

# GCSE Examiners' Report

Food and Nutrition  
GCSE  
Summer 2025

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## Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.<sup>1</sup>

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

## Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	<a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/">https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/</a>
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.  For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: <a href="#">Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)</a>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a>
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	<a href="https://resources.wjec.co.uk/">https://resources.wjec.co.uk/</a>
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	<a href="#">Become an Examiner   WJEC</a>

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## Executive Summary

The examination paper and NEA tasks were of a very similar standard to previous examination series, although there was an increase in performance by candidates in the examination this year which has led to the grade boundaries being increased for this series.

Candidates generally demonstrated sound knowledge across both Unit 1 (Principles of Food and Nutrition) and Unit 2 (Food and Nutrition in Action), with many showing confidence in extended responses and practical tasks. However, literacy issues and misinterpretation of command words remain barriers to higher achievement for some candidates. Compared to previous series, there was a noticeable improvement in concise research and planning, particularly in NEA tasks, though some generous marking and inconsistent depth in analysis were observed.

### Highlights and issues:

- Unit 1: Candidates performed well in questions related to food poisoning, protein functions, and diet. However, responses lacked depth in areas such as complementary proteins, food logos, and fibre. Misreading questions and poor handwriting affected clarity and scoring. There is an option to complete the Unit 1 examination on-screen – candidates who struggle with handwriting may want to consider completing the on-screen paper. This is an option teachers should consider for their learners.
- Unit 2: NEA tasks were generally well-executed, with improved research conciseness and planning. Photographic evidence and data presentation were strong in much of the work seen. However, analysis and evaluation sections were often descriptive rather than analytical, and some candidates failed to link findings back to research or scientific principles in NEA 1.

### Common themes across units:

- Literacy and Interpretation: Misunderstanding of command words and poor handwriting hindered performance.
- Scientific Understanding: Candidates showed growing confidence in applying scientific principles, especially in NEA tasks, but analytical depth was inconsistent.
- Administrative Compliance: Some centres failed to use the mandatory 2025 FN coversheets. AI usage was evident but often unreferenced by candidates. Use of incorrect FN coversheets or lack of acknowledgment of use of AI in future series risks centres and candidates being investigated for malpractice.

### Key areas for improvement:

- Encourage deeper analytical responses, especially in evaluation sections of the NEA tasks, particularly NEA 1.
- Improve understanding and application of command words that are used in the Unit 1 exam.
- Ensure accurate referencing of AI tools and adherence to administrative protocols.
- Promote high-skill dish selection and detailed justification of choice in planning.

Resources to support improvement:

<b>Areas for improvement</b>	<b>Classroom resources</b>	<b>Brief description of resource</b>
<b>Unit 1</b>		
Exam technique practice	<a href="#">Portal</a>	Past papers and mark schemes
Examination review	<a href="#">Assessment Feedback Package 2024-25</a>	A range of resources such as online exam reviews, free access to scripts, Principal Examiners reports and Exemplars.
Exam technique	<a href="#">WJEC GCSE Food and Nutrition EWT.pptx</a>	Exam walkthrough
Subject knowledge	<a href="#">Resource WJEC Educational Resources Website</a>	Knowledge organisers HWB Effect of cooking on commodities Nutrition principles Food provenance
Subject knowledge	<a href="#">Free education resources for teaching young people aged 3-16 years about where food comes from, cooking and healthy eating, and teacher training. - Food A Fact Of Life</a>	Free resources
Command words	<a href="https://resource.download.wjec.co.uk/vtc/2016-17/16-17_3-18/eng/assessment_Objectives_wjec.pdf">https://resource.download.wjec.co.uk/vtc/2016-17/16-17_3-18/eng/assessment_Objectives_wjec.pdf</a>	All the possible command words used in the exam are explained in this document.
<b>Unit 2</b>		
Uploading of work to IAMIS	<a href="#">e-Submission   WJEC</a>	This resource explains the format for uploading work onto IAMIS. Page 68 is specifically for Food & Nutrition.
NEA 1 – Food science knowledge and understanding	<a href="#">FoodCrumbles - Improving Food with Science - FoodCrumbles</a>	Website that covers a range of food science topics and investigations
NEA 1 Food science	<a href="#">Food science (14-16 Years) - Food A Fact Of Life</a>	Website that provides food science information and resources to help complete NEA's.

