General Comments

It was encouraging to see evidence of centres using the guidelines that have been produced on the controlled assessment tasks. These guidelines are available on e-AQA to assist candidates with completing the Research Task and the Individual Investigation. In addition to these guidelines, it was clear that those centres that accessed the Teacher Online Standardisation (via e-AQA) had a better understanding of how to apply the assessment criteria and could practise applying marks to tasks.

There was more evidence of centres offering a choice of titles. This allowed candidates to research topics which interested them and allowed them to produce more independent work.

Some candidates did not always read the task/investigation carefully to ensure they answered all parts of the question. Some examples of this were seen in the research tasks which required a comparative analysis; fruit and vegetable task (task 2) and food additives in convenience foods (task 6). Each should include a comparative analysis with a shop bought version of the dishes made. Dishes chosen should be relevant to the title, for example the dishes chosen for research task 6 could be a convenience food high in food additives compared to a homemade dish with few or no food additives.

For the individual investigation, planning nutritious main meals for a week (i.e. a weekly meal plan) for the elderly (invest. 5) is a required part of this investigation. Some candidates who carried out this investigation failed to produce such a plan.

Presentation

It was pleasing to see an improvement in the presentation of the work produced by many candidates. Most candidates numbered their pages and included a contents page. In addition to this, candidates produced a front cover showing the full title of their chosen task/investigation along with the centre name and number and their candidate name and number. This is a requirement and is necessary for the moderation process. If both the Research Task and the Individual Investigation are included in the same folder it is essential that each has its own front cover with all this information included.

The use of ICT greatly improved the presentation of the work and was used to great advantage by many candidates.

Healthy eating should be a focus for most practical solutions to the tasks/investigations. Most centres produced a good balance of mainly savoury dishes/meals with fewer sweet dishes, which is good practice. Practical solutions should reflect the eatwell plate in most instances, especially where a meal is made. For example, where the non-meat meal (investigation 6) is chosen, it is not appropriate to make mainly sweet dishes as the investigation is about replacing meat in a balanced diet.

Teacher Annotation

Pleasingly, the majority of centres are using the Individual Assessment Record Form to record details of where the assessment objectives are being credited and these are referenced to the page numbers in candidates’ work; this greatly aided the moderation process. Teacher comments were especially helpful to record independent candidate work or detail any support needed for the
completion of some of the objectives. The Individual Assessment Record Form can be found on the Food and Nutrition section of the AQA website under the Controlled assessment section, or alternatively on e-AQA.

Photographic Evidence

Photographic evidence of the candidates’ practical work is a requirement of this specification. Photographs downloaded from the internet confused the moderation process and it is recommended that they should not be present in any part of the candidates' work. Label cards clearly showing the candidate name and number accompanied the practical photographic evidence in some folders and this practice is to be strongly encouraged for future entries. Colour photographs of a large enough size should be presented in candidate folders; a suggested minimum size for photographic evidence is 6 cm x 6 cm for each dish / meal made.

Specific Comments

Research Task

The recommended minimum 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. Evidence suggests that two comparisons or four dishes are often sufficient to achieve top band marks.

Individual Investigation

It is recommended that candidates spend a minimum of 18 hours of class time on the Individual Investigation. Although evidence indicates that most centres had broadly 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. Practical work should take up approximately 6-8 hours of this time. Evidence suggests that about 12 dishes should be sufficient to achieve top band marks in AO2.5, although some dishes which contained different components showed more skills and allowed for dovetailing in a single dish e.g. lasagne. It should be remembered that the quality and variety of skills demonstrated is more important than the quantity of work carried out.

AO1.1 – There was more evidence of candidates justifying why they had selected the issues they had chosen which allowed some to access higher band marks.

AO1.2 – Good candidates produced two valid primary and two valid secondary methods of research for the research task, and three of each for the individual investigation. For the research task about two hours should be spent on this research and for the individual investigation about 6 hours. This year excellent presentation of the research produced was evident from more candidates. Where the internet is used to download material, this should ideally be summarised and presented in the candidates’ own words. Some folders contained many pages of sheets which had been printed directly from websites and no comments were made on the information
presented, which reduced marks for this objective. Furthermore, some candidates had used data from outside the UK, e.g. from the USA for information, all research should be UK based.

**AO2.1** – More candidates accessed some marks for this assessment objective this year. However, there were still many who did not complete this after the secondary and primary research had been completed, but before the primary research had been analysed. The best examples were seen where candidates reviewed their work so far and stated what they planned to do next, presented as a list of aims.

**AO2.2** – Where candidates did not produce enough evidence of research in AO1.2, they were less likely to gain higher marks for this assessment objective. The best examples showed ongoing analysis throughout AO1.2 or an overall analysis at the end of the research. Analysis of the research should include charts or graphs to show the results of questionnaires and surveys, along with written comments explaining the significance of the findings.

**AO2.3** – There was evidence that some centres had a narrow range of recipes to choose from which candidates then tried to fit to the task / investigation they had selected. Evidence suggests that where candidates have a free, but teacher guided, choice of recipes the outcomes are more original and the reasons for choice are more relevant to the chosen tasks / investigations. A statement of aims which encompass the aims of all practical sessions is needed for top band marks to be awarded. Some candidates produced reasons for choice for dishes they did not go on to make. It is better if the reasons for choice are completed after the dishes to be made are chosen. Reasons for choice were linked to their own background research and candidates who achieved top band marks focused on the chosen title.

**AO2.4** – In order to be marked in the top band, planning for practical work should include recipes, methods and timeplans. Dovetailing of activities was shown on timeplans for separate dishes or, if a more complex dish had different components, these were sometimes dovetailed. This dovetailing, along with details of oven temperature, washing up and any comparative testing and / or sensory analysis, allowed higher marks to be accessed. Unsuitable choice of dishes reduced the marks awarded in this assessment objective. For example, some unsuitable high sugar snacks were planned for the low sugar research task where traditional recipes hadn’t been adapted to reduce the sugar.

**AO2.5** – About two hours of practical work was produced for the Research Task by more candidates this year, which is the recommended time. However, there were some candidates who did not reach the recommended time of 6-8 hours of practical work for the individual investigation. All practical work must be photographed as this evidence is needed for the moderation process. Where there is no photographic evidence, written evaluations or sensory analysis to show that the practical has taken place, a mark of zero is awarded for practical work. However, there were some excellent examples of candidates producing sufficient practical work and covering a wide range of skills to a high standard, which was very pleasing.

**AO3.1** – Evidence showed that candidates included a separate evaluation for each practical as well as some sensory analysis using at least four people, with comments on their significance to the chosen titles. Both the sensory analysis and detailed nutritional analysis should be included for at least one practical in the research task and at least two for the individual investigation. More centres included a bibliography, but many did not. These show the secondary sources of information which were useful when crediting marks in both AO1.2 and AO3.1. Where costing is relevant to the title, for example the student research task (task 5) and the elderly investigation (investigation 5), these were credited in this objective. Workings to calculate the costs should be evident as well as some comments on whether the costs were realistic for these groups.
AO3.2 – Some evaluations were too brief to access the higher band marks. However, it was pleasing to see some excellent examples of the overall evaluation. These reviewed each part of the task / investigation and referred back to AO1.1 to see if the original issues identified were successfully investigated. Candidates who achieved marks in the top band also discussed their strengths and weaknesses as well as justifying any changes to their plans which needed to be made to the practical or written work.

Support

Teacher Online Standardisation (TOLS) for 2014-15 is available from the autumn term around October. TOLS is accessed on e-AQA and can be found under 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 your 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 the AQA subject team at: homeeconomics@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