



General Certificate of Secondary Education

**Applied Science (Double Award)
4861**

APSC1 Science in the Workplace

Report on the Examination

2009 examination – June series

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Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.

General comments

Activities

There were some excellent examples of activities that gave thorough coverage of the specification and were set in a good vocational context. Most candidates were given opportunities to use a wide range of resources and had access to the full range of assessment criteria.

Assessment

More assessments were broadly in line with the AQA standard than in the previous series. However, there was some generosity of marking at the higher end of the marking grid.

Most centres had responded to the guidance given regarding the importance of assessor annotations. Generally it was clear to see where, as well as what, credit had been awarded to candidates.

It was pleasing to see evidence of internal standardisation in the samples from many centres. A number of centres must address the issues of annotation and internal standardisation with some urgency before submitting further work for moderation.

Presentation of work to the moderator

Work was generally well presented for moderation, with most centres punching and tagging the portfolios together as requested. Some centres need reminding that the use of staples, plastic wallets, bulky folders or piles of loose pages can seriously hinder moderation.

The majority of Centre Mark Forms were received by the deadline, many arriving well before which significantly aids the moderation process. Most centres also completed the Centre Declaration Sheets and Candidate Record Forms correctly.

A minority of centres, still do not seem to comprehend the importance of accurate administration and the quick turn-around required for requested work.

Strand A: The Use of Science in the Workplace

As in previous series, there was some very nice work seen here, with many candidates achieving well-deserved high marks. It was clear that these centres had followed the guidance given in the specification and the Teachers' Guide.

The majority of centres now understand that a 'range of organisations' is at least three. Some centres gave Stage 2 marks or above where only one or two organisations had been studied, but far fewer misunderstood this than in previous series.

There was less confusion over what is meant by 'describe the location', most centres correctly encouraging candidates to include a map and address to ensure that the organisation could be found using their information (the name of the town or city alone was not given credit). At Stage 3, there should be a full explanation of why the organisation is located where it is, not simply generic statements like 'good transport links' without some justification.

Some centres were giving credit to candidates for the 'description of products or services' at Stage 2 for a simple list. A list of products or services is worthy of Stage 1 marks only.

To achieve Stage 2 marks for the qualifications and description of the jobs, more than one job must be given per organisation. The number of jobs required should be appropriate to the size and type of organisation.

The in-depth study for Stage 3 should be distinguishable from the other two organizations by the amount of detail included. Candidates should be encouraged to produce one report that is clearly more thoroughly researched than the other two.

Unfortunately the amount of downloaded information remains a problem, specifically in the descriptions of qualifications and skills of scientists, but occasionally elsewhere as well. There were some instances of material that was clearly cut and pasted being annotated by the assessor, the candidate achieving marks where they had done nothing but print off the Internet. Assessors are reminded that downloaded material can be given credit only if the candidate has **used** it. Unedited material should not be included in the candidate's portfolio at all.

Strand B: Working Safely in Science

The majority of centres had ensured that candidates had good coverage of all three aspects of the specification (hazards, fire safety and first aid) to achieve full Stage 1 although some had awarded Stage 2 marks or above where one of the three aspects of the specification was missing at Stage 1. These centres need to look back at the specification and the Teachers' Guide, or check with their Portfolio Adviser for further clarification.

A named workplace **must** be included to achieve marks at Stage 2 and the same areas of the specification should be covered. This could be one of the organisations covered in Strand A.

A comparison of this workplace with the school laboratory is required to achieve Stage 3, but the Stage 2 detail for this workplace must be achieved first. The comparison alone is not enough to cover both Stage 2 and Stage 3 marks.

Centres must again be careful here to ensure that credit is not given for unedited downloaded material.

Strand C: Research and Communication

This was generally assessed in line with AQA expectations, candidates who had done very little work being awarded 1 mark, those using several sources of information being awarded 2 marks, and those who had used and identified many sources and shown understanding being awarded 3 marks. Instances of centres being too lenient (usually giving 3 marks where the candidate had not identified their sources) or too harsh (usually giving only 1 mark where it appeared that several sources had been used) were fewer than in previous series.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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