

CIEH Annual Moderators' Report

2009–2010

CIEH Level 3 Award in HACCP for Food Manufacturing

This report covers the period 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010.

It has been produced on behalf of CIEH moderators by the Curriculum Manager for Food Safety.

Qualification performance

Percentage breakdown of the total number of candidates who completed the following assessment (1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010):

- **CIEH Level 3 Award in HACCP for Food Manufacturing**

Credit: 20 %

Pass: 66 %

Fail: 13 %

These results show an 86 % success rate in the achievement of a pass and above for this award.

As well as drawing attention to strengths in candidate performance, a key purpose of this report is to highlight areas where candidate performance is weak and to suggest possible causes. It also recommends where improvements might be made, by both trainers and candidates, in order to increase future pass rates.

Assignments

Assignments are a method of determining whether candidates have been able to:

- assimilate information in the taught part of the course
- research the given subject
- analyse and evaluate
- present information in a form that demonstrates their understanding of the subject.

In general, candidates perform sufficiently well in assignment work, and some assignments are excellent. Strong assignments are generally well structured, concise and coherent, and it is evident that the candidates have good knowledge and understanding of HACCP-based food safety management procedures.

There are some assignments where, with a little more thought and structure, candidates would have picked up those few marks that make the difference between pass and fail. There is some consolation in the evidence that those resubmitting the assignment often perform better on the second attempt.

Poor assignments generally reflect a lack of understanding of key concepts, insufficient research into the subject or difficulty in expressing relevant points.

Addressing the requirements

It is clear that many candidates need guidance on how to prepare a report and on the particular requirements of the assignment as indicated by the marking criteria. It is not unusual for some criteria to be poorly addressed or missed entirely.

The assignment for the Level 3 Award in HACCP for Food Manufacturing is designed to test candidates' knowledge, understanding and application. The main objective of the assignment is to determine if the candidate is able to translate HACCP theory into a practical scenario; consequently, no marks will be awarded for repeating the theory, history and benefits of HACCP.

Trainers should provide candidates with copies of the candidate guidelines and discuss these with them to ensure that they are clear about what needs to be addressed, the quality of information required and the appropriate level of detail. The guidelines also give a clear breakdown of how marks are awarded in each section and sub-section.

Candidates should read the requirements for the assignment carefully and have a clear understanding of what is being asked of them. They should appreciate and be able to utilise skills of research and analysis and show depth of knowledge when answering assignment questions. As many candidates will not have written a substantial report/assignment since school or college, they may need support in reaching the academic standard required for such coursework (see section 'Trainer support for candidates').

Highlighted below are key areas that moderators have identified as being in need of improvement in candidates' assignment responses. Trainers must ensure that these recurrent areas of weakness are addressed in their training delivery.

Understanding HACCP

Many candidates struggle to understand HACCP terminology, in particular the difference between control measures, monitoring procedures, verification procedures and record keeping. As a result, they often fail to identify these features of the HACCP system. Other key words most often misunderstood include 'tolerance', 'target' and 'corrective action'.

A common weakness is that many candidates do not include sufficient detail. For example, 'physical contamination' is not adequate as a hazard description. A more appropriate statement might be 'metal contamination due to machine failure'.

Where documentation is asked for, it is not enough to include just those documents relating to critical control points. A complete range of documents should be included, for example all documentation that would be audited by an environmental health practitioner (EHP) when carrying out an inspection of a food business.

Often candidates do not consider the intended use of a product, at-risk consumer groups or the scope of potential hazards.

Another frequent problem is the inclusion of over-simplistic flow diagrams, either with key stages missing or important areas omitted, such as packaging, water addition and removal of waste. It is also recommended that critical control points (CCPs) are shown on the flow diagram.

Critical control points (CCPs) and critical limits

Some candidates have difficulty in determining CCPs, and they either misuse or do not use the Codex decision tree. While candidates are not obliged to use the Codex decision tree, they do need to state *why* they have identified specific steps in their chosen food process as CCPs.

Some candidates fail to identify CCPs at all; if this happens, marks for related areas are also lost, such as for critical limits. Critical limits, targets and tolerances are often poorly understood or overlooked.

Monitoring and corrective actions

Discussion of monitoring procedures often lacks detail, with little or no evidence included of the method of monitoring, frequency or responsibility. It is important to stress that if monitoring procedures are not effective, it is difficult to establish corrective actions to ensure that a CCP is under control.

Discussion of corrective actions should include what happens to the product and an investigation as to why the critical limit was exceeded.

Verification

Many candidates do not understand verification procedures and sufficient time should be allocated during training to address this.

Fulfilling performance criteria

Candidates must ensure that *all four* performance criteria listed in the candidate guidelines are fulfilled in order to achieve the qualification. It is not unusual for some key areas to be poorly addressed or missed entirely.

Performance criteria 1 (process/flow diagram/hazards) and 2 (control measures/critical control points/limits) are generally well covered. Some assignments then begin to deteriorate, with poorer answers appearing for criterion 3 (monitoring/corrective action). By criterion 4 (documentation/verification/review), omissions start to occur.

