**General Comments**

Many centres have made good use of the information on the AQA website for carrying out the Controlled Assessments, in particular the Guidelines for the Research Task and the Individual Investigation. As a result, most candidates were able to access marks in all assessment criteria, some scoring maximum marks in several assessment areas. The moderation process was greatly assisted where teachers had provided annotation on the investigations and a breakdown of the marks awarded in each area. A wide range of titles was attempted by candidates, producing some excellent individual studies. In a few centres, however, candidates all did the same tasks for both the Research Task and the Individual Investigation which resulted in studies which were formulaic in approach with the same or similar outcomes. The most original work was seen in centres where candidates had been given a free choice of titles, had carried out genuinely individual research and where the practical work reflected the topic rather than a list of randomly chosen dishes.

**Presentation**

There was a great deal of variation in the standard of presentation of the finished studies. Some were outstanding, with excellent use of ICT, photos of finished dishes, graphs, charts and clear text. A few centres do not pay sufficient attention to details such as page numbering, headings and a bibliography, as well as a title page which should include the task written out in full.

**Teacher Annotation**

An overall improvement was seen this year. However, in some centres a lack of annotation and breakdown of the marking made it hard for moderators to see where marks had been awarded. Where only total marks were given on the Candidate Record Form for AO1, AO2 and AO3 this created difficulties for moderators to advise centres on where over-marking had occurred. Teacher comments on the Individual Assessment forms are most helpful, particularly on the practical work when there is a lack of evidence of the work being carried out.

**Photographic Evidence**

There were fewer problems this year with candidates who had downloaded pictures from recipe websites rather than providing photographs of their own finished work. However, some photographs were of a poor quality and did not do justice to the candidates' practical work. Photographs showing the method of making dishes are not required, only those of the finished dishes. Where there is no evidence of the practical work being carried out and no photos provided, a mark of zero will be given by the moderator (please see page 35 of the specification).

**Specific Comments**

**Research Task**

The recommended time to be spent on the Research Task is 6-8 hours, with approximately 2 hours of that time to be spent on practical work. Some teachers ask how many dishes candidates should make for the Research Task. As a general guide they should fill in the 2 hours with work that reflects the task title and shows a variety of food preparation skills. The amount of work produced will depend on the ability of the individual candidate.

The most popular tasks this year were Task 1 (Low Sugar), Task 2 (Fruit & Vegetables) and Task 5 (Student Meals). Most tasks were done well. Weaker areas included AO2.1 where candidates failed to review their work and produce a statement of aims for the rest of the task. In AO2.3, although most candidates gave reasons for choice for the practical work, some did not produce a
statement of aims linked to the research findings. Candidates should spend time reflecting on their research before planning practical work, and to score high marks in AO2.4 they must include their own detailed timeplans, showing dovetailing of more than one dish, as well as recipes and methods. Timeplans should also include details of sensory testing or comparisons that may be carried out during the practical sessions.

To be marked in the top band in AO2.5, candidates must demonstrate a ‘wide range of skills to a high standard’. A good example of a candidate meeting this criterion for the Research Task would be to make a variety of items for the Low Sugar snack foods demonstrating the modification of standard recipes for buns, biscuits, scones or flapjacks in order to reduce the sugar content. It is vital that sensory and nutritional analysis is carried out for at least one of the practical sessions for the Research Task. Many candidates lost marks because insufficient practical work was planned and carried out. Evaluations should be ongoing throughout the investigation, with sensory and nutritional analysis credited in AO3.1. Overall evaluations should reflect the whole of the investigation, including the research, with candidates making reference to issues identified in AO1.1. Conclusions should be drawn by candidates on the effectiveness of their investigation.

**Individual Investigation**

It is recommended that candidates spend 18 hours of class time on the Individual Investigation. Although the evidence indicates that most centres had followed this recommendation, it was obvious that some candidates had spent much more than 18 hours on the work produced. This did not always improve the quality of the investigations; some of the extra work was repetitive and resulted in very bulky pieces. Where candidates had gathered information from a wide range of primary and secondary sources, had synthesised it succinctly, and drawn conclusions from their research before planning suitable practical work, they were able to produce coherent work of a high standard. Some candidates, however, filled up their assignments with many printed sheets downloaded from websites, at the expense of collecting information from other sources.

