



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Additional Applied Science 4863

AASC3 Using Scientific Skills

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: www.aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2009 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

COPYRIGHT

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

General comments

Activities

As in the previous series, the work seen from many centres clearly demonstrated the ethos of this vocational qualification. There was evidence that candidates 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 Sports Science), although more centres had successfully undertaken Forensic Science activities.

Where the guidance given in the specification and the Teachers Guide had not been followed, there were some common problems. Tasks set had no vocational context, and/or a 'range' of tasks had not been completed. Centres should note that this unit represents 40% of a GCSE qualification and one simple task is not enough to satisfy the criteria, especially at the higher end of the assessment grid. This is clearly outlined in the Teachers Guide.

Assessment

Most centres' assessment of this unit was broadly in line with the AQA standard. Any problems with assessment tended to relate to the complexity and range of tasks set rather than misunderstanding of the grading criteria. The number of centres with problems was much fewer than in previous series, showing that centres were generally following the guidance given relating to complexity and range of tasks set. Where there was generosity of marking, this tended to be, as expected, more at the top end.

The importance of assessor annotations cannot be stressed enough to centres and it was encouraging to see that this was addressed by most.

There was evidence of internal standardisation in the samples from many centres. Centres who have not already incorporated internal standardising into their internal marking regime must address this issue. Internal standardisation can detect problems, issues or mistakes before work is submitted for moderation and, if acted upon, can reduce the chances of moderation raising concerns.

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, bulky folders or loose pages.

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: The Use of Science in the Workplace

It was not always clear to see why centres had awarded the marks in this strand because annotation was often lacking. There were fewer instances of over-marking in this strand than in the previous series. More candidates had described the vocational context and researched an area relating to the task set, rather than just copying out the task set in their own words. There was little evidence of explanation and this was an area still over-marked by some centres.

Strand B: Working Safely in Science

This strand was quite well marked by most centres. 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 with varying degrees of independence. Problems arose occasionally and they were still 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

Generally this strand was marked in line with AQA expectations. Annotation was better here than previously but there were still centres where it was unclear why marks had been awarded for this strand. Centres should break down each Stage and annotate for each individual mark either by code or by words in order to make it clear what credit has been given. For example, the first mark for 3C1 might be 3C1i, 3C1a or 3C1 'independently select'. Any of these will allow the moderator to see which marking point is being awarded, rather than just 3C1.

Strand D: Processing Information and Drawing Conclusions

As in the previous series, centres that had followed the guidance about the number of tasks undertaken had candidates who scored well. Generally, those who had completed several tasks, at least one of which had some numerical data to comment on, had opportunities to pull together better conclusions and potentially achieve higher marks. Many centres had done several tasks but candidates had written several simple conclusions and had not pulled their findings together to answer the original question.

Those who had performed only one, often simple, task could not reach all of the Stages 2 and 3 marks.

Strand E: Evaluation and Explanation

Some centres were still marking leniently 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. Many centres were allowing candidates to simply write 'repeat' to gain the 2E1 improvement mark. Fewer centres were wary of giving 2E2 and 3E3 and more candidates had been encouraged to suggest how their findings might be used in a vocational setting. This was still 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.