



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Additional Applied Science 4863

AASC3 Using Scientific Skills

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – January series

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General comments

Activities

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

Where the guidance given in the specification and the teacher's 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 teacher's guide.

Assessment

Most centres' assessment of this unit was broadly in line with the AQA standard. There were fewer problems relating to the complexity/range of tasks set than in previous series, showing that centres were generally following the guidance given in the Teacher's Guide about an investigation being a range of tasks. Where there was generosity of marking, this was, as expected, more at the top end.

The importance of assessor annotations has continued to be stressed to centres and it was encouraging to see that this has now been addressed by most centres.

There was evidence of internal standardisation in the samples from most centres. The importance of internal standardisation in detecting problems, issues or even administrative mistakes before work is submitted for moderation cannot be stressed enough. Most centres have now realised that internal standardisation 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. A small number of centres need reminding not to use staples, plastic wallets, bulky folders or loose pages.

Most centres sent in their marks by the deadline and their samples were sent promptly upon request. There are still some centres that severely hinder the moderation process by missing deadlines and responding too slowly to requests for samples.

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

Strand A: The Use of Science in the Workplace

This strand was less over-marked by centres than in previous series. More candidates were able to describe the vocational context and link their research to the task by explaining the vocational significance.

Strand B: Working Safely in Science

This strand was 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.

Strand C: Research and Communication

This strand was marked reasonably in line with AQA expectations. Annotation is improving but there were still centres whose annotation did not make it clear 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

Centres that had followed the guidance about the number of tasks undertaken had candidates who scored well here. Candidates 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 draw conclusions for the whole investigation. Those who had performed only one, often simple, task could not reach all of stage 2 and gain three marks.

Strand E: Evaluation and Explanation

Fewer centres were allowing candidates to simply write 'repeat' to gain the 2E1 improvement mark. Centres know that for 2E1 a reason for the improvement must be given and for 3E1 the review of the task must contain a detailed account of the strengths and weaknesses. More candidates had been encouraged to suggest how their findings might be used in a vocational setting and so more were successfully achieving 2E2 and 3E3. This was more difficult to achieve for candidates where the centre had set the investigation with little vocational context.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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