GCSE Examiners' Report

Food Preparation and Nutrition

GCSE

Summer 2026

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Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.[1]

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and component level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

[1] ***Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.***

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Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner | Eduqas

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Contents

	Page
Executive summary	5
Component 1 - Principles of Food and Nutrition	9
Component 2 - Food Preparation and Nutrition in Action	18
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	24

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Executive Summary

Component 1 – Principles of Food and Nutrition External Assessment

The examination paper was of a very similar standard to previous examination series and outcomes generally aligned. Candidates generally displayed knowledge and understanding of a wide coverage of Component 1 content. However, there were some obvious gaps in knowledge and often candidates showed knowledge but were unable to demonstrate understanding of that knowledge. Section A will always allocate a range of marks linked to a specific focus but span a wide content range: some of these marks will be given for simple recall (knowledge) and some for understanding. Many candidates were unable to develop their responses beyond simple recall and either did not attempt to try to demonstrate understanding or made incorrect developments.

Section B will always have a range of question types, allowing candidates to showcase their knowledge and understanding across all areas of the content.

There was also evidence, throughout quite a few responses, of misconceptions and incorrect knowledge of key Food Preparation and Nutrition terms.

Many candidates are missing out on further marks by giving simplistic and brief responses to questions allocated more than 1 mark. Focussing on the command verb is key to understanding the requirement of the question, and the number of lines allocated for the response is also a prompt to show where extended writing is required.

In higher tariff questions in Section B, candidates need to develop their answers and, if required, give a balanced response. Too many candidates miss out on achieving the higher bands for extended writing responses as they give superficial explanations and unsupported judgements. However, many candidates did very well on extended responses and demonstrated sound understanding of the requirements of specific command verbs. There has been an improvement for some candidates this year, which is pleasing to see.

Component 2 – Food Preparation and Nutrition in Action

Performance in Component 2 (NEA) was broadly comparable with the previous series, with the majority of centres supporting candidates effectively through both assessments. Many centres demonstrated clear engagement with previous moderator feedback, resulting in generally accurate application of the Eduqas assessment criteria. Administrative procedures and electronic submissions also improved, although some issues remained regarding document uploads, clerical errors and the use of non-approved mark schemes.

In NEA 1, the majority of candidates selected the raising agents task and demonstrated strong research skills, with many producing detailed investigations supported by relevant food science. Stronger candidates justified their choice of variables, carried out a range of well-structured tests, presented findings through a variety of methods and linked conclusions directly to scientific principles. Candidates generally performed well when analysing the effects of raising agents, whereas investigations based on vegetables often lacked depth, variety of testing and sufficient focus on the task requirements. The most common weakness was in analysis and evaluation, with many candidates describing results rather than explaining why outcomes occurred using scientific evidence.

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NEA 2 showed improved use of primary research and a wider range of practical investigations. Successful candidates demonstrated clear links between research, dish selection and task requirements, while producing detailed plans and evidence of effective time management. Practical outcomes were often of a good standard, with a broad range of dishes and technical skills evident. However, some candidates selected final dishes before completing sufficient research or trialling, limiting opportunities for development and justification. Evaluation sections were frequently descriptive, with candidates focusing on what they had done rather than critically analysing outcomes, sensory testing and technical performance.

Common themes across both assessments included the importance of linking research to decision-making, justifying choices with evidence, and developing stronger analytical skills. In NEA 1, centres should continue to focus on scientific understanding, evaluation and the effective presentation of evidence, particularly annotated photographic records. In NEA 2, improvements are needed in planning, dish trialling and sensory analysis.

To support future performance, centres should utilise moderator reports, Eduqas guidance documents, professional learning opportunities and assessment resources. Particular emphasis should be placed on developing analytical and evaluative writing, strengthening food science knowledge and ensuring candidates fully align their work with the specific requirements of each assessment task.

Resources to Support Improvement:

Areas for improvement	**Classroom resources**	**Brief description of resource**
Component 1		
Exam practice and technique	Portal	Past paper and mark schemes
Examination Technique: command verbs, extended writing, application of knowledge	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/Pages/ResourceSingle.aspx?rlid=1476	Exam walk through
Granularity of subject content e.g. Micro-nutrients	Eduqas Digital Educational Resources	Knowledge organisers
Subject content	Resource	Thinking tools
Subject content	Free education resources for teaching young people aged 3-16 years about where food comes from, cooking and healthy eating, and teacher training. - Food A Fact Of Life	Resources for teaching
Subject content	Resource	BBC class clips

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Subject content	Eduqas Digital Educational Resources	Effect of cooking on commodities
Command words	https://resource.download.wjec.co.uk/vtc/2016-17/16-17_3-18/eng/assessment_Objectives_wjec.pdf	All the possible command words used in the exam are explained in this document.

