

CIEH Annual Moderators' Report

2009–2010

CIEH Level 4 Award in Managing Food Safety in Catering

CIEH Level 4 Award in Food Safety Management for 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.

Qualifications performance

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

- **CIEH Level 4 Award in Managing Food Safety in Catering**
 - Credit: 25 %
 - Pass: 52 %
 - Fail: 23 %
- **CIEH Level 4 Award in Food Safety Management for Manufacturing**
 - Distinction: 0.75 %
 - Credit: 23 %
 - Pass: 50 %
 - Fail: 27 %

These results show an increase of around 10% in the average pass rate and above for these awards, compared with the figures for 2008–2009. However, the average failure rate is still high, at 25%.

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.

General comments

The overall standard of candidate performance has improved, although many of the issues highlighted in last year's report continue to cause problems.

The Level 4 qualifications are aimed at managers or potential managers, and the expected competencies for the successful achievement of these awards are therefore challenging. However, there are candidates whose basic underpinning knowledge and practical application appear lacking and do not meet the required depth for a Level 4 course.

A number of candidates appear to have been recruited onto the course without sufficient prior knowledge and appreciation of food safety to meet the demands of the qualification. Consequently, they struggle with the content, terminology and requirements of the written paper, even if they might have successfully displayed understanding in their assignments.

It is highly recommended that candidates have achieved the Level 3 Award in Supervising Food Safety before taking a Level 4 award. Trainers should determine candidates' eligibility for the Level 4 award at the earliest opportunity, either through some means of initial assessment before they embark on the course (though this may not always be possible) or during the early stages of the course. Candidates should always be entered for the qualification that is relevant to their practical knowledge and experience.

It is imperative that trainers consult with candidates during the course to understand any difficulties they are experiencing and to establish whether these can be addressed to enable candidates to meet the requirements or whether a decision needs to be made not to continue with the course/examination at that stage.

Requirements

Level 4 questions test knowledge, understanding and application. These elements are incorporated into the questions in order to assess the breadth and depth of candidates' abilities. They are explained below in light of recurring comments about leading words/verbs and their meanings.

Trainers should provide examples of questions in their training/teaching and not assume that candidates can automatically differentiate between the skills of knowledge, understanding and application.

Knowledge

This aspect tests a candidate's ability to recall facts and information and uses question words such as 'list', 'state' and 'define'. For example:

- '**List** four ways by which managers can monitor physical contamination.'
- '**State** the relationship between time and temperature in controlling bacterial multiplication; express fully the details/facts of the relationship, including approximate time, correct temperatures and binary fission.'
- '**Define...**' (give the exact meaning of).

Candidates need to be fully conversant with the whole syllabus, rather than only focusing on specific topics. Without this level of knowledge, they will find it difficult to meet the rigours of a Level 4 award and will be unlikely to gain a pass.

Understanding

This aspect tests a candidate's comprehension and uses question words such as 'identify', 'describe', 'explain' and 'outline':

- **identify** – name or pinpoint something
- **describe** – communicate the key features of something or a process, perhaps using examples
- **explain** – this is different from describe; explanations often have short descriptions but also express the relationships between component parts, for example describe a refrigerator and then explain how it works
- **outline** – this involves part description and part explanation, but in a more concise format.

Proficient candidates use examples of good practice to demonstrate their depth of understanding.

Weaker candidates who only make lists are not 'explaining', 'describing' or 'outlining' as specifically requested in the question and fail to provide the relevant detail.

Application

Question words such as 'apply', 'demonstrate', 'prepare' and 'solve' are frequently used for application questions. Candidates are required either to make reasoned arguments for or against a point (or several points) or to find an answer to a problem. These words are often used in examination questions that include scenarios (Part 1 and especially Part 2 of the paper), for example 'You are asked to prepare a case for additional resources for food safety training to present to your general manager'.

With the command to 'apply and demonstrate', candidates need to be able to show that they understand how to use their knowledge practically in any given situation.

A recurrent weakness is candidates failing to answer questions from a management perspective. They need to address how they would react as a manager in the given circumstances, and demonstrate how they would manage a situation and implement a solution. Examples, where required, need to be relevant and applicable to the specific type of food premises.

The application of enforcement procedures and the consequences for food premises seem to be areas where candidates are lacking in their responses.

Syllabus areas

Weaknesses

Highlighted below are the key syllabus topics that moderators have identified as recurrent areas of weakness in candidates' examination/assignment responses, in line with the requirements for the Level 4 awards in food safety.

