



General Certificate of Secondary Education

**Applied Science (Double Award)
4861**

APSC1 Science in the Workplace

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – January series

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General comments

Activities

There were many excellent examples of activities that gave thorough coverage of the specification and were set in a good vocational context. The majority of candidates had access to the full range of grading criteria and they had been given opportunities to use a wide range of resources.

Assessment

Most centres' assessment was broadly in line with the AQA standard. There was some generosity of marking by some centres and this tended to be more at the higher end of the marking grid.

Assessor annotations were generally good and this made it clear to see where, as well as what, credit had been awarded to candidates.

Whilst there was evidence of internal standardisation in the samples from many centres, there were still a number of centres that must address this issue before submitting further work for moderation. If assessors within the centre are not marking candidates' work to the same standard they risk all their candidates' marks being regressed if any work is out of tolerance.

Presentation of work to the moderator

Work was well presented for moderation by most centres, being punched and tagged together as requested. A small number of centres still need reminding that the use of staples, plastic wallets, bulky folders or piles of loose pages can seriously hinder moderation.

The prompt sending of marks and samples significantly aided the moderation process for most centres. As in the last series, many centres sent in marks and samples before the deadline, despite the extended deadline given due to the snow and freezing conditions. Most centres completed the Centre Declaration Sheets and Candidate Record Forms correctly.

The importance of accurate administration and the quick turn-around required for requested work needs stressing again to a small minority of centres.

Strand A: The Use of Science in the Workplace

Once again, there was some very nice work seen here, including a good selection of organisations that use science. Many candidates achieved high marks that were well deserved. It was clear that these candidates came from centres that had followed the guidance given in the Specification and the Teacher's Guide very carefully.

Most centres acknowledged that a 'range of organisations' should be at least three. A small minority of centres were still giving stage 2 marks or above where only one or two organisations had been studied. However, the number of centres who misunderstood this was, once again, less than in previous series.

The majority of centres encouraged candidates to describe the locations of the organisations by including a map and address to ensure that the organisation could be actually found using their information. Fewer candidates than previously gave only the name of the town or city which, alone, could not be given credit. At stage 3, generic statements like 'good transport links' (without some justification) would not achieve credit for explaining the location.

A few centres were still 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.

The qualifications and description of the jobs at stage 2 should be for more than one job per organisation. The number of jobs required should be appropriate to the size and type of organisation, but should be approximately three.

At stage 3, the in-depth study should be distinguishable from the other two in the range by the amount of detail included. Candidates should be encouraged to produce one report that is more thoroughly researched than the other two.

There were still instances of downloaded information being given credit, specifically in the descriptions of qualifications and skills of scientists, although this was less than in previous series. Assessors are reminded that downloaded material can only be given credit 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.

A named workplace must be included to achieve marks at stage 2 and the same areas of the specification should be covered again for this workplace. Candidates could be encouraged to use one of the organisations covered in strand A as their scientific workplace in strand B. It was nice to see that some candidates were using their work experience organisation as this workplace in both strands. Centres should encourage candidates to do this, if it is an appropriate workplace, as candidates are able to write more information themselves, from their own experiences, and are not tempted to 'cut and paste' information from the internet.

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

Strand C: Research and Communication

As in the previous series, this was generally assessed in line with AQA expectations.

Candidates who had done very little work being awarded one mark, those using several sources of information being awarded two, and those who had used and identified many sources and shown understanding being awarded three marks. Instances of centres being too lenient (usually giving three marks where the candidate had not identified their sources) or too harsh (usually giving only one mark where it appeared that several sources had been used) were only seen in a small number of centres.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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