Component 2		
NEA 2	Portal	Exemplar materials
NEA 2	Resource	Illuminate video for practical skills
NEA 2	Resource	Food preparation skills videos
NEA 2	eduqas-gcse-foodpreparation-and-nutritionupskilling-recipes.pptx	PowerPoint – upskilling recipes
NEA 2	eduqas-gcse-food-prepand-nutrition-work-smarterwith-nea.pptx	PowerPoint – work smarter not harder
NEA 2	GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition | Eduqas	Open website – Star diagrams Mark sheets Viscosity charts Practical skills sheets Sensory vocabulary poster Specification Guidance for teaching
Complete a variety of sensory tests	Search Resources Only - Food A Fact Of Life GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition | Eduqas eduqas-gcse-food-prepand-nutrition-work-smarterwith-nea.pptx What is Love Food Love Science? | Institute of Food Science and Technology	The Food a fact of life website and EDUQAS website have star profile proforma's that learners can use to help present the results of their practical experiments. There is also a PowerPoint on the open website which shows how to prepare for the NEA 1 task.

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Referring back to the food science in NEA1	FoodCrumbles - Improving Food with Science - FoodCrumbles Food science (14-16 Years) - Food A Fact Of Life Eduqas Digital Educational Resources	These websites have many different articles on various food science topics that could possibly help with some NEA 1 tasks.

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COMPONENT 1 - PRINCIPLES OF FOOD AND NUTRITION

Overview of the Component

The examination paper assesses AO1, AO2 and AO4. AO1 targets knowledge and understanding of aspects of subject content where candidates are asked to recall and supply concise answers. AO2 targets application of knowledge and understanding with candidates being asked to explain concepts and apply knowledge. AO4 targets analysis and evaluation of different aspects of nutrition, food cooking and preparation and candidates are asked to analyse evidence, evaluate issues or draw together information and make judgements.

The examination assesses the six areas of content:

1 Food commodities
2 Principals of nutrition
3 Diet and good health
4 The science of food
5 Where food comes from
6 Cooking and food preparation

The examination paper this year appears to have been accessible to candidates. There was a good mix of different examination style questions which enabled candidates of all abilities to access some marks on the different areas of content within the specification. The questions that examined aspects of principals of nutrition, food science, factors that affect food choice and food manufacturing proved to be more challenging to many candidates. The use of subheadings for one of the essay style questions proved to be more beneficial for candidates in structuring their responses.

The following areas of content were well understood or well-answered:

Q.2 (a)(b)(c) (d)(i) Principles of nutrition and Commodities – fish pie.

Q.3 (a)(ii)(iv) (c) Skills groups and techniques and Factors Affecting Food choice – equipment.

Q.4 (a)(b) Diet and Good Health – an individual's diet and the Eatwell Guide.

Q.5 (a) (d)(i) Factors Affecting food Choice and Commodities – vegetarians – alternative protein foods – additives.

Q.6 (b)(c) Principles of Nutrition – vitamins and iron.

Q.7 (a)(b)(c) Principles of Nutrition – water – energy – complementary nutrients.

Q.8 (a)(b) Food Spoilage – food poisoning bacteria - food safety and hygiene practices.

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Some candidates found some skill group and techniques questions difficult: **Q1** (b) (e) (f)

Areas for improvement include:

- Improving familiarisation with the 20 different skill groups.
- Practising the making of products or parts of products that demonstrate the different skill groups.
- Linking of practical skills with theory/written aspects before, during or after practical activities or by using visual images.

Many candidates found aspects of principals of nutrition, food science, factors affecting food choice and food manufacturing difficult:

2 (d)(ii) (e)

3 (a)(i)(iii)

5 (b)(c) (d)(ii)

6 (a)(i)

7 (d)

Areas to improve:

- Ensure familiarisation with all micronutrients listed in the specification; regular testing/quizzes/spot questioning could aid this.
- Covering of the science of cooking food, listed in the specification, through practical activities, e.g., cake making, batters, sauces, pastry making, poaching and bread making as well as cross referencing different methods when using the product for practical activities or revisiting regularly through short topic tests/ lesson starter activities.
- Food manufacturing and the use of food additives in the manufacturing process – understanding the different terms e.g. quality control, finishing techniques, layered product, food additives and the reasons for carrying them out/using them.

General areas for improvement:

- Many candidates did not always read the question carefully which led to incorrect responses to questions asked.
- Some candidates still struggle with answering a question which requires a developed response.
- Encourage candidates to take notice of the number of marks awarded for each question to help them understand the type of response which is needed.
- Continue to develop understanding of command words used in the different questions set.

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Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 Visual stimuli question

(a) Nearly every candidate appeared to have attempted to answer the question, with most candidate scoring 1-2 marks. Some candidates were not familiar with lard or the correct flour to use when making shortcrust pastry.

(b) Candidates were not always sure of what the 'binding' agents were, many stating butter, lard, yeast, flour or warm water. Most correct answers included eggs, milk and water.

(c) Candidates generally knew another type of pastry. Some candidates gave examples of products using different pastries e.g., croissant, sausage roll; these responses were not awarded marks.

(d) Most candidates were able to give two basic responses to rules for making shortcrust pastry; cool hands/do not over rub. Some candidates gave descriptions for the incorrect pastry e.g., roll and fold (flaky). Some candidates gave generic kitchen and personal hygiene rules which were not awarded a mark. Many stated use the rubbing in method which was not a 'rule' but a method.

(e) Most candidates mentioned the texture, (crispy), colour, (brown) and to prevent 'soggy bottom', if the filling is added too soon.

Many candidates were able to explain what was baking blind rather than explaining why pastry cases were baked blind, which did not gain marks.

(f) Most candidates attempted to explain the changes that occur during the baking of pastry. There was some knowledge of changes to the pastry when cooked, but understanding of scientific terminology was lacking. Some candidates were able give scientific terminology but lacked the full description of how it works, for example 'dextrinisation takes place and there are colour changes', this response was too vague and required a more detailed response; looking for golden brown/brown as opposed to changes colour.

Some candidates were awarded full marks for two scientific terms, mainly caramelisation and dextrinisation.

Section B

Q.2 (a) The majority of candidates gave a correct response to a unit of energy. A few candidates gave incorrect responses by answering grams/g.

(b) The majority of candidates gave the correct response to the ingredient used in the pie that contains carbohydrate, with potato and flour the most common responses.

(c) The majority of candidates gave the correct response of the use of a sauce in a fish pie with flavour, texture, moisture and bind ingredients as the most common responses.

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(d) (i) Most candidates were able to identify why piping is added to a fish pie. Most candidates mentioned appearance, appealing to the customer and portion control. Candidates that mentioned its traditional, cooks better or makes it last longer were not awarded marks.

(ii) It was disappointing to see so many incorrect responses for this question. Some candidates correctly answered that that fish was a high-risk food/highly perishable/high in bacteria. This reason was linked to the safety of the customer; will not give the customer food poisoning/salmonella/make them ill.

Candidates were not always sure of quality control checks made during the manufacturing of the fish pie with many candidates often referring to packaging and selling of the fish pie, rather than the making.

(f) Assess was the command word used in this question which means candidates should judge the use of poaching when cooking fish, giving consideration to all the factors that apply, and give positive and negative viewpoints. Many candidates were able to describe poaching and were able to explain it was a healthier method and that it used no fat. There was a tendency to miss marks due to lack of detail and misunderstanding. Some candidates mentioned vitamin loss or quick method which were not awarded any marks.

Q.3 This question appeared to be quite accessible for candidates of all abilities and there were very few candidates who did not attempt the question.

(i) This was not well answered by candidates due to a food not being named; answers needed to detail what was being piped/decorated and onto what food product.

(ii) The majority of candidates answered that the wooden spoon was used to mix/stir food.

(iii) Most candidates were not aware that this was a colander and answered that it was a strainer/sieve/draining bowl or cylinder.

(iv) Most candidates correctly answered that it was a spatula; some candidates added silicon or plastic which was still awarded a mark.

(b) Candidates were able to answer the question on the use of stick blenders in the kitchen well. Some candidates gave one-word answers, others gave several sentences. Candidates included – to puree food…. such as fruit/strawberries for a coulis, baby food or easy to use as you can control the speed/don't have to transfer the food into blender jug/processor bowl. The most common answers given were easy to use, small so easy to store and quick/saves time. Some candidates gave answers that were not credit worth such as 'you get better results', and many answers stated to blend food/blend soup, but because 'blend' was part of the question, no credit was available.

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(c) This was answered well by candidates; the majority of candidates were able to give safety rules for using electrical equipment. Most common answers included: do not use near water, unplug when not in use, unplug before washing, do not immerse motor when cleaning, tie back hair, keep fingers away from blade/moving parts, set up correctly/ensure lids are locked/whisks are secure and switch off/unplug when not in use. Some candidates had given safety rules for the stick blender, but the question was about use of 'general' electrical appliances. Occasionally points were repeated such as do not use with wet hands, do not plug in with wet hands, do not use on a wet surface, keep wires away from water– these were the same marking point so it was only credited once.

(d) Candidates did not always read the question carefully and gave examples of food that can be microwaved or advantages/disadvantages of microwave cooking – uses less electricity, quick, good for small quantities, less loss of vitamins, takes up less space and therefore not awarded marks.

Candidates that demonstrated good knowledge gave answers including; heat/warm up foods, defrost, reheat, melt, cook and many given with examples and described.

Some candidates gave incorrect answers such as keeps food warm which is not credit worthy.

Q.4 (a) This was very well answered by candidates with many showing good knowledge, and Mary's diet was modified rather than generic healthy eating points being stated. Answers often gave reasons for the modifications showing a good understanding of healthy eating guidelines applied to Mary's diet.

Some candidates gave answers that were not credit worthy; swap sugar in tea for honey (still high in sugars), have a smoothie/fruit juice instead of teas/coffee (still high in sugar), cut down on tea/coffee (not replacing it with water), instead of biscuits have a protein bar (still excess calories), eat less snacks but bigger portions of main meals (still excess calories).

(b) The majority of candidates demonstrated good knowledge about nutrition and healthy eating guidelines. Candidates tended to answer the question in two parts: nutrition then healthy eating. Key points covered the dangers of a diet high in fat, high in sugar, the functions of named vitamins (A D C) and minerals (calcium and iron) in relation to Mary aged 65 years old. Some responses were more generic but covered points from the mark scheme so gained credit. Some candidates covered all nutrients – protein, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, plus water and fibre, discussing their function in the diet and examples of sources included. Deficiencies and excesses were also given so candidates covered the dangers to high fat, high sugar, low water and low fibre on the mark scheme. Nutritional knowledge shown by candidates was good.

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Healthy eating guidelines were named by most candidates, namely the Eatwell guide and 5-a-day. Again, good knowledge of candidate knowledge was seen and there was some application to Mary shown by candidates. Key areas covered by most candidates were 6-8 glasses of water for hydration, eating oily fish for omega 3, more fruit and vegetables for vitamins and minerals (often named and linked to examples such as vitamin C from oranges, calcium from milk), fruit and vegetables and wholegrains for fibre to prevent constipation and make you feel fuller so less likely to snack on sugar which is empty calories.

Q.5 (a) Candidates were able to give reasons why people follow a vegetarian diet. This was well answered, answers included; cheaper, healthier/weight loss, use of land for crops is more sustainable than animals, religious reasons (often with examples Jew – pork, Hindus – beef, Muslims – pork), ethical reasons and don't like taste/smell/texture of meat.

A few mentioned parents might be vegetarian, so children brought up the same, and social media influence.

Quite a few gave two ethical or religious points but could only be credited once.

Some gave examples of what vegetarians eat/don't eat – these gained no credit as candidates did not answer the question, e.g., 'they don't eat meat'.

(b) This question proved to be challenging for many candidates with some candidates leaving the question unanswered. Candidates demonstrated some basic knowledge of what a vegan ate but limited and muddled knowledge of what a lacto ovo vegetarian ate.

Answers tended to be basic: a vegan doesn't eat meat or animal products; lacto ovo vegetarians eat dairy (sometimes with a list of dairy foods – milk, cheese, yoghurt) or lacto ovo vegetarians eat eggs.

Some better responses identified lacto ovo vegetarians eating both eggs and dairy.

Many candidates did not understand lacto ovo vegetarianism and referred to not eating lactose/lacto products/dairy. Reasoning was also incorrect – health reasons as they are intolerant/allergic to lactose or for medical/health reasons where veganism is a diet from personal choice.

Many thought lacto ovo vegetarians don't eat milk or eggs but do eat meat.

A few candidates achieved full marks for sound knowledge such as a vegan is a strict vegetarian who does not eat meat or animal products for moral reasons and gets their food from plant sources such as TVP, Quorn or Oat milk; a lacto ovo vegetarian eats dairy and eggs so has a less restricted diet and gets calcium and HBV protein from dairy products.

