



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Applied Science 4861

APSC1 Science in the Workplace

Report on the Examination

2008 examination – January series

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General comments

Activities

It was pleasing to see that most centres undertook activities that gave thorough coverage of the specification. As in the summer, there were some excellent examples of activities set in a good vocational context. Most centres were giving candidates opportunities to use a wide range of resources.

Assessment

There were a number of instances of generosity of marking and, as last summer, this tended to be more at the higher end.

Most centres had followed the guidance given regarding the importance of assessor annotations and generally it was clear to see where credit had been awarded. There was also evidence in the samples that many centres had carried out internal standardisation, which is encouraging to see. However, some centres need to address the issues of both annotation and internal standardisation.

Presentation of work to the moderator

Thank you to all those centres who sent their marks in by the 10 January deadline. However, some centres missed this deadline and/or delayed sending their samples to the moderator, which severely hindered the moderation process.

Work was generally well presented for moderation. Most centres had punched and tagged the portfolios together as requested.

Most centres completed the Centre Declaration Sheets and Candidate Record Forms correctly. There were, however, some centres that did not complete the 'Title of candidate's work' section of the CRF. This is designed to help a moderator navigate a candidate's portfolio more easily and is crucial to the moderation process.

Some centres had made errors either in transferring marks onto the Candidate Record Form or in adding up candidates marks. Care should be taken to ensure that the information on the Candidate Record Form (and subsequently the Centre Mark Form) is correct.

Strand A: The Use of Science in the Workplace

Most centres had followed the guidance that a 'range' should be at least three organisations, although a small number gave full Stage 1 marks or above to work showing that only two organisations had been studied.

It was disappointing to see a minority of centres allowing candidates to choose almost identical organisations at local, national and international level (eg three different pharmacies). This is not in the spirit of the specification as it does not provide candidates with the opportunity to undertake extensive research of different jobs, products, services, etc. Whilst it is accepted that the school or college is a workplace, the idea of this strand is to allow students to explore the opportunities for the use of science and scientific skills in the wider environment.

The description of location should not just be a map but an actual description (accompanying a map is even better). For Stage 3 marks there should be a full explanation of why the organisation is located where it is. This explanation should be very specific to the organisation and not simply consist of generic statements such as 'good transport links'.

At Stage 3, the in-depth study should be distinguishable from the other two in the range by the amount of detail included. Some centres were annotating Stage 3 for all three organisations. This is not necessary, and candidates should be encouraged to produce one report that is more thoroughly researched than the other two.

The use of downloaded information is a problem area in this strand. Centres are reminded that downloaded material can be given credit *only if the candidate has used it*. In some instances unedited downloaded material was being annotated by the assessor and candidate being awarded marks for doing nothing but print material from the internet. Any downloaded material should be written up by the candidate in their own words and unedited material should not be included in the candidate's portfolio at all.

Strand B: Working Safely in Science

Generally there was an understanding of the necessity to provide evidence of good coverage of all three aspects of the specification (hazards, fire safety and first aid) to achieve full Stage 1.

Risk assessment should be included in the 'hazards' section. It is not, however, necessary to include dozens of risk assessment sheets: one good example of a risk assessment and a little explanation would suffice.

To achieve marks at Stage 2 the same areas of the specification should be covered for a named, specific workplace, not workplaces in general. It could be one of the organisations covered in Strand A. Preferably the workplace should not be part of the school or college, as this is often too similar to what has been done at Stage 1 and does not allow candidates to undertake the research required for this strand.

Once again, centres must be careful to ensure that downloaded material is not credited when candidates have not used it.

Strand C: Research and Communication

This was generally assessed well and in line with AQA standards, candidates who had done very little work being awarded 1 mark, those using several sources of information being awarded 2, and those who had used many sources and shown understanding being awarded 3 marks. There were, however, a few instances of candidates doing very little and scoring very low marks for strands A and B but still being given 3 marks for Strand C. This is not acceptable. It should also be noted that to achieve 3 marks here candidates must clearly identify their sources of information.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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