



GCSE

Food Preparation and Nutrition

8585/W Paper 1

Report on the examination

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Introduction

This report explores all the questions that were presented on this year's written examination for GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition.

Across Section A and Section B of the written examination, a range of different question styles were used to assess students against three assessment objectives:

- AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of nutrition, food, cooking and preparation.
- AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of nutrition, food, cooking and preparation.
- AO4: Analyse and evaluate different aspects of nutrition, food, cooking and preparation.

It is important to note that there is no set style of question used to examine students against each assessment objective. It is a requirement to assess different aspects of nutrition, food, cooking and preparation through a range of question styles. Centres and students should therefore expect to see questions presented in different formats year-on-year. Centres are encouraged to ensure that **all** of the specification content is covered so that students are well-prepared for sitting the written examination at the end of the GCSE course. This can be achieved by mapping the specification across schemes of learning.

This year's question paper was well-differentiated and appropriately demanding, eliciting a wide range of responses from students of all ability levels. The demand of the question paper was in line with previous written examinations and performance was as expected.

Section A

As typically seen, Section A presented students with 20 multiple choice questions, which covered a wide range of topics from the specification. The vast majority of students attempted all questions, and the style of questions enabled students to achieve multiple marks.

A small minority of students did not answer the multiple-choice questions clearly, which impacted the number of marks that they could be awarded. Centres are therefore advised to ensure students are fully aware of the correct way to identify chosen responses. Students' attention should be drawn to the guidance given at the start of Section A to help with this. It is important to note that if multiple responses are given for a question – purposely or accidentally – and it is not obvious which response they are choosing, a mark will **not** be awarded. Students should ensure that **one** response is clearly marked for each multiple-choice question. Students should also be advised against leaving any multiple-choice questions blank as this immediately reduces the number of marks that can be achieved.

Good practice was noted when students were seen to have annotated around the questions, with this demonstrating that they had spent the required amount of time working out the correct response from the options provided for each question. Centres are encouraged to consider sharing this approach with students when preparing them for the written examination. In general, regular practice of multiple-choice questions is encouraged. This can be achieved by setting multiple choice questions as retrieval practice at the start or end of lessons, interleaving them throughout lessons, and/or setting them as part of homework tasks.

Question 1.1

This was a successfully answered question with the vast majority of students recognising that beef casserole is a traditional British dish.

Question 1.2

This was a more challenging question for students to answer, with approximately one third of students able to identify that coconut oil is a source of saturated fat.

Question 1.3

Most students identified that a rash is not a common symptom of food poisoning, highlighting good knowledge and understanding of the symptoms that may be experienced.

Question 1.4

It was pleasing to see that approximately three-quarters of students successfully recognised that food security is the supply of safe, nutritious and quality food.

Question 1.5

Students were confident in recognising that smell and taste work together to generate flavour when food is eaten.

Question 1.6

This was a challenging question for students to answer, with only a small proportion of students able to identify that 'dietary reference value' is the term given to the amount of nutrients needed to maintain good health in most people. Dietary reference value (DRV) is a term that is presented multiple times on the specification, and centres are encouraged to ensure that students are taught about DRVs when learning about nutrients.

Question 1.7

Approximately half of students successfully identified that vitamin C would be lost when making strawberry jam. When teaching about micronutrients, centres are encouraged to ensure students can identify key food sources whilst also considering how preparation and cooking can affect the nutritional properties of food, as per specification content.

Question 1.8

Half of students recognised that a marinade causes the chemical bonds in a protein food to denature. The food science section of the specification continues to challenge many students. It is important that this section of the specification is taught in conjunction with practical work.

Question 1.9

This question was relatively well-answered with over two-thirds of students identifying that air is the raising agent that is used to make meringue.

Question 1.10

Nearly four in five students recognised that a person with high blood pressure should limit their intake of processed meat, which highlights understanding of high salt content in processed foods.

Question 1.11

Half of students correctly identified that a bacterial culture is added to coagulate protein during cheesemaking.

Question 1.12

It was pleasing to see a significant proportion of students correctly identified that the exposure of fruit and vegetables to the air is most likely to lead to oxidation.

Question 1.13

Just over half of students identified that vitamin E is best described as an antioxidant.

Question 1.14

This was a challenging question for students to answer with approximately one third of students able to correctly identify that a lack of vitamin B3 (niacin) in the diet can lead to pellagra. This was unsurprising given the number of B-group vitamins and different deficiencies that students are required to learn to ensure full coverage of the specification.

Question 1.15

Approximately three in five students correctly identified that the Eatwell Guide recommends that fruit juice and/or smoothies should be limited to 150 ml a day.

Question 1.16

Two in five students were able to determine that convection currents are used when poaching eggs. Centres are encouraged to ensure that cooking methods are linked to heat transfer methods when covering this area of the specification.

Question 1.17

Knowledge of protein complementation was shown by half of students, with lentil soup and bread selected as the correct example from the meal options presented.

Question 1.18

This was a well-answered question with almost three-quarters of students acknowledging that bacteria grow and multiply rapidly at 37 °C.

Question 1.19

The majority of students identified that a dry environment prevents mould growth, demonstrating good knowledge and understanding of conditions required for microorganisms to multiply and thrive.

Question 1.20

This was the most successfully answered multiple choice question, with most students recognising that an ingredient list is a legal requirement on a food label.

Section B

In Section B, students were required to write responses to a range of questions that carried between two and 12 marks. This section of the question paper was accessible to all students, although naturally, some questions presented a higher level of challenge. Students' responses varied in terms of length, detail and the level of knowledge and understanding demonstrated. However, outcomes were in line with expectations.

Question 2.1

This question was the most successfully answered question in Section B, with over two thirds of students achieving full marks. As well as successful interpretation of the data aiding the identification of suitable protein alternatives for each given life stage, students demonstrated clear knowledge and understanding of why the protein alternative was suitable for each circumstance. For example, mycoprotein was a popular response for an adult needing to lose weight due to being lowest in fat out of the protein alternatives presented. It was pleasing to see that some students also explored specific nutrient functions, such as growth spurts in teenagers being supported by high levels of protein.

Where students did not secure full marks, it was typically due to them misinterpreting the most suitable protein alternative for an older person suffering with constipation. A number of students identified tofu as the most suitable protein alternative due to its low fibre content, rather than a fibre-rich source, such as mycoprotein. This suggests that centres should ensure that students are taught more explicitly about constipation and suitable food sources to overcome and/or prevent it.

Question 2.2

Approximately half of students were rewarded for demonstrating good knowledge and understanding of lactose intolerance and dietary advice that should be followed. Most students were able to link lactose intolerance to dairy products, with specific examples given, such as milk, cheese and yoghurt. Many students identified symptoms experienced by someone with lactose intolerance, including stomach cramps, bloating and diarrhoea, and suitable alternatives were freely suggested, such as lactose-free and plant-based / vegan products. Soya and oat milk were popular responses.

It was impressive to see a number of students linking to calcium and vitamin D as part of their response, particularly when considering dietary advice for teenagers. The importance of securing these micronutrients to support the development of strong bones and teeth was emphasised.

A small proportion of students accessed the top mark band. Where this was achieved, students typically showed knowledge and understanding of how lactose intolerance is the

inability to break down lactose, with the digestive system subsequently affected. Some students also referred to checking food labels, advising restaurants upon ordering, and seeking medical advice.

Some students struggled to differentiate between allergies and intolerances. Centres are therefore encouraged to ensure students are aware of the key differences when teaching about food choice, and when considering how to plan a balanced meal for specific dietary groups.

Question 2.3

This question received a range of responses from students, with varying levels of knowledge and understanding shown. Typically, where students were able to correctly identify suitable changes that could be made to reduce the fat content of the dessert recipe, they were also able to offer a relevant explanation. Many students referenced switching double cream for single cream, or cream with a lower fat content. Changing whole milk to skimmed or semi-skimmed milk was also a popular response.

Where full marks were not achieved, it was typically due to students referencing sugar. This limited the number of marks that could be awarded due to the misconception that reducing the amount of sugar will lower the fat content. Furthermore, some students suggested switching butter for unsalted butter, which was not credited due to the focus on salt content rather than reducing fat content. A small proportion of students also suggested changing the flour in the pastry to wholemeal flour to increase the fibre content, which was also not relevant to the question. Through teaching and learning, centres are encouraged to ensure students have experience of modifying recipes to accommodate different dietary and nutritional needs.

Question 2.4

It was pleasing to see that this question was well-attempted by students. A wide range of responses were seen, with approximately four in 10 students demonstrating basic knowledge and understanding to be placed in the 3-4-mark band. Very few students were awarded 7-8 marks, and a small proportion of students were placed in the 5-6-mark band. This highlights additives as an area of the specification that is likely to be covered in less detail by centres. However, many students were able to draw upon learning and general awareness of additives to identify different examples of additives, such as flavourings, colourings and preservatives. Understanding about the role of additives in enhancing the sensory appeal of food products was evident. A number of students also made links to fortification and the addition of nutrients. Where good or very good knowledge and understanding was shown, students also explored the role of emulsifiers and stabilisers, with lecithin named as a specific example. Some students also named specific sweeteners, such as xylitol.

In general, the analysis section of the question was stronger, with an imbalance between analysis and evaluation being a key contributing factor to higher mark bands not being accessed. When students responded to the evaluation part of the question, many reflected on health concerns associated with the consumption of additives, with some exploring this further by linking to allergies and unknown long-term side effects, as well as hyperactivity in children. Some students also referred to the use of additives being unethical, with natural foods preferred because consumers know what is in them.

Overall, this question and the responses seen highlight a need for centres to ensure that the technological developments area of the specification is covered in full and revisited. This could be achieved by encouraging students to review food packaging on a regular basis to assess what additional ingredients have been added and why.

Question 3.1

This was a relatively well-answered question, with approximately four in five students achieving at least one mark, and around one third scoring full marks. The indicative content on the mark scheme highlights the responses that were commonly seen. Where students did not achieve marks, it was because they made reference to flavour or colour, which was not relevant to the question presented.

Question 3.2

This was a well-answered questions with half of students achieving full marks. Very few students left the question blank. Many students made reference to the kneading process adding / trapping air in the dough to assist with it rising. A number of students also made links to the role of kneading in developing the gluten, with some referencing elasticity and plasticity. Other popular responses included the role of kneading in distributing ingredients and enabling a smooth texture to be achieved. It was evident from responses that bread-making is an established element of schemes of learning within centres.

Question 3.3

Dextrinisation was a challenging topic for students to write about. Many students did not attempt the question or scored zero marks. Whilst a number of students who were awarded marks recognised that dextrinisation causes starch to brown, limited technical understanding about the process was shown, as outlined in the indicative content on the mark scheme. This highlights an area of the specification that centres need to explore in further detail.

Question 3.4

Although students may be more familiar with discussing the process of caramelisation in the context of sweet baked goods, such as cakes, it was pleasing to see that many were able to apply knowledge and understanding to the frying of onions. Four in five students achieved at least one mark for this question, although few accessed the top mark band to show very good knowledge and understanding. Typically, students were able to recognise that frying onions leads to them turning brown and tasting sweeter, and some linked this to the presence of natural sugars and the application of heat. When teaching students about the process of caramelisation, centres are encouraged to explore what is happening in further detail, as explored in the indicative content on the mark scheme.

