



General Certificate of Education

Science In Society 1401/2401

**SCIS2 Reading and Writing about
Science**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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General Comments

The moderating team reports some very interesting work this year and found that the administration of the coursework was effectively completed in most cases. However, where problems did arise, they were the same, or similar to, those of last year.

Centres are reminded that they can contact AQA or their moderator if a problem arises. It is much easier to work together to find an early solution rather than waiting until the moderating period is underway. Help may also be sought from your Coursework Adviser, details of who are available from AQA. New centres, in particular, are reminded that coursework administration is detailed in section 6 of the specification. You should be familiar with the requirements of this section from the beginning of the course.

It was clear that the most effective advice given to the students from their teachers increased the final marks of the candidates. Those teachers, who were familiar with section 3.2 of the specification and had briefed their students well, found that the less time was needed with the coursework and their marks were accepted by their moderator. It should be remembered that “drafting” of coursework for initial review by teachers is acceptable and reduces the need for subsequent correction. Annotation of the final scripts is also very important, as it informs the moderators of your thinking in awarding the marks. Please try to use these annotations as a “conversation” with your moderator.

Standardisation meetings are held at a number of venues around the country in the autumn term to which new centres, and some others, are automatically invited. Centres where a new member of staff is involved in assessment, particularly if they are leading the assessment, are advised to contact AQA to enquire about attendance at one of these meetings.

The AQA Subject Officer and Coursework Advisers are always available for support and advice. Support material and links to other associated resources for this work are freely available on the AQA website. However the key source of information is the specification and centres are encouraged to regularly refer to sections 3.2 and 6 whilst preparing students for the coursework.

Standard of marking

In general, the marking was very good, with the criteria being well understood in the “Study of a Topical Scientific Issue” in particular. Centres are reminded that the highest marks in the “Critical Account of Scientific Reading” are only available where the science in the text is clearly explained in the student’s own words and related ideas about “how science works” are fully explored.

Unfortunately, incorrect marking was noted in a small number of centres. In many cases this might have been avoided by thorough internal standardisation procedures or study of the material provided at standardisation sessions in consultation with the Coursework Adviser if necessary. The full range of marks is available and centres are encouraged to use that range unless there is good reason for this approach to be inappropriate.

Critical Account of Scientific Reading

Candidates’ accounts showed a wide range of reading which reflects the increasing number of readily available texts. However the inappropriate still exist, alongside those of too low a level. Many students need their teachers’ help to find something they are interested in and that matches the marking criteria. Science fiction remains a difficult choice unless the high level of science needed is present.

There are still some centres who believe that only one or two books are needed for this exercise for the whole class. They are usually the same ones who consider that only one chapter from a book is needed. The rationale behind this coursework exercise is to involve students of this age in reading about science and enjoying the task. Then being able to communicate the essence of what they have read to someone else. So the exercise should be seen in a positive light. It is difficult to see how this is the case by using a chapter from the same book with most of the class. This practice should be avoided.

Some centres may be helped by a reminder that, in assessing the science explanation in candidates' work, a mere listing of the science content should gain marks in the lowest band. A description of the science is better, but candidates should explain the science in their own words to achieve marks in the highest band. This was the main source of error in this year's marking and I would draw your attention to it.

It should also be noted that the marking criteria cover both the science to be explained and the concepts of "How science works". High marks may not be gained from a discussion of the "How science works" concepts alone.

Study of a Topical Scientific Issue

Moderators read many interesting studies from some very talented candidates.

In general, the marking criteria were well understood by most centres. However the same confusion of "how science works" being marked highly, where there was no associated explanation of the science, was evident. High marks were also given in some cases to purely descriptive accounts of a scientific issue. Centres are reminded that the study is designed to allow candidates to "weigh evidence, analyse views on an issue and draw personal conclusions from the evidence." This is most easily done if there is a debate amongst scientists, where the differences in views can be seen and explained.

The referencing of quoted work was a problem this year in many cases. Some centres seem to think it acceptable for the students' work to contain no citation of reference at all. This is not the case (please refer to section 3.2) and can lead to suspicions of plagiarism. The Harvard system for citing quotations is recognised in many of our higher education establishments and is the one we use in Science in Society. Consequently it is a skill that many of your students will find extremely useful and compulsory in their university essays. We expect to see correct citation of students' work. Guidance on the use of the Harvard system may be readily found on the internet, in the course AS textbook and from your coursework adviser. Centres should also note that the correct citation for material from the internet is the whole URL plus the date accessed.

Plagiarism is not malpractice when candidates honestly reference their sources, although it is undoubtedly poor practice and must be penalised accordingly in marking content. Moderators expect teachers to comment (on candidate record forms) on all incidences of such plagiarism and encourage centres to offer candidates the guidance and oversight necessary to reduce significantly the incidence in final reports submitted.

The evaluation of the study seems to cause, even some of the best candidates, problems. Students should show evidence of both analysis of what they have read and synthesis of their ideas to form relevant conclusions. Consequently, it is difficult to see how an evaluation, at the highest level, will be a short paragraph at the end of the assignment. The "drafting" of candidate's work can be particularly useful here.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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