There are frequently problems regarding the presentation of appropriate documentation and records as part of performance criterion 4; candidates often provide either a list with no description or simply a collection of company process control documents. The verification and review sections of this criterion also tend to be presented as lists with no discussion, and are the most likely parts of the assignment to be omitted altogether.

Trainers need to identify such issues and advise candidates accordingly.

Focus, length and structure

Candidates must focus on the subject of the assignment. As well as being clear about the questions they need to address, careful planning and clear structure will help candidates to maintain focus.

There is no recommended word length, but comprehensive assignments can be completed within a 2,000 word count plus any appendices. It should be reiterated that quality is better than quantity. The tendency is that longer assignments stray from the subject and candidates include unnecessary material, duplication of points, or information that is not their own work, such as company documents.

Strong assignments typically consist of an introduction and scope (process description etc.), a flow diagram, a HACCP control chart and a summary of documentation, verification and review drivers.

Many candidates omit important areas by failing to use headings. They should be encouraged to use headings in their assignments to help them maintain focus, dividing the material according to the sections mentioned in the title and dealing with each area separately.

Candidates should note the number of marks available for each section, as these are indicative of how much information should be included. For example, they often write copiously about the process in the first part of performance criterion 1, where a maximum of 5 marks is available, but then lose momentum as they reach the end of the assignment and write very little on performance criterion 4, where a maximum of 20 marks is available. This poor planning can be the difference between a pass and a fail for the whole assignment.

A related problem is the use of company documentation to substitute explanation or description. For example, in performance criterion 4 candidates are asked to list and describe the elements of appropriate documentation and records that might be used to demonstrate effective control in their chosen food process. Some candidates have interpreted this to mean placing as much company documentation as they can find into an appendix. In this format, it is generally meaningless, and in cases where there is no reference to this material in the main body of the assignment, it has resulted in candidates receiving no marks. It is essential that any items included in appendices (for example reading lists, reference lists and examples of paperwork) are clearly numbered and accurately referenced.

Acknowledging sources

When including information that is not their own work (for example company HACCP charts, plans and flow diagrams), candidates *must* acknowledge and submit this as supportive data and not present it as their own material. Some candidates have used content straight from company manuals that is clearly not their own work, without providing any source citation. Where this has been blatant, candidates have had their assignments referred.

Notes for trainers

Marking

Overgenerous marking

Moderators have found on occasion that trainers are being overgenerous in awarding marks that do not match the standards illustrated in the CIEH marking criteria and exemplar materials. Candidates may therefore be marked down at the moderation stage.

Trainers must adhere to the marking guidelines to assist in placing the candidate's work within a grade band. They must decide to what extent the assignment meets the specific performance criteria in these guidelines and then allocate marks within the range, according to how well the work matches the standard descriptors.

Equity of marking

As assignments are moderated, trainers must be consistent and ensure equity when marking.

Required levels of feedback

Trainer feedback is occasionally brief. Clear, detailed comments written on assignments by trainers will help moderators appreciate the rationale behind their marking and speed up the moderation process. Additionally, feedback should be provided on how the candidate could have gained extra marks.

Where feedback is missing or gives no indication as to how marks have been allocated, assignments will be returned and only moderated when acceptable feedback is provided.

Multiple attempts at assignments

If a candidate makes more than one attempt to complete an assignment, trainers must provide details (on the back page of the candidate assessment record) about the weaknesses identified and the advice given to the candidate.



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Trainer support for candidates

Trainers are encouraged to mentor and support candidates appropriately in the development of coursework, and, where necessary, coach them in the required skills of research, analysis and evaluation, as well as the necessary depth of knowledge in answering the assignment questions.

Some candidates need additional assistance when constructing the layout of their assignment; this can be achieved by expanding on the assessment criteria to give detailed requirements.

Candidates should be encouraged to submit draft copies of assignments to enable additional support and guidance to be given. The trainer should offer general comments on strengths and weaknesses. Candidates should then be given enough time to amend their assignments in order to benefit from the comments made by the trainer. This is good practice and will allow less able candidates to learn from experiences and produce assignments of an adequate standard. If a final copy of the assignment is returned to the candidate for improvement, this should be recorded on the candidate assessment record.

Timely and appropriate feedback on the assignment is crucial. It should provide support and guidance to candidates on their learning shortcomings and offer justification as to the marks awarded in each section.

If appropriate, trainers need to ensure that candidates have access to a food-manufacturing establishment to complete this qualification.

Candidates also need to be allocated time by their employer to prepare their assignment, and trainers need to make this clear to clients when discussing course requirements.

Procedure for reasonable adjustments

Trainers should refer to the 'Procedure for reasonable adjustment' if there are special needs to be accommodated.

It is imperative that trainers consult with candidates during the course to understand any difficulties they are experiencing and to establish how these can be addressed to enable candidates to meet the requirements.

Presentation of scripts

Trainers should ensure that the pages of a candidate's assignment are numbered sequentially and secured together with a staple or treasury tag to keep them in the correct order. Do not use plastic sleeves for each page of text, as this slows down the moderation process.

Carol Slinger

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