



# CIEH Annual Moderators' Report

## 2009–2010

### CIEH Level 3 Award in HACCP in Catering

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 in Catering**

Credit: 15 %

Pass: 65 %

Fail: 19 %

These results show an 80 % 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.

The assignment for the Level 3 Award in HACCP in Catering 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. The phrase 'supported by appropriate background information' in the first paragraph of the assignment guidance on the candidate assessment record refers to communicating details about the food operation and the premises.

Formal HACCP or *Safer Food, Better Business* type approaches (or regional alternatives) are acceptable as the basis of the assignment.

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.

## Fulfilling performance criteria

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

Trainers need to be aware of the issues below and must advise candidates accordingly.

### General comment

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'.

### Criterion 1: control of general food safety requirements

For criterion 1, candidates are required to describe briefly and not just list the general food safety requirements that need to be in place before implementing a HACCP-based system. A list only half answers the question, and as such will only receive half marks.

### Criterion 2: product description, process and hazards

#### Product description

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

#### Process

Up to 5 marks are awarded for identifying the steps involved in producing the meal or food item. This information may be presented as either a flow diagram or a step-by-step description. Many candidates have assumed that only a flow diagram is acceptable, and consequently produced a poor diagram that fails to match their chosen meal or food item. In this situation, a brief step-by-step description would almost certainly attract a higher mark.

#### Hazards

Up to 10 marks are awarded for describing potential food hazards, but this is often done poorly. It is insufficient for candidates to describe hazards in general terms, and they must identify clearly which potential hazards may occur at each step in the production of their chosen meal or food item. If candidates fail to be specific and thorough in their identification and description of hazards, the subsequent stages – identifying control measures and critical control points, considering critical limits, carrying out effective monitoring procedures and taking appropriate corrective actions – also tend to be considered in vague, general terms, and this approach will lose marks.

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 poorly maintained equipment'.

Candidates tend to concentrate on microbiological hazards, and they should be advised also to consider physical, chemical and allergenic hazards.

### Criterion 3: implementing procedures based on Codex HACCP principles

#### Control measures

Candidates are often over-reliant on taking temperatures to prove safe cooking, where in practice visual checks are often used. Properly described visual checks are an acceptable alternative, but if temperatures are cited, they must be linked to an appropriate duration (i.e. a time/temperature ratio must be given).

#### 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.

Critical limits, targets and tolerances are often poorly understood or overlooked. Candidates need to be reminded that rejection is the last resort and that there are often several actions that can be taken before this stage is reached.

#### Monitoring procedures 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.

### Criterion 4: food safety management tools

#### Opening and closing checks

Up to 10 marks are awarded for identifying opening checks, and up to 5 marks are awarded for identifying closing checks. While these areas are well answered by the majority of candidates, some mistakenly list these checks under criterion 1 instead of pre-requisites.

Opening checks are *general* checks that are carried out before the normal work for the day begins, and closing checks are *general* checks that take place at the end of the day when the work is finished. Therefore, checking that the temperature of a raw material to be used in a chosen meal is satisfactory is *not* an appropriate opening check; however, checking that refrigerators are working before commencing work is an acceptable answer. Similarly, checking the use-by date of raw materials is *not* an opening check, whereas checking that everything is in date at the end of the day would be an appropriate *closing* check.

Opening and closing checks can be scored at 1 mark each, provided they are relevant to the chosen scenario.

#### The importance of documented food safety systems

Up to 10 marks are awarded for first describing why it is important to have a documented food safety management system, and then listing appropriate documentation and records that might be used to demonstrate effective control. Some candidates fail to address the first part of this requirement and only provide a list; in this situation, only half marks will be awarded, as only half of the question has been answered.

There are frequently problems regarding the presentation of appropriate documentation and records, with some candidates simply placing as much company process control 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.

It is also insufficient 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.

#### Verification

Many candidates do not understand verification procedures and sufficient time should be allocated during training to address this. They should be advised that in order to be awarded higher marks, they need to relate verification to their chosen meal or food item, and not just discuss it in general terms.

#### Review

Candidates generally show good understanding of the need for review. However, answers tend to be brief and in general terms, and candidates should always make specific reference to the preparation of their chosen meal or food item.

The verification and review elements 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.

#### Communication

Communication of information to fellow food handlers is reasonably well covered by candidates, but this section needs to be closely linked to their chosen scenario to gain high marks.

## 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.

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 and sub-section, as these are indicative of how much information should be included. For example, they often write copiously for performance criterion 1, where a maximum of 10 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 40 marks is available. This poor planning can be the difference between a pass and a fail for the whole assignment.

## 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

It is vital that trainers help candidates to choose their assignment. They should recommend that each candidate selects a scenario that is not over-complex and with which he or she is familiar.

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. Catering candidates are generally 'hands-on' in their approach to food safety, and as such need good support in communicating theory in a written academic way.

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.

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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