The most popular tasks for the Individual Investigation were Task 2 (Health Problems), Task 5 (Elderly) and Task 6 (Non-meat Eaters). The least popular was Task 3 (Starchy Foods). Some excellent work was produced with many candidates achieving marks in the top bands. There were still some weaknesses, particularly where insufficient time was spent on research in AO1.2 and practical work in AO2.5. Some candidates chose unsuitable conditions to study for Task 2 such as anorexia and rickets which are not in the Specification.

The main areas for improvement for the Individual Investigation are as follows:

**AO1.1**
Lack of justification for the issues identified in the brainstorm prevented many candidates from scoring marks in the top band. Justification is why they have chosen certain issues to investigate and not how they are going to do it.

**AO1.2**
In some cases, insufficient time was spent on research, with candidates only producing similar amounts to the Research Task. Approximately 6 hours should be spent on assembling relevant information for the Individual Investigation, with at least three primary and three secondary sources employed. Candidates should not be awarded above 8 marks for AO1.2 where they have only produced a questionnaire and notes from secondary sources.

Primary research, such as questionnaires, surveys, dietary diaries and case studies, should be carried out using correct methodology. For example, questionnaires require an introduction stating
when and where they were carried out, the numbers involved and the relationship of the
questionnaire to the task title. It might also be helpful to carry out a pilot questionnaire before
conducting the final one.

AO2.1
Once the research has been completed candidates should review their work so far and produce a
statement of aims for what they intend to do for the rest of the investigation, including the analysis
of the primary research. Many candidates did not provide a statement of aims, which reduced the
marks available to them in this assessment area.

AO2.2
Analysis of the research should include charts or graphs to show the results of questionnaires and
surveys, and written comments explaining the significance of the findings. It is not necessary to
include all the completed questionnaires in the submitted investigation, but there should be one
blank copy and one completed sample. Most candidates were able to analyse questionnaires but
failed to draw conclusions on all their research before planning the practical work.

AO2.3
Candidates lost marks when they did not produce a clear statement of aims for the practical work,
which included justification for their choice linked to the research findings. Many candidates just
gave a list of dishes with only basic reasons for choice.

AO2.4
In order to be marked in the top band, planning for the practical work should include recipes,
methods and timeplans for 6-8 hours of practical work, demonstrating a wide range of complex
practical skills. Timeplans should show a breakdown or order of work for the tasks to be completed
in the time allocation. They should include methods used, oven temperature and cooking times.
Time should also be allowed for washing up and sensory testing. Unsuitable choice of dishes for
the topic should be marked down in AO2.4, e.g. some candidates researching ‘Main Meals for an
Elderly Person’ made a selection of dishes and not full meals.

AO2.5
Many candidates were over marked when the practical work chosen did not fit within the
recommended 6-8 hours or where only simple skills had been demonstrated. To be marked in the
top band, candidates must demonstrate a wide range of skills to a high standard. Some candidates
made the same items such as pizza for both tasks. Where this occurs, the dish will only be
credited once, usually for the Research Task. Where there is no photographic evidence, sensory
analysis and written evaluations of the practical work, a mark of zero will be awarded. However, a
good deal of excellent practical work was evident in many centres, and teachers have clearly
worked very hard with their candidates to produce work of such a high standard.

AO3.1
Overall, improvement was observed this year in sensory and nutritional analysis, but some
candidates still fail to carry out taste tests using a panel of at least four people on two of the
practical sessions for the Individual Investigation and one for the Research Task.

AO3.2
Although there was a slight improvement in overall evaluations, some were very brief. Candidates
should be advised to spend more time reflecting on the outcomes of their investigation with
reference to the issues identified in AO1.1.
Support

Teacher Online Standardisation (TOLS) for 2013-14 is available from September. TOLS can be accessed on e-AQA and can be found in the teacher tab. It is important that teachers use TOLS in order to familiarise themselves with the standard set for this unit. Examples of work marked by the Principal Moderator are available on TOLS and these will provide the opportunity to compare marking with the standards set by AQA.

Controlled assessment advisers are available throughout the year to assist with any questions regarding the requirements for controlled assessment. If you require details of your controlled assessment adviser please email home-economics@aqa.org.uk

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion