

FOOD SCIENCE

SUBJECT 9194

PAPER 04

GENERAL COMMENTS

The total number of candidates who were entered for this examination was 171. The standard of work for the research project has slightly improved compared to the previous year. However, there are a few new centres that are not yet familiar with the requirements of this examination.

Choice of Topic

The majority of the candidates were able to select topics that are appropriate to the syllabus. The main problem was that some topics were too long and in most cases the parameters were not well defined. Very few candidates managed to explain clearly the four reasons for choosing the particular topics. There was a tendency to confuse aims with reasons for choice of topic.

Planning

Aims and objectives were clearly stated but in some instances, aims were left out. Lists of activities were included at the beginning of the project or in the appendix. Very few centres did not include the plan of action. There is need to give a time plan that shows date, time, activity, venue and persons interacted with. Plan of action should also include research methods to be used and a brief description of how data will be presented. The activities in the planning should show logic and sequence.

Theoretical Research

Theoretical research should be a summary of texts that are relevant to the topic under study. In some centres, candidates wrote very lengthy reviews of literature, some of which was not relevant. On the other hand, some texts were too brief and lacked essential information required at A-Level. Sources of information were acknowledged but the selection of sources was very limited. Candidates should read a wide range of texts, including the internet, in order to widen their scope of knowledge. Use of own words is encouraged and candidates should avoid duplicating data from the sources. Candidates are required to present information succinctly, therefore essay type presentations should be avoided. Texts should have subheadings and some information should be written in point form or tabulated.

Methodology

Candidates should have been exposed to a wide range of research methods such as; structural questionnaires, interviews, observations, experiments and surveys. They are required to use at least three methods to collect data for the study. Several candidates listed four methods but did not use all of them. It is required that specimens for each method be put in the appendix. Questionnaires and interview questions should have a title or the name of organisation to be interviewed or given the questionnaire. There must be an introduction to indicate the purpose of gathering the information.

The researcher must also reassure the respondents about the confidentiality of the information gathered. The set up of the questions must be user friendly, easy to fill in and questions must be brief and specific. However, questions must be sufficient and relevant to the study. Where a survey or observation is to be carried out, an observation checklist must be made. It should have a title, introduction and a table with subheadings showing aspects to be observed and conclusions that would be drawn. If an experiment is to be carried out, it must have an aim, apparatus, reagents, procedure, observation and conclusion.

Collation of data

Data collected should be presented using bar charts, line graphs, pie charts, pictograms, photographs, tables, etc. Candidates should select at least three methods to present information collected. Bar graphs and line graphs should be labelled properly on the X-axis. A key must also be shown. Pie-charts must also include percentages for each portion shaded. Shading must show distinctly the different portions. When tables are used, they must also have a heading, subheadings, subtotals, totals and percentages. At the end of each graph, or a table, there must be a brief summary of conclusions drawn from the collated data. In cases where photographs are used, they must be labelled clearly to show what has been observed.

Analysis/Conclusions

Summary of findings needs to be written, in which case the researcher should analyse and draw conclusions. The summary should be accurate and based on evidence from the study. Recommendations must be made and they should be specific. Avoid general statements when making recommendations. Practical dimensions must be included in the recommendations.

Evaluation

Finally, the study must be evaluated. There is still a problem in schools, where students do not exactly know what recommendations are. They confuse them with findings. Candidates need to state whether aims and objectives were met or not. They should also highlight the success of the methods used to collect data. Weaknesses of the methods must also be stated but suggestions must be included to indicate how they could be improved. The candidates must list the personal benefits of carrying out the study.

Presentation

The projects were well presented and all work was typed. The outer covers were lightweight and easy to open. The covers were appealing and titles were well presented together with details of the candidate. A cover sheet was included and, in very few cases, the project title was different from the one on the outer cover.