



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Additional Applied Science 4863

AASC3 Using Scientific Skills

Report on the Examination

2008 examination – June series

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General comments

Activities

Generally there was some very nice work seen for this unit. Where the specification and the teachers guide had been followed, candidates' work demonstrated the ethos of this vocational qualification and it was clear to see that students had really enjoyed completing the tasks set. Good examples of candidates work were seen in all three areas of the specification (Forensic Science, Food Science and Sport Science).

Problems occurred where the guidance had not been followed and tasks set had no vocational context, and/or a 'range' of tasks had not been completed. Centres must be reminded that this unit represents 40% of a GCSE qualification and one simple task is not enough to satisfy the criteria. This is clearly outlined in the teacher's guide.

Assessment

This unit seems to have been marked generally in line with AQA standards. Problems usually tended to relate to the complexity/range of tasks set, rather than issues with the grading criteria. Where there was generosity of marking, this tended to be, as expected, more at the top end.

There were issues regarding a lack of assessor annotations and it was not always clear to see where credit had been awarded to candidates. There were many centres new to Applied Science who, perhaps, have not realised the importance of assessor annotation but they must ensure this issue is addressed for next time.

There was evidence of internal standardisation in the samples from many centres and this was encouraging to see. New centres must take this on board too.

Presentation of work to the moderator

Work was generally well presented for moderation. Most centres had punched and tagged the portfolios together as requested. Some centres need reminding not to use staples, plastic wallets or bulky folders.

Thank you to all those centres that sent their marks in by the deadline. Some centres missed this deadline and/or delayed sending their samples to the moderator. This severely hindered the moderation process.

Most centres completed the Centre Declaration Sheets and Candidate Record Forms correctly.

Strand A: Vocational Application

It was not always clear to see why centres had awarded the marks in this strand – annotation was severely lacking. There were also many instances of centres giving marks (sometimes at stage 3) where all the candidate had done was to write out the task set (often word for word from the task sheet). All candidates from these centres often had the exact same wording for strand A). Marks here are given for writing in their own words, describing and then explaining.

Strand B: Planning and Risk Assessment

This strand was reasonably well marked. Most centres had followed the guidance about plans being written in the future tense and about the necessity for risk assessments at stages 2 and 3 to be comprehensive as well as being written with varying degrees of independence. Where problems arose, they were due to one of these two issues. Centres are advised to check the guidance given in the teacher's guide.

Strand C: Selecting Equipment and Recording Information

Annotation was an issue again here and it was often unclear why centres had awarded marks. It is necessary for centres to break down each stage and annotate for each individual mark either by code or by words, i.e. the first mark for 3C.1 might be 3C.1 i, 3C.1a or 3C.1 'independently select'. Any of these will allow the moderator to see which marking point is being awarded, whereas simply '3C.1' does not.

Generally, though, this strand was marked in line with AQA expectations, where justifications for marks given could be seen.

Strand D: Processing Information and Drawing Conclusions

Where centres had followed the guidance given candidates scored well. Generally, those who had completed several tasks, where at least one contained some numerical data to comment on, provided greater opportunities to pull together better conclusions and potentially achieve higher marks. Those who had performed only one, often simple, task could not reach stages 2 and 3 here.

Strand E: Evaluation and Explanation

Centres marked appropriately at stage 1, however, many centres were lenient in their marking at stages 2 and 3, giving marks for 2E.1, where there was no reason for the improvement given or giving 3E.1, where the review of their work consisted of a few brief lines and no detail. Centres appeared to be wary of giving 2E.2 and 3E.3 and there was a feeling that many had not encouraged their candidates to suggest how their findings might be used in a vocational setting (quite hard to do for some where there was little vocational context in the task set).

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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