NEA 1 resources for conducting experiments	<a href="#">Search Resources Only - Food A Fact Of Life star-diagram-for-food-investigation.xls</a>	The Food a fact of life website and WJEC website have star profile proforma's that candidates can use to help present the results of their practical experiments for Section B of NEA 1.
Completion of NEA 1	<a href="#">work-smarter-not-harder-nea-1-wjec-final-version.pptx</a>	PowerPoint to help guide learners through the NEA 1 task.
	<a href="#">GCSE Food and Nutrition</a>	Guidance for teaching document, located in the 'Key Documents' tab provides suggestions for teaching the content and examples of good practice for the NEA tasks.
NEA 2 practical skills	<a href="#">high-medium-and-low-level-practical-skills.pptx</a> <a href="#">upskilling-recipes.pptx</a> <a href="#">WJEC Educational Resources Website</a> <a href="#">GCSE Food and Nutrition</a>	The WJEC website has some guidance for what skills are classed as High/Complex, Medium and Basic/Low. The guidance also gives some explanation on how to assess practical dishes. There is a PowerPoint on how to upskill recipes. There are several videos on skills. The Guidance for teaching pp56-76 has a comprehensive list of dishes and skills noted as does the specification pp24-26.

# FOOD AND NUTRITION

## GCSE

Summer 2025

### UNIT 1 - PRINCIPLES OF FOOD AND NUTRITION

#### Overview of the Unit

The exam paper covered AO1, AO2, and AO4 areas, ensuring all required content was covered. Its format was consistent with previous years. Candidates' responses were often thorough and in-depth, showing confidence and a deeper understanding. Understanding command words, meticulously reading questions, and answering with relevant information is crucial. Many candidates successfully tried the extended questions. Response lengths varied, reflecting varying degrees of knowledge, and understanding.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Section A

This section was well attempted with nearly all candidates attempting the questions. The visual stimuli aided the accessibility of the questions.

- Q.1
- (a) This question was well-answered, as most candidates attempted it and provided correct responses, showing a clear understanding of nutrition.
  - (b) Candidates did not utilise the information provided in the images effectively. While many attempted this question, there was a general lack of sound knowledge on the suitable cuts of meat for the various methods of cooking.
  - (c) In general, this question was well-answered, showing a good understanding of food poisoning bacteria.
  - (d) Most candidates had attempted this question, and many understood the importance of cooking meat for safety and to enhance its sensory qualities.

## Section B

- Q.2 (a) Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the benefits of incorporating fruits and vegetables into their diets. Many provided evidence of their nutritional knowledge in their responses.
- (b) A considerable number of candidates attempted this question, with most being able to offer a diverse range of answers addressing the challenges of an unbalanced diet. They specifically mentioned obesity, heart disease, and diabetes as common issues. To secure the highest marks, candidates should demonstrate a wider range of knowledge and understanding of the subject matter in their answers and use examples to support their knowledge.
- Q.3 (a) Most candidates answered this question correctly and provided suitable responses.
- (b) While most candidates answered this question correctly, they did not obtain two marks per item (i) because their answers lacked depth without exemplification, i.e they did not give an example of how food is spoiled.
- (c) Most candidates could access this question and provide examples of foods for the preservation method.
- Q.4 (a) Most candidates completed this question correctly by reading the information and finding the correct response.
- (b) Overall, most candidates answered this question correctly, but they lacked depth in their answers to gain four marks. Most candidates made the link to gut health/digestion or constipation, but they lacked knowledge of soluble fibre.
- (c) Some candidates identified a range of suitable changes. Candidates should be encouraged to include variety in their answers rather than focussing on just wholemeal varieties of pasta, bread, etc.
- Q.5 (a) Most candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge of the functions of protein.
- (b) Most candidates provided correct answers to this question.
- (c) Not all candidates answered this question well. Some candidates chose foods not high in protein rather than LBV sources.
- (d) Some candidates demonstrated limited knowledge. They lacked detail to explain the different types of protein.
- (e) Some candidates showed limited knowledge of complementary proteins.

- Q.6 (a) While some candidates were aware of the recycling logo /Mobius loop, only a limited number of them received two marks for the description because their answers lacked depth and understanding that it was the packaging that is capable of being recycled and not the item in it.
- (b) The British Lion Mark answers were well-attempted, though some lacked awareness. For example, there was a misconception that eggs are free from salmonella, when in fact hens are vaccinated against it.
- (c) Many candidates could name the Fair-Trade logo, but they had limited descriptions.
- Q.7 (a) Most candidates could provide at least one reason why water is important in the diet.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- (c) Some candidates struggled with inadequate water intake, resulting in few high-scoring answers. They mostly referred to dehydration and headaches.
- Q.8 Candidates were aware of the definition of food poverty, but their answers lacked depth and awareness of a wide range of the consequences of initiatives. This meant that they struggled to gain top-band marks.

## Recommendations

- Most candidates were well-prepared for the examination, but some would benefit from more in-depth knowledge of the content.
- Literacy remains a concern, as some responses are difficult to interpret due to poor handwriting. Centres are advised to encourage candidates to read questions carefully. This is because reading questions incorrectly remains a weakness for some candidates, preventing them from achieving higher marks. Candidates may misunderstand questions, subject specific terminology, or command words.
- Future candidates would benefit from further practice in examination techniques and guidance on interpreting command words used in questions.
- Please remember this examination is available as an “on-line” option, and sitting via this medium can benefit all levels of learners. Contact [e-assessment@wjec.co.uk](mailto:e-assessment@wjec.co.uk) for more information.

# FOOD AND NUTRITION

## GCSE

Summer 2025

### UNIT 2: FOOD AND NUTRITION IN ACTION

#### Overview of the Unit

#### Assessment 1

The assessment covered AO2 (Apply knowledge and understanding of food, cooking and nutrition) and AO4 (Analyse and evaluate different aspects of food, cooking and nutrition, including food made by themselves and others) assessment objectives.

The two tasks set by WJEC were;

##### Option A

When cooking green vegetables, the colour, texture and nutritional value can be affected by a number of different factors.

Investigate a number of variables to determine the effect that cooking can have on green vegetables.

##### Option B

Mayonnaise is an emulsion of oil and water, stabilised by an egg yolk.

Investigate the working characteristics, the functional and chemical properties of the ingredients used to make mayonnaise.

#### Assessment 2

The assessment covered AO3 (Plan, prepare, cook and present dishes, combining appropriate techniques) and AO4 (Analyse and evaluate different aspects of food, cooking and nutrition, including food made by themselves and others) assessment objectives.

The two tasks set by WJEC were;

##### Option A

There are many different methods of cooking, with baking being a popular method.

Research, plan, prepare and cook a selection of dishes (with accompaniments if appropriate) that uses baking as the main method of cooking.

##### Option B

Food waste is an issue in many households in the UK, and among the most commonly wasted foods are milk, potatoes, bread and bananas.

Research, plan, prepare and cook a selection of dishes (with accompaniments if appropriate) that showcases at least one of the above listed foods in each dish/that uses at least one of the above listed ingredients as the main ingredient in each dish.

In Assessment 1, more candidates chose to complete Option A, although many did complete Option B. The standard of work was similar across both options. Overall, candidates had kept to the 2000 - 2500 word count and this was partly because there appeared to be less pages of research than previous years. Research was evident in much of the work seen and it was pleasing to see that many candidates had summarised their research effectively and concisely. In Assessment 2, both options were equally as popular, and the standard of work saw little variation.

New FN coversheets have been produced by WJEC, as set out in the circular sent to all centres in January 2024, to include an explicit declaration in relation to the use of AI and are available on the WJEC website. These new FN coversheets became mandatory for submissions for the 2025 series. A number of centres did not use these forms, possibly due to teachers having their own saved pre-populated FN coversheets, but the new ones need to be used, and should they not be in future series then the centre may be subject to a malpractice investigation.

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been more evident in candidates' work this year. Whilst the use of AI is not prohibited, when it is used, it must be clearly referenced by the candidates in their work. There were numerous instances where candidates had used AI but had not referenced the AI tools used. On the new FN coversheets, which both candidates and teachers must sign, the declaration states that any sources and Artificial Intelligence tools used in the work should be clearly referenced, and that making a false declaration is a form of malpractice. Unfortunately, some instances of malpractice have been evident this year in relation to the use of AI, and some candidates have been penalised.

Centres are becoming more proficient with the e-submission of work directly onto IAMIS, but some centres are still uploading multiple documents. Guidance on e-submission is available on the WJEC website, with specific advice for each subject listed. The guidance for GCSE Food & Nutrition is listed on page 68. Both NEA tasks and relevant administration submitted should all be included in one document, preferably a PDF document. Some centres uploaded two separate documents, one for each NEA, which is acceptable. To aid the moderation process, please can work be uploaded as one or two PDF documents for each candidate as opposed to a zip file. Work submitted in zip files makes moderating the work difficult and time consuming.

Moderator reports are sent to each centre on results day and will highlight any problematic marking or administration issues. Some centres had clearly acted on moderator feedback from 2024 which was pleasing to see, but there are still some centres that are not heeding the advice provided in the moderators' report which is disappointing and can affect candidates' performance.

## **Tasks**

### **Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria**

#### **NEA 1**

The majority of the candidates whose work was moderated this year chose the 'green vegetables' task.

#### **Section A**

Research varied in quality and quantity but what was pleasing to see this year was that many candidates had managed to make their research more concise and summarised. This meant that we did not see pages of irrelevant research, meaning that candidates were able to provide more focussed research for their chosen topic. Making the research more concise also helps candidates adhere to the word limit of 2000-2500 words. Most research for this task came from books and the internet, and overall, it was relevant to the task. It appeared that many centres had focused candidates' research using questions or topic webs. As was seen in some of Section A last year, some candidates had completed practical experimentation as part of their research for the green vegetables task, whereby they had completed a small experiment on a number of green vegetables before narrowing their choice down to one green vegetable. As mentioned in last year's report, I believe that this would have deepened the candidate's knowledge of the subject area, and I would encourage more centres to consider this form of research when guiding candidates through Section A of this task.

It is important that when candidates are carrying out research, they look at different variables linked to the task as well as the science so they can make suitable predictions and have a basis to refer back to in Section C. Over the years, researching the science element of the task has improved significantly, allowing candidates to gain a deeper understanding of the ingredients and recipes they are using.

Most candidates now produce a clear plan for their experimental work, but there is still a significant number of candidates that do not provide justification for their variables which makes it difficult for them to achieve the Band 3 marks. The plans should also provide information on how candidates are to record their results – some candidates had not done this.

#### **Section B**

Some candidates are still planning large numbers of experiments; this is not necessary to achieve the Band 3 and 4 marks and can mean that the candidates lose focus on what they are trying to achieve with their experiments by having too many variations in their experiments. Most candidates had carried out a range of interesting experiments. For Option A (mayonnaise), most candidates had used different types of oil as a variable, but other variables included using different emulsifiers, using different ratios of ingredients and using different methods of making the mayonnaise. Most candidates had chosen one or two different variables to experiment with to ensure that they had a range of results to discuss. Photographic evidence included images of the ingredients prior to mixing, the finished mayonnaise, the mayonnaise on a viscosity chart and a comparison of the colour of the mayonnaise using a Munsell chart.

