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Highfield Qualifications Guidance for Nominated Tutors and Learners Sitting Written Examinations

Version 4 July 2018

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Guidance for Nominated Tutors and Learners Sitting Written Examinations

In every examination marked, examiners identify that poor written examination technique is a key reason why a number of learners (including some who are obviously very capable) do not perform as well as they could.

Tutors should ensure that during the course (or for homework), they give learners an opportunity to practice answering example written questions.

It is important that learners:

- **Write as clearly as possible.** Marks are often lost because examiners cannot read the words. There is no need for learners to write the questions out before attempting the answer.
- **Know that questions can be answered in any order** but should ensure that they are numbered exactly as in the question. If points are added at the end of the paper this should be clearly indicated.
- **Read the learner instructions properly.** Learners should be aware that examiners are instructed to mark the first answer presented for each question and disregard any remaining answers. Learners will not gain any extra marks for answering more questions than the required number.
- **Read all parts of a question carefully before they answer.** Learners should always refer back to the question to ensure that they have addressed all points. Learners often digress and although the points are correct, marks cannot be awarded if it does not answer the question posed. In some cases, learners might answer the question in a wrong answer space; for example, they might provide answer to part b of a question in part a and lose marks if they don't realise the mistake or waste time by repeating the answer in the correct space.
- **Manage their time effectively.** Learners should look at the marks awarded for a question and spend appropriate time accordingly. If only 2 marks are awarded then no matter how good and detailed an answer is, only two marks will be given. Often learners will write lengthy responses to questions which are worth only a few marks and just provide a brief list for an answer worth more marks. A small number of learners do not manage to complete all the questions and so obviously limit the marks they can achieve.
- **Provide enough depth of information in their answers.** Where the subject matter is complex, for example HACCP or some microbiology questions, learners need to

demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding appropriate for Level 4. Much detail and specific examples are expected to maximum marks available for such questions.

At level 4 it is important that learners provide sufficient detail in their answers. It is not enough to just cite terminology without providing explanations. For example, answering with ‘implement a HACCP system’ to a question on to ‘how to control hazards during a cook-chill process’, does not demonstrate that a learner really understands the specific controls required in this process. Another common answer provided, in particular by manufacturing learners, is to ‘check the line’. Again, this does not provide any detail regarding what specifically is to be checked on the production line.

Other common examples of where learners fail to provide enough detail is by using the terms ‘proper’ or ‘correct’ without actually telling the examiner what ‘proper’ or ‘correct’ is; for example, ‘correct temperature’, ‘proper systems in place’.

Learners also often confuse the difference between a legal requirement and good practice. At level 4 it is expected that they can differentiate between this clearly.

- **Pay full attention to the action verb in the question.** Sometimes learners may not pay full attention to the action verb in each question. The most commonly used ones are described in a little more detail below:

Action Verb	Meaning	Example
List	Provide a list without explanation. Unless this is specifically required in the question, for example “list and explain 5 reasons why...”	List three items you might use to heat food in a kitchen Oven, Microwave, hob
Give	Provide without explanation, questions of this nature are usually linked to providing an example, for instance “give 5 examples of...”	
Define	Provide a generally recognised or accepted definition. This should be clear and complete, but it does not need to be word perfect to get marks. Where delegates are struggling to give an exact definition, they should consider providing an appropriate specific example to illustrate their answer.	Define the term cooking The practice or skill of preparing food by combining, mixing, and heating ingredients.
State	This is mainly used where there is no generally recognised definition.	

<p>Identify</p>	<p>Ascertain the origin or nature of, select or name something.</p> <p>When answering this type of question, learners should ensure they are specific in their answers.</p>	<p>Outline/Identify one reason to ensure the butter is at room temperature when mixing a cake.</p>
<p>Outline</p>	<p>Provide the most important features of something.</p> <p>Learners would not be expected to provide as much detail as they would in a question which asks them to describe or explain something, but specific examples will help to demonstrate a clear understanding</p>	<p>Because butter at room temperature will incorporate more air during the creaming process and this will help to ensure the cake rises when it is in the oven.</p>
<p>State why</p>	<p>‘State’ can be accompanied by the word ‘why’, for example “state why egg whites foam when you beat them”. When used in this context it is very similar to explain or describe.</p>	<p>State why egg whites foam when you beat them</p> <p>As liquid egg-white is whisked, the mechanical action causes its proteins to unfold and form a network, trapping air in tiny pockets. As the whisking continues, the air pockets become smaller. the foam is composed of small gas bubbles dispersed through the egg-white.</p>
<p>Describe</p>	<p>Provide a word picture. This should give some detail and explanations and specific examples should be included if a learner is to describe fully.</p>	<p>Provide a description of a pie.</p> <p>A pie is a baked dish. It is usually made of a pastry casing that covers or completely contains a filling. This could be either a sweet or savoury filling.</p>
<p>Explain</p>	<p>Provide a clear account of, or reasons for something.</p> <p>A list will not be enough to get full marks.</p>	<p>Explain how a microwave cooker heats up food.</p> <p>Microwave radiation has lower frequencies and longer wavelengths than visible light. The frequency of the</p>

		microwaves cause water molecules in the food to vibrate. These molecules hit other water molecules and they vibrate. This vibration of the molecules converts into heat. Microwave ovens rely on the ability of microwaves to penetrate about 1 cm into food.
Other terms often misinterpreted in examination questions		
Properties	This asks the learner to provide the general characteristics of something, for example a property required of a food mixer may be that it is durable	
Characteristics	A feature that helps to identify, tell apart, or describe recognisably. For example, one of the desired characteristics of a food preparation surface is that it is non-toxic.	
Assess & improve	<p>When the word ‘assess’ is used in a question it is related to how something can be measured. Many learners confuse this with ‘improved’ which is asking for how something can be made better.</p> <p>For example, if asked to assess the suitability of this chocolate cake recipe, the learner would need to identify whether it had been easy to follow, all the required ingredients had been included in the recipe, written clearly and in the correct order, provided suitable explanation for more complex steps and whether the cake made by following the recipe was suitable.</p> <p>If a candidate had been asked to improve the recipe, then they would need to fill in missing details and put processes in the correct order etc. to make it better.</p>	

Learners will not be able to score well if the question asks for a ‘description or outline’ and only a list is given. It is also worth remembering that learners who provide an explanation where only a list is required will be wasting time and that could cost marks in the long run.

Remember it is up to the learner to demonstrate to the examiner his/her understanding of a topic. At Level 4, bullet points are not sufficient unless the question asks for a list. Explanations are needed.

Nominated Tutors are advised to provide feedback to learners on practice examination questions and in doing so not to be lenient when marking and feeding back as this can give a false sense of security and ability. Result enquiries from learners who have failed the examination often include statements that they had performed well during the class and in mock examinations.

Special Considerations

This includes, amongst other things, physical and medical considerations, dyslexia, English as a second language. For complete guidance with regard to special consideration, centres should refer to the Highfield Qualifications Reasonable Adjustments Policy.

<https://www.highfieldqualifications.com/downloads>

The policy outlines where extra time or facilities may be provided and whether this is at the discretion of the centre, or if Highfield need to authorise it.

It is important that Nominated Tutors identify any special consideration early in the course and refer to the Reasonable Adjustments Policy to identify and discuss suitable special consideration. Nominated Tutors must ensure they follow the procedures outlined by Highfield in order to ensure that malpractice does not inadvertently take place.