.
- It is important to stress that student do not need to fillet fish/portion a chicken to receive high marks. 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' faces should not be included in the photographic evidence.



- The final dishes must be presented and photographed together.

### **Section E: Analyse and evaluate**

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 and was over rewarded. This section is the opportunity to showcase the nutritional knowledge gained through the teaching of the specification. Analysis and evaluation are essential skills which are also tested through the examination paper. A final evaluation of the process is not required, some centres allowed students to narrate the process which gains no marks. Students would be advised to spend more time on the analysis and evaluation of the costing, sensory and nutrition element.

### **Recommendations**

- Timing was an issue for some centres and this section may not have had the time devoted that was required to ensure the marking criteria was sufficiently covered.
- Students need to explain the nutritional data and costing. Marks were given for the production of data rather than analysis and evaluation of the information.
- 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 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.

### **General points**

The recommendations is that centres should be including 2/3 investigations, inclusive of a number of variables for NEA1. Too many centres only produced what constituted one investigation.

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 demonstration of technical skills 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 impressive.

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.

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 throughout the year.

### **Administration and Assessment**

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

Many centres had to be contacted due to addition errors or uncorrected submission of marks.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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