Where candidates had chosen Option B (green vegetables), many had looked at interesting changes around cooking methods, cooking time and adding additional ingredients to try and prevent the vegetables from losing their colour or texture. A small number of candidates had managed to test for the loss of nutrition in their results. Photographic evidence was not always as comprehensive for this option; the main images seen were of the green vegetables before, during and after cooking. Some had included photographs of the colour of the cooking liquid (if there was any) and colour comparisons using Munsell charts.

Most candidates had included photographic evidence, which was helpful and gave candidates more to discuss, and good use was made of tables in Word to present the photographs and annotation. Many candidates had carried out a range of tests, but where some candidates were awarded Band 4 marks, they had not always included participant feedback or discussed the functional and chemical properties of the ingredients selected, so marks were often generous because of this. A range of different formats should be well presented and clearly communicated to achieve marks from Band 4. Where candidates had included ranking tests, preference tests, star profiles and used their data to produce graphs, they were able to gain the higher marks, and this was done very effectively by some centres.

Centres and candidates are advised to read the options for each task carefully – some candidates had completed experiments on a number of green vegetables for Section B, yet the brief clearly stated that one green vegetable was to be chosen.

### **Section C**

This year, analysis and evaluation tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. Candidates were able to discuss what happened during their experiments, and most reviewed their hypothesis. However, few candidates linked this back to their research or highlighted the scientific reasons for their results. Again, this section was often generously marked considering the lack of justification that was evident.

For the mayonnaise task, candidates discussed a number of scientific principles of the results in Section C, such as how different emulsifiers affect the emulsification of the ingredients and how different oils can affect the viscosity of the mayonnaise.

For the green vegetables task, candidates had numerous opportunities to discuss the scientific principles behind the length of cooking time, how the different cooking methods affected the green vegetable and why the chlorophyll in the green vegetables was affected by the varying conditions of heat and time.

## NEA 2

A mixture of both options were completed by candidates. There was little difference in the quality of work between both options.

### Section A

Marks for this section were a little lower compared to previous years. Research often lacked the detail required for candidates to achieve marks from Band 3. Internet research varied in quality more than in previous years and many candidates were unable to use this research to help their decision making. Internet research should only be brief as more primary research should be included in candidates' work. Discussion of other research methods such as questionnaires, visits and tasting sessions also lacked detailed analysis. Centres should encourage candidates to carry out two to three detailed pieces of research, rather than many types of research that lacks depth. Trialling of dishes again varied, with centres awarding Band 3 marks for this section even when low skill dishes were being trialled. Clear photographic evidence of trials was not always provided, and the evaluation of trials also varied in quality, with some centres using the final evaluation criteria for Section D to evaluate trial dishes.

### Section B

(i) Where candidates had used headings to look at the areas required by the specification, they had covered all sections of the justification of choice. A few centres had used a table with the dishes listed and the headings across the top, which was helpful for the lower ability candidates, to ensure they had comments on each of the points. Some centres had not included this as separate section, instead linking it to trials, or they covered the areas, but candidates hadn't linked it to the dishes chosen. It should also be remembered that to award the full six marks for this section, detailed justification of choice for all three dishes, plus the choosing of high skilled dishes, should be evident.

(ii) Orders of work - Most centres are now producing a 3-part plan, where candidates colour code their work which makes for a clear flow and helped justify the higher marks. There are still some mise en place sections that are lacking detail though and only include basic instructions which may only take a matter of minutes to complete. The mise en place section should encompass all preparatory tasks to be completed before cooking the dishes, such as preparing ingredients, lining tins, collecting and setting up pieces of equipment, making doughs (pasta/bread/pastry), or any other suitable tasks. Simply allocating five minutes in the mise en place section for basic preparation is insufficient. Overall, this section was completed well by most candidates.

### Section C

On the whole, candidates had produced a range of dishes that met the briefs. Where high marks are awarded, it is expected that candidates have shown a range of knife skills, preparation skills and presentation skills, executed with a high degree of competence, to justify the awarding of these marks. These areas in particular were most likely to be overmarked. Clear photographic evidence was provided, but as a reminder, there should be a photograph of each individual dish produced along with a photograph of all