This was a challenging question, but majority scored at least 1 mark, usually for a description of a vegan.

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(c) This was poorly answered by candidates; most were not able to give an alternative protein and therefore unable to discuss the use in meal planning. Most candidates gave basic points and little or no explanation or discussion. Candidates were also unable to explain meal planning and how it is used by households.

(d) (i) Most candidates gave correct answers of naming additives with sweeteners, colouring, preservatives and flavourings the most common responses. Some candidates gave the actual additive name, which were not credit worthy.

(ii) There was some awareness of the benefits to manufacturers of using additives. Candidates sometimes gave two benefits with no explanation/extended answers or one benefit without any explanation/linked explanation. Some explanations given were benefits to the customer rather than the manufacturer, which were not credited.

The majority of candidates answered; improves colour/flavour ….so sales increase, longer shelf life so…less waste, will last longer or can be stored/have in stock all year round …use artificial flavourings such as strawberry in winter as strawberries are a summer fruit or expensive to import

Some candidates stated nutritional benefits: the health-conscious customer will look to buy fortified food such as protein shakes and this will increase sales and profit. Credit was awarded for the explanation but not the reason as nutrition/fortification was not credited in 5di so could not be credited here.

Q.6 (a) This question was well answered by most candidates, and most correctly answered carrot, kale, spinach, eggs, oily fish, apricots, sweet potato, papaya, mango, melon/cantaloupe and milk. Incorrect answers given by candidates included banana, apple, pepper, leafy vegetables, sunlight, fruit, and vegetables, for night blindness, broccoli, oranges, red meat, fish and lettuce.

(b) This was very well answered. Most candidates gave the correct answers such as being tired, pale skin and dizzy/faint. Candidates tended to give more than two points with descriptions and explanations – lack of iron means red blood cells cannot carry oxygen, so you get a pale skin due to lack of haemoglobin and tired as cells have less oxygen for energy.

Incorrect responses that were not credit worthy included; eyesight goes blurry, get black dots in your vision, vomiting and nausea, low blood pressure, anorexia, can't fight infection and caused by heavy periods.

(c) This was fairly well answered by candidates; some candidates had written four good points on either preparation or cooking but omitted the other so could only score 2 marks maximum.

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There was some misunderstanding as some candidates thought food had to be cooked in water to maintain the vitamins as they were water soluble. Some candidates named water soluble vitamins B and C. Some answered about spraying food/topping up pans with water to keep the vitamins as they needed water to be soluble in.

Some candidates also answered about ways water soluble vitamins were lost rather than how the loss could be reduced, as asked for in the question.

Several responses discussed the cooking of pasta and using the pasta water to make soups/stock and gravies with.

Q.7 (a) The majority of candidates knew 6-8 glasses and 2 litres was the recommended intake of water per day. Some candidates had omitted the measurement so couldn't gain the mark. E.g. 2, 6-8.

(b) Candidates generally knew the function of water in our diet was for hydration, for waste removal, digestion, brain activity, nutrient transportation, temperature regulation and carrying/helping absorption of water-soluble vitamins. Some candidates responded with gives you energy, makes you feel full, for dieting as no calories, healthy, prevents headache or for fluorine, and therefore was not awarded a mark.

Some responses gave two organ functions – for brain function and skin – both from the same marking point so only 1 mark available.

(c) The majority of candidates knew the nutrients that gave energy were protein, fat and carbohydrate. Some candidates gave food examples. E.g. butter, bread, potato, and these responses were not credit worthy.

(d) Most candidates knew that complementary nutrients 'work together' to increase 'absorption' rate and need to be eaten together. Candidates were aware that a lack of calcium and vitamin D, for strong bones, leads to osteoporosis, weak bones that fracture easily. Examples of foods working together such as fortified breakfast cereal and milk were given by candidates. This was the most common complementary nutrients given. Some candidates also gave protein complementation and iron and vitamin C

Quite a lot of responses were comments on nutrition, the function of protein, fat, and carbohydrate, fibre and named vitamins and minerals, rather than complementary nutrients. Good knowledge was seen but the question was not answered and therefore not credit worthy for many.

Q.8 (a) The majority of candidates were able to give two named food poisoning bacteria, a small minority of candidates had misread the question and given reason why food poisoning happens; for example, hands not washed before handling food and food not thoroughly cooked.

(b) This question was accessed by candidates of all abilities with at least 1-3 marks being gained by lower-level candidates. Candidates had very good personal hygiene knowledge, but many candidates only covered/mainly covered this so limited their marks.

