



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Additional Applied Science 4863

AASC3 Using Scientific Skills

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – January series

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Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.

General comments

Activities

As in the first series, there was some very good 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, tasks set had no vocational context, or a suitable '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 Teachers' Guide.

Assessment

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

Most centres had addressed the issue of assessor annotation and in most portfolios it was clear where credit had been given to candidates.

There was evidence of internal standardisation in samples from many centres and this was encouraging. New centres are reminded that both annotation and internal standardisation are required to ensure that they provide clear and consistent evidence of assessment to the moderator.

Presentation of work to the moderator

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

Many centres missed the deadline date for sending in their Centre Mark Forms and/or delayed sending their samples to the moderator. Deadlines during the January series are very tight and any delay severely hinders the moderation process.

Most centres completed the Centre Declaration Sheets and Candidate Record Forms correctly. There were a few examples of incorrect transfer of candidates' marks onto the Candidate Record Forms and/or the Centre Mark Forms. Centres are reminded of the importance of checking that all marks submitted are accurate.

Strand A: The Use of Science in the Workplace

For most centres, the candidate responses were better than in the previous series. Centres had a clearer understanding of the assessment criteria, and had given credit for 'identifying' at stage 1 and 'describing' at stage 2. A number of centres had, however, awarded stage 3 marks where no research or explanation was evident.

Strand B: Working Safely in Science

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 having 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: Research and Communication

Annotation was an issue, and it was often unclear why centres had awarded the 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 3C1 might be 3C1 i, 3C1a or 3C1 'independently select'. Any of these will allow the moderator to see which marking point is being awarded, whereas simply 3C1 does not

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

Strand D: Processing Information and Drawing Conclusions

Centres that had followed the guidance had candidates who scored well. Generally, those who had completed several tasks, at least one of which contained some numerical data to comment on, had 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 in this strand.

Strand E: Evaluation and Explanation

Centres marked appropriately at stage 1 here. However, many centres were lenient in their marking at stages 2 and 3, giving marks for 2E1 where there was no reason for the improvement given or giving 3E1 where the review of their work consisted of a few brief lines and no detail.

Centres appeared to be wary of giving 2E2 and 3E3 and there was a feeling that many had not encouraged their candidates to suggest how their findings might be used in a vocational setting. In many cases evidence of any scenario used was not evident making the awarding of these criteria almost impossible.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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