Question 3.5

Around two thirds of students achieved at least three out of six marks for this question, highlighting good knowledge and understanding of the functions of ingredients used to make shortbread biscuits. Most students attempted to state two functions for each ingredient, and it was pleasing to see very few one-word responses, with this helping to ensure that points were clearly communicated to examiners. Some students incorrectly referenced nutritional

functions of ingredients, such as flour provides carbohydrate, rather than functional and/or chemical properties as intended.

Of the three ingredients, students responded most confidently for sugar, recognising its role in sweetening the biscuits, whilst aiding browning and texture.

For butter, students recognised its role in binding the other ingredients together to form the biscuits. The shortening process was also referenced by some students, whilst others identified its flavour and colour profile.

Students found it more difficult to identify two functional and/or chemical properties of plain flour, with one common misconception being that flour coats butter in the shortening process. Many students were able to identify flour as the main / bulking ingredient though, and some made reference to dextrinisation.

Centres are advised to encourage students to regularly reflect on scientific process that occur during practical lessons to support them in answering this style of question. Developing and utilising a glossary to aid focus on key food science terminology is good practice.

Question 3.6

This was a successfully answered question, with approximately half of students achieving full marks. Whilst a wide range of responses were seen, a number of students named bread as a baked product for biological raising agent, cakes and scones for chemical raising agents, and meringue and choux pastry for mechanical raising agents.

A small proportion of students stated examples of raising agents for each type of raising agent rather than naming a baked good; for example, yeast was presented as an example of a biological raising agent rather than a baked good made using yeast. These types of responses were not credited. Centres are advised to encourage students to read questions carefully to maximise the number of marks they can be awarded. Best practice was seen where students identified an appropriate baked good and specified which raising agent was used when making it.

Question 4

Many students attempted this question, with few blank responses seen. However, access to the higher mark bands was restricted due to limited knowledge and understanding being shown, alongside an imbalance in analysis and evaluation. On the whole, students were able to 'Analyse the health risks to adults of regularly eating meals which are too large', with a number of diet-related health conditions identified, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease and high blood pressure. Some students linked conditions to the over-consumption of specific nutrients, and those demonstrating a higher level of knowledge and understanding described the conditions as well. A number of students did not acknowledge the focus on adults and wrote about other life stages, such as children. Students should be encouraged to annotate questions before attempting to answer, so key elements of the questions are not overlooked.

The evaluation element of the question was more challenging for students to respond to, with less detail seen compared to that provided for the analysis component of the question. Whilst a number of students made links to the Eatwell Guide and 5-a-day, and although some were able to discuss dietary reference values for specific nutrients, other students presented repetitive points that rewrote the question stem rather than answering it. Some students also went off on a tangent and evaluated how a person can achieve correct portion sizes, rather than how they can contribute to a healthy and balanced diet. This limited the number of marks that could be awarded.

Centres are reminded that AO4 questions can cover any of the content from the specification. Centres are encouraged to build in regular practice of different AO4 questions. As part of this, students should be encouraged to utilise mark schemes to assist them with planning thorough responses. When marking responses, centres and students are encouraged to annotate responses to show where analysis and evaluation points have been credited. This helps to ensure that students are experienced in writing balanced responses.

Question 5.1

Whilst there were few blank responses for this question, a number of students answered it incorrectly, with only one third achieving two or more marks. A common misconception was that raw chicken is a high-risk food. Many students based their response around the example of raw chicken, which limited the number of marks they could be awarded unless other points from the indicative content on the mark scheme were presented. For example, a number of students correctly recognised 'high in moisture' and 'high in protein' as features of high-risk foods.

Students who achieved full marks for this question demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the term high risk food and presented examples such as cooked rice, cooked meat products and dairy products, such as cheese. Some of the students who were awarded 0 marks misunderstood the question and wrote about high-risk foods in the context of diet-related health conditions.

Centres are advised to refer to the definition of high-risk food on the specification, which states that high risk foods are "ready to eat moist foods, usually high in protein that easily support the growth of pathogenic bacteria and do not require any further heat treatment or cooking". Students should then be encouraged to learn examples of high-risk foods based on this definition to improve awareness of what high risk foods are.

Question 5.2

This was one of the more challenging questions on the paper for students to answer; however, it was well-attempted, with the tabulated format and example aiding completion. Few students achieved five or six marks; however, many students achieved half marks or higher. The highest concentration – one third – of students achieved two marks.

In general, many students found it difficult to correctly identify sources for all three named types of bacteria; however, credit was given where a suitable method of control was stated even if the source of bacteria was not deemed appropriate. Students were most confident identifying a source of salmonella bacteria, with raw chicken seen most frequently. For method of control,

students referenced thorough cooking of chicken, cooking until the chicken is white all the way through, or cooking until the chicken reaches 75 °C. This explains why the highest concentration of marks awarded was two marks.

Students found listeria the most challenging bacteria to write about, closely followed by E.coli. In a number of instances, vague responses were given for sources of these bacteria, such as 'meat' or 'cheese'. More specific answers were required, as per indicative content on the mark scheme.

It is evident that centres are ensuring that students are well equipped with knowledge and understanding about methods of control; however, more specific focus on the different types of food poisoning bacteria would be advantageous.

Question 6.1

This was a very well answered question, with three quarters of students achieving at least two out of three marks. Many students referenced discounts, special offers, placement in store and advertising as ways that shops and supermarkets try to influence consumers' food choices.

Some students presented one-word responses, which were more challenging for examiners to interpret and credit. Centres are advised to encourage students to make use of the line spacing available so that responses are explained in full to limit the need for interpretation by examiners.

Question 6.2

In general, the yoghurt-making process was difficult for students to explain in detail, with only a small proportion achieving full marks. However, these students demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the process, highlighting thorough teaching of this element of the specification within their centres. As a significant number of students did not attempt the question, it is evident that a number of centres may not touch upon this topic, which is something they are encouraged to rectify.

Half of students achieved one to three marks, which demonstrates effort to complete the question using information available even with limited understanding about the yoghurt making process. When this was seen, students typically referred to the yoghurt thickening when the mixture is held at 42 °C and setting when cooled. Many students also identified that adding flavouring will make the yoghurt more flavoursome and/or appealing to consumers. It was pleasing to see technical terminology used in a number of responses, such as coagulation.

One of the common misconceptions was that holding the mixture at 42 °C will destroy microorganisms rather than encourage the bacterial culture to multiply. The awarding of some marks was limited by repeated answers, which the question stem advised students not to do. The importance of checking back over answers, where possible, to prevent this, is emphasised.

Question 6.3

Over four in five students achieved two or more marks on this question, with over two in five students securing full marks. This highlights that the question was highly accessible to provide a positive conclusion to the paper. It is important to note that the written examination for

GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition does not increase in difficulty as students progress through the paper.

Students were able to confidently identify ways in which the named leftover foods could be used, with a good level of creativity seen in responses from some students. Students appeared to identify dishes that they had made or were very familiar with. For example, many students suggested that stale bread could be made into breadcrumbs, and some also suggested how the breadcrumbs could be used, for example to coat chicken. For ripe bananas, banana bread was the most popular response.

Students found it most difficult to identify uses for the mashed potato, with some visualising a potato salad or chips. A popular and correct response was shepherd's / cottage pie, with fishcakes and gnocchi presented as alternative examples of dishes. Egg yolks were also challenging for some students to consider uses for, with meringues incorrectly identified as a dish that could be made. However, many students recognised that egg yolk could be used as a binding ingredient in pasta or to glaze pastries.

Concluding Comments

Centres and students should be praised for the outcomes achieved for this written examination. Outcomes are comparable with those that were seen in 2023 and 2024. Centres are reminded that there is a CPD webinar available in the autumn term with further analysis of the paper and teaching and learning strategies to support the delivery of the specification.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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