Syllabus section B: ensuring compliance with legislation and industry guidance

The relevance and application of legislation is often poorly understood. Candidates also continue to cite out-of-date legislation, such as the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995, or they provide inaccurate detail. Many candidates show little awareness of codes of practice and guidance appropriate to their particular sector of the food industry. Overseas candidates still tend to struggle with UK law, although there is a marked improvement. They should focus on UK practice and law, and not on ISO standards and consultants.

Syllabus section C: food safety hazards

Understanding of microbiology is still generally poor and always causes problems for less able candidates, particularly regarding bacterial spores, toxin production, *E. coli* O157, *Staphylococcus aureus* and the associated controls required in food preparation to prevent food poisoning. Without an adequate understanding of this topic, candidates struggle in other areas.

Bearing in mind the compulsory assignment on HACCP and critical control points, trainers should focus carefully on this area in order to address the generally weak understanding by candidates.

Syllabus section E: managing the operational requirements of a safe food business

Candidates must answer questions from a manager's perspective. Key words such as 'control', 'implement', 'monitor', 'audit' and 'verification' still pose problems for some candidates. Trainers should ensure that all candidates can apply these terms correctly.

Candidates also tend to have a poor understanding of 'fitness to work' requirements and pre-employment checks.

Strengths

Candidates tend to perform well in syllabus sections F (cleaning and disinfection regimes) and H (pest controls) and show good understanding. This is possibly because many candidates choose to study these areas for their assignments and are therefore able to display a more in-depth knowledge of management skills.

Examination technique

High-scoring scripts are generally well structured and coherent, and it is evident that candidates have the required depth and application of knowledge.

There are some scripts where, with a little more thought and structure, candidates would have picked up those few marks that make the difference between pass and fail.

However, many candidates continue to demonstrate poor technique, especially in Part 2. This may be due to their general educational standard, and these candidates may need additional support.

The following comments from moderators highlight the key areas in need of improvement in candidates' responses. Trainers should emphasise these matters when providing feedback to candidates.

Think like a manager

Candidates must demonstrate their depth of understanding and knowledge of key concepts, systems and controls from a management perspective. Some candidates answer questions from an employee perspective, when additional marks are often available for reference to management arrangements. For example, an employee would refer to the various controls in place, whereas a manager would plan, implement, monitor and review.

Read the question carefully

It is important to emphasise that candidates must read questions carefully to understand what is being asked of them. It is still apparent that some candidates do not read questions properly and as a result waste both time and marks by giving inappropriate answers. In Part 2, they should choose the question that best reflects their knowledge and understanding, but they should be careful to answer the question as set, rather than one that they would like to answer. Note that there is no need for candidates to write out the question in their answer.

Using highlighter pens to pick out key words/verbs in the question can help candidates to ensure that they respond to all the requirements and avoid deviation.

Candidates need to be able to answer questions based on any part of the syllabus, so it is essential that they address and revise every element in their course programme.

Quality vs quantity

In Part 1, one word answers do not provide sufficient depth or detail.

Candidates are required to give reasoned answers to questions in Part 2 and should ensure that they have sufficient knowledge to respond in depth. For example, where the word 'training' appears, the question requires specific detail on managing training, such as prioritising, planning, implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of training. Bullet-pointed lists do not provide sufficient depth and breadth of information, and a candidate who provides a list of topics for a training programme will not be eligible for the full range of marks.

Another example would be managing the implementation of a HACCP policy. The candidate may go through all the steps of HACCP without stating how its implementation would be managed.

Conversely, in either part of the examination, writing copiously on a subject without considering the finer points of the question is not an effective practice. It leads to digression and unnecessary/irrelevant information, which will not gain any marks.

Some candidates repeat similar points, or the same point by means of an alternative phrase, when additional marks are available for citing different examples. For instance, candidates have lost marks by referring to hand washing several times when other examples of personal hygiene are required.

Structure, focus and clarity

Questions are specifically worded and written in a format that guides the candidate. Stronger candidates use the structure of the question to plan their answer. Lack of clear structure and focus is a key area where weaker candidates continually let themselves down. Trainers should provide guidance and support to candidates with regard to the length, structure and necessary depth of answers for Part 2 questions.

For Part 2 questions, it is essential that the question number and relevant sections are identified clearly. In order to achieve high scores, candidates should be encouraged to divide their answers according to the requirements of the question by using headings, subheadings and underlining, in order to provide clarity and maintain focus.

The use of a simple essay/answer plan with key headings would help candidates to structure Part 2 responses in a logical and concise manner. This approach allows candidates to focus on the particular demands of the question and to respond to the specific issues. It will also ensure that no salient information is omitted and points are not repeated.

Individual sentences should ideally not exceed 25 words in length, although this can be difficult when working under timed examination conditions.

Time management and planning

Candidates need to prepare thoroughly for the written paper and manage their time across the two parts and six questions. In a paper that lasts for two and a half hours, they need to plan their time carefully.

Candidates have lost most marks by failing to answer all the questions or spending an inordinate amount of time on the first question they answer and rushing the last. This weakness is often as much about candidates failing to plan adequately or pace themselves accordingly as a greater or lesser depth of knowledge informing their application to the question.

Candidates who are unsure of how to answer a section of a question should move on; they should leave sufficient time to return to it before the end of the examination when they are checking their work.

Candidates should look at the mark scheme to gauge the amount of information the question is requesting and the comparative amount of time they should afford in answering it. This is particularly important for Part 2 questions.

Candidates should be advised to allow around 15 minutes at the end of the examination to check through their answers for any gaps or errors – in particular, they should make certain that the key issues have been addressed.

Legibility

On occasion, candidates' handwriting is difficult to read, and sometimes it cannot be deciphered at all. If during the training programme this problem is identified by trainers, the candidate should be advised and help should be sought.

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 tend to cover the issues concisely, with enough detail to demonstrate a good understanding.

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.

As many candidates will not have undertaken this level of academic study/application since school or college, they will need support in reaching the academic standard required for such coursework (see section 'Trainer support for candidates').

Candidates should ensure that *all* sections of the assignment are sufficiently covered. Some candidates neglect to tackle key sections. For instance in the compulsory assignment, the section 3 question 'how would managers communicate information to those concerned?' is often completely ignored or inadequately covered.

There has been some misinterpretation regarding the requirements of Assignment A. The assignment should focus on the actual food safety management system in place, whether it is a traditional HACCP system or one of the national support models, such as *Safer Food Better Business*, *Cook Safe* or *Safe Catering*. Candidates often forget to explain how the system was established and implemented. They should also give a brief summary of the food business concerned, including such information as their own role within that business, the types of food produced or manufactured and the average number of covers/throughput.

Weaknesses occur in describing monitoring and verification activities. Candidates need to demonstrate an understanding of these terms within the assignment and explain them in their own words – it is not acceptable practice simply to cut and paste from company policies.

Examples of completed control charts, safe methods and monitoring records should be included; however, some candidates place an undue reliance on completed pro-formas when additional marks are available for an explanation as to the decision-making process.

Section 3 requires a short outline of the critical incident, analysing what happened, when and how (critical analysis). The quality and amount of evidence and information is important. Corrective actions based on the need to prevent a

re-occurrence of the incident require an explanation. Communications and recommendations need to relate specifically to the incident and the corrective actions; the latter need to be explained in the context of the original problem. Candidates should not forget that staff, supervisors and management may be at fault.

Legislative knowledge and accuracy

It is essential that candidates research appropriate items of legislation and then explain how the business complies with these. Some candidates list the items but forget to address business compliance.

Accuracy when citing legislation is imperative; candidates lose marks where they cite out-of-date legislation/references. Candidates need to research the subject thoroughly; this includes quoting the correct EU directive, UK statutes and their statutory instruments, sections etc., and, where appropriate, industry codes of practice and guidelines.

Similarly, the correct types and names of organisms should be cited. For example, *Clostridium welchii* was renamed *Clostridium perfringens* in the early 1990s. Candidates should have the time to carry out such research, as there are many sources of information readily available.

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 a clear structure will help candidates to maintain focus.

Assignments should be within the recommended word length. Comprehensive assignments can be completed within the 2,500 word count plus any appendices. 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.

Candidates should be encouraged to use headings in their assignments, clearly dividing the material according to the sections mentioned in the title and dealing with each area separately. They must identify the key verbs and answer appropriately.

Reading lists, reference lists, floor plans, diagrams, examples of paperwork/pro-formas etc. should be placed in appendices. It is essential that these are clearly numbered and accurately referenced. Ensure that the size of the appendices does not exceed that of the candidate's script. Items in appendices should be outlined in the main body of the assignment and not just placed there for markers to read.