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Candidates who were able to cover a wide range of points from the mark scheme and give evaluative comments for all points made were awarded the higher mark bands. Key temperatures were well known by candidates: fridge 5°C, freezer -18°C, danger zone 5-63°C, core cooking temp 75°C and hot hold above 63°C for max 90 mins.

Candidates gave good and correct use of terminology: cross contamination, pathogenic bacteria, salmonella, danger zone and hot holding were seen in many responses.

Candidates also had good knowledge that allergens can cause customer safety issues; better answers could explain ways the café could limit/eliminate allergy contamination, separate equipment, separate areas, asking customers before serving, use of purple equipment and staff training. Allergies and intolerances were muddled and many discussed ways gluten and dairy free foods could be prepared, stored and served. All answers referred to customer safety.

Many candidates were assessed this series using non-standard scripts e.g. Modified Language, Large print etc., and whilst these are an essential requirement for Eduqas to provide these to accommodate for specific eligible learners needs, it would support the examination process if candidates accessing these scripts were able to respond via one medium, not a mix of both.

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FOOD PREPARATION AND NUTRITION

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COMPONENT 2 – FOOD PREPARATION AND NUTRITION IN ACTION

Overview of the Component

As in previous series, learners choose the focus from the briefs released in September and November 2025.

The outcomes of the assessments were comparable to last summer.

The majority of centres guided candidates well through both assessments.

Many centres had clearly acted on moderator feedback from 2025, and marking for both assessments was generally in line with Eduqas criteria, although for NEA 2 we are still seeing instances of overmarking in Section B. For both NEA 1 and 2, some centres have been using a marking criterion that is not Eduqas approved and does not match the mark scheme that is on the website.

Accessing the uploaded work was less problematic – thank you. To facilitate the moderation process, NEA 1 and NEA 2 should be uploaded as one document, with the FP coversheets and NEA 2 practical marksheet included in the single document. Additionally, photographic evidence of the candidates' practical outcomes can also be included in each NEA document. Some centres uploaded numerous documents, which made moderating the work extremely difficult and time-consuming. In the future, it is hoped that teachers will become more familiar with saving work as PDF documents and uploading them as one document. The FP coversheet should be the latest version, which includes a statement about the use of AI in the work – older versions cannot be accepted. The candidates also need to sign the FP forms – electronic signatures are allowed. Unsigned FP coversheets will not be accepted.

It is vital to check the marks being entered onto IAMIS – there were many clerical errors and work that was not uploaded correctly and/or missing.

When completing the FP coversheets, it is recommended that teacher annotation is included as this provides evidence of how and where marks are awarded.

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

Assessment 1: The Food Investigation Assessment

The two tasks available this year were:

Task A

Raising agents are used in cake making.

Investigate the working characteristics and the functional and chemical properties of a range of raising agents used to make a well risen cup cake.

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Task B

Different cooking methods may affect the sensory properties of vegetables.
Investigate the working characteristics and the functional and chemical properties of one type of vegetable when cooked using different methods.

Section A

The majority of candidates conducted detailed research on the topic. While many candidates provided thorough research, some should consider summarising their findings to stay within the 2000-word limit. After conducting thorough research, candidates should be able to explain why they have chosen their experimental ingredients. Many candidates chose the raising agents in cakes task this year.

Both tasks were generally well-researched, with many candidates including in depth research about the function of ingredients in cakes and the science behind the use of flours in cakes. Relevant research is needed in relation to the food science element - for example, using a viscosity chart for the cake batter/raising agents task was not a suitable method to choose. However, the food science element was generally better for the ‘Cake’ task than the ‘Vegetable’ task.

Well-structured plans were included, but some candidates failed to justify their choice of variables. The research candidates conduct should help support their choice of variables. The majority of the work included predictions in varying levels of detail. Predictions need not be lengthy, but candidates should refer back to their research to justify their hypothesis. Some hypotheses are being written prior to the research being carried out which should not happen – research should be completed first to enable candidates to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the topic to be able to make a prediction. Also, some hypotheses were not feasible, for example, ’I think the bicarbonate of soda will cause the top to go crispy’.

Section B

The level of detail in this section varied among candidates. For some, there was insufficient photographic evidence of the steps when carrying out the investigation and annotated commentary to go with this. Some candidates conducted a range of experiments, but some results were not tested using a range of formats. While some excellent examples of work were seen, there were instances where marks were generously awarded based on insufficient evidence.

Most testing had evidence of star profiles, viscosity charts and peer assessment was present, but more is needed to justify awarding marks from the top band in this section.

When carrying out the Vegetable task, there was a tendency to take one vegetable and cook it in three ways and carry out a sensory test. If this is the only testing taking place, then the results would be very limited. There was a limited number of tests carried out – the raising agent task generally showed more variation than the vegetable one. In the Vegetable task, there was a tendency to stray from the task of cooking methods and vegetables. Some candidates had tested using butter, adding black pepper and garlic, which distracted from the overall aim of the investigation.

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For Section B, candidates are expected to include a range of annotated photographs in their work. Unfortunately, there was a lack of diverse photographic evidence in many submissions this year. It is hoped that future candidates will include more photographic evidence. Encouraging candidates to take plenty of photos throughout their practical sessions will enhance their work and demonstrate that a range of tests have taken place. The accompanying annotations can also provide evidence of knowledge and understanding. Candidate name and number should also be present in these photographs.

Candidates are expected to use a variety of formats and results to present their findings. Many opted for charts and/or star profiles. Candidates could also include graphs, pie charts and line graphs. Advising candidates to use peer assessment and sensory preference testing will not only diversify their results presentation but also provide more opportunities for analysis.

Section C

This section is often challenging for candidates in this assessment. While many can describe their practical experiments, justifying marks from higher bands requires drawing conclusions from the data and explaining why the results occurred. Where too few tests were carried out there was a lack of data to analyse and draw conclusions from. Evaluations should analyse the data that has been gathered in Section B, but too often evaluations were descriptive. Where there was analysis, it seemed to follow on from each test and generally showed a good understanding of what had happened. These explanations should link back to the candidate's research and specifically address the scientific principles of the task, which is the most challenging aspect. The raising agent's task had included reference to science research in with the analysis. The raising agent's conclusions had ranked and rated cakes according to their acceptability of rise, colour and taste, and explanations were given which showed the candidates understanding of the task. Candidates are also required to evaluate their hypotheses and confirm whether their predictions were correct or incorrect, providing explanations for their correctness or lack thereof. In some instances, candidates were awarded high marks for this section without discussing the scientific aspects of the task or reviewing their hypotheses. Given the time constraints of this assessment (8 hours, as recommended by Eduqas), Section C may also offer an opportunity for candidates to discuss further experimental work that could be conducted in the future.

Assessment 2: The Food Preparation Assessment

The two tasks available this year were:

Task A

A 'pop up' restaurant is opening in your local town.
Research, prepare and cook 3 dishes (and accompaniments, if appropriate) that showcase your technical skills and could be sold on the restaurant's opening night.

Task B

The Eatwell Guide advises that we eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
Research, prepare and cook 3 dishes (and accompaniments, if appropriate) that showcase your technical skills and include a variety of fruit and/or vegetables to encourage people to meet this guidance.

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Section A

It was pleasing to see more evidence of primary research in candidates' work this year. Detailed analysis of both tasks would have seen greater numbers of candidates referring to all areas of the task rather than only focussing on one part. Whatever research is carried out needs to be relevant to the task being carried out. For the ‘pop-up restaurant’ task, many chose a theme such as Greece, Italy and Middle Eastern food. The weaker candidates seemed to get distracted by this and lost sight of the ’pop up restaurant’ element of the task. Some candidates had misread the ‘Eatwell Guide’ task. Rather than focussing of the task of increasing fruit and vegetables, some research was solely based on the Eatwell Guide. Some candidates included valuable pieces of research from areas such as textbooks, recipe books, surveys, restaurants menus and photographs of food they had tried, visits to restaurants/supermarkets, product analysis, questionnaires, and interviews. Mood boards had a lot more annotation, which is good practice, as they have very little value if they are not annotated. Some candidates are putting in a copy of a questionnaire in their research, but not adding any data, analysis or conclusions from this type of research. Many seemed to spend a lot of time planning what they were going to research but not actually getting round to doing it. Conclusions should be drawn from the different types of research and should always refer back to the task.

While a range of practical trials were observed, candidates must remember to include a picture of each trial dish made. Candidates are not carrying out enough trial dishes; most completed three and were mainly a practice for their final practical exam (this was a lot more common this year). The trialling of dishes is meant to enable candidates to select and reject ideas for their final choices. Ideally, top band candidates should be trialling between 4-6 dishes. Some candidates are selecting their final dishes before they have completed their research. Trial evaluations covering nutrition, skills, cooking methods, and sensory qualities were seen in most of the moderated work. However, some candidates still include recipes, methods, ingredients lists and costings of each practical trial dish, which are not creditworthy and should be discouraged if not applicable to the task. As well as not being creditworthy, they are time consuming. Overall, this section was accurately marked in most of the work moderated.

Justification of dish choices was seen in many candidates' work this year, but often these lacked detail. Many listed the skills that were to be demonstrated but candidates should give detailed reasons for selecting the dishes and always refer back to the task and research carried out.

Orders of work were generally detailed, but there is still room for improvement. Plans should be detailed enough for a third party to follow – examples seen included a lack of cooking times, no cooking method (e.g., just ‘cook fish‘) and no temperatures stated for the oven. Cakes were often cooked last with no time allowed to cool down before decorating. The use of ‘real time’ is essential if the candidates are to complete the practical in the 3-hour time limit. Health and safety points listed were better than last year. The use of colour coding for the different dishes is a good visual aid for candidates and should be recommended. Candidates generally provided good detail, and dovetailing was more evident, although some candidates still struggled with it. To ensure candidates are confident and proficient in dovetailing, it is recommended to provide practical and written dovetailing activities throughout Year 10 and Year 11 prior to starting NEA 2. Many time plans finished after 90 minutes; others over ran by 90 minutes.

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Notably, some pieces of work included written points on serving and presenting dishes, along with visual images depicting how the dishes should look. This visual prompt may benefit many candidates, helping them present their dishes more attractively rather than relying solely on written bullet points.

The specification and assessment brief states that the three dishes (and accompaniments) should be completed in a single 3-hour block of time and not over individual hours. There was also evidence seen in the work this year that some centres are allowing mise en place time before the three hours to wash hands, collect equipment, weigh ingredients, etc. – this is not permitted as all preparatory tasks must be included within the three hours. Where this was identified by moderators, centres were referred to the malpractice team.

Section B

Some candidates did not make what the time plan suggested they had planned, so had difficulty with the time keeping. This year, there was a comprehensive range of dishes documented in the photographic evidence of candidates' work, and more teachers are using the NEA 2 practical marksheet to assess candidates' practical work. Some marksheets used were not ones provided by Eduqas and therefore not meeting the criteria of the exam board. The practical marksheet facilitates fair and accurate marking of the practical session and allows moderators to understand how and why marks were awarded. Generic comments such as ’worked well’ or ’excellent standard’ are not useful to justify marks awarded. However, some centres still generously mark the practical work. Top band marks are being awarded despite photographic evidence showing that the practical work was not completed or presented well. The dishes were lacking presentation and accompaniments to be awarded marks from the top bands. To award marks from the higher bands in these sections, candidates must demonstrate a range of well-executed, complex, high-level skills along with excellent presentation using various techniques and garnishes to include accompaniments where suitable. Due to the work being uploaded on IAMIS, candidates should include images of their dishes within the main body of their work for easy reference by moderators. Some centres are still uploading separate image files onto IAMIS – these are not needed as the images should be included in the candidates work.

Section C

Candidates should refer back to the conclusions drawn throughout the work and the task chosen. When they did refer back to the task, candidates who completed the ’pop up restaurant‘ task referred to it not needing much equipment and the kitchen was very compact, or it was a favourite recipe from the survey carried out in the research and a popular food found in other ’pop up restaurants’ so will sell. Many evaluations were describing the dishes made rather than analysing the process/outcome. Sensory evaluation of the practical work should be included in this section – this could be from peers, family, teachers and candidates themselves. There was a tendency for candidates to give sensory comments (self-evaluation of dishes) rather than carrying out sensory testing as stated in the assessment criteria. Technical skills were listed or described, for example ’I made my cake using the whisking method’, or ‘baking, frying, chopping, dicing’. The evaluation should also help to inform them of improvements that could be made in the future. Many more candidates were evaluating their dishes against similar/existing ones this year than in previous years. Some compared against other candidates’ practical work or used a shop/restaurant comparison. From the comparison, they should make suggestions for future improvements. The marking of this section was mostly accurate, and the evaluations covered all the specification criteria.

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Please remember that the NEA tasks change annually and differ from those in Wales (WJEC). Additionally, there will be online and face-to-face CPD opportunities in the autumn to support teachers delivering this qualification.

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Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.
Tel: 029 2240 4262
Email: food@eduqas.co.uk
Qualification webpage: GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition

See other useful contacts here: Useful Contacts | Eduqas

CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

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