Acknowledging sources

When including information that is not their own work (for example diagrams and tables), candidates *must* acknowledge and submit this as supportive data and not present it as their own material. Sources should always be cited carefully, for example 'Source: FSA 1999'.

Notes for trainers

Marking

Moderators have found on occasion that trainers are being overgenerous in awarding marks that do not match the standards clearly illustrated in the CIEH marking criteria and exemplar materials. Candidates may therefore be marked down at the moderation stage. In some cases, this may mean that they do not satisfy the requirements for the award, even though they have passed the written examination.

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.

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

Trainer feedback is occasionally brief. Clear, detailed comments written on assignments by trainers are essential to help moderators appreciate the rationale behind their marking and speed up the moderation process. These comments should be specific to individual assignments and not generalised.

There are still instances where the trainer has signed the candidate assessment records on or after the date of the written examination paper. As this could indicate that the candidates were sitting the examination without first receiving feedback on their assignment, this practice is unacceptable. It is imperative to give appropriate and supportive feedback to candidates so that they can learn from their shortcomings. Providing such guidance before candidates sit the written paper will help them to avoid making the same mistakes in the examination and should allow them to achieve a better grade. This means that assignments should be marked well in advance of candidates sitting the written paper.

Note that trainers should not repeat the phraseology of the performance criteria in their feedback, as this is insufficient to guide the candidate.

Further feedback on areas of strengths and weaknesses from the syllabus would be useful.

Trainers must ensure that the correct candidate assessment records are fully and accurately completed and signed by both the candidate and the trainer.

Legislative/technical knowledge and accuracy

While the onus is on candidates to carry out the research, trainers must ensure that they keep up to date with legislative/technical changes and changes in professional practice, and that this is reflected in course materials.

Training delivery

The complexities of some learning outcomes mean that the trainer needs to teach the material in an instructive manner. The information should be presented clearly and accurately so that candidates appreciate the range and depth of the various topics and apply the acquired knowledge to their own workplaces.

Trainer support for candidates

Pre-course information

It is important that candidates are provided with accurate, comprehensive pre-course information regarding Level 4 qualifications and that they are fully advised on the requirements and knowledge/skills/experience needed to cope with the rigours of the course and to fulfil the objectives and learning outcomes.

Practice questions

It is recommended that trainers spend time focusing on examination technique and perhaps include a session on this within the course scheme of work.

Devising mock examination questions for candidates is good practice. Precise wording is essential, and the syllabus will provide a useful guide to trainers who wish to compile their own bank of mock questions.

Short written exercises in groups with trainer feedback might be another way to increase confidence.

Support in assignments

It is essential that trainers take candidates through the candidate guidelines document to ensure that they are fully aware of what needs to be addressed and how, in both the examination and assignments.

Trainers are encouraged to mentor and support candidates appropriately in the research and development of coursework and, where necessary, coach them in the required skills to fulfil their assignment and tackle the examination with confidence. The ability of candidates to express themselves in writing varies significantly, and it may be necessary to provide assistance with written communication skills.

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. The candidates should then be given enough time to amend their assignments in order to benefit from the comments made by the trainer.

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

Trainers should consider the support that they will provide candidates prior to re-sitting the written paper and/or resubmitting an assignment.

Coverage

As candidates need to be able to cope with questions based on any part of the syllabus, it is essential that trainers cover every element in their course programme.

While it is imperative that trainers keep their own knowledge up to date, they should also liaise with other experts in delivering their course, such as local environmental health officers (EHOs), who can provide technical information and advice on current legislation and policy and good practice in the industry.

Candidates must read textbooks in addition to coursework notes, as this will increase their understanding as well as reinforce formal training sessions. Trainers might provide reading lists and webpage references in order to encourage such further study.

Procedure for reasonable adjustment

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

Presentation of scripts

Trainers should ensure that scripts are secured with staples or treasury tags; do not use plastic sleeves for each page of text, as this slows down the moderation process.

If writing an assignment by hand, candidates should ensure that they write clearly.

For typed assignments, candidates should be encouraged to use a standard font such as Arial or similar, displayed at size 12.

Other comments

While the demands of the Level 4 awards in food safety have again resulted in a proportionally high average failure rate, pass levels can be improved through the diligence and approach offered by trainers to their candidates.

Trainers are actively encouraged to provide regular feedback to the CIEH to ensure a process of continual improvement. This may be on any issue, for example administration, course materials, examination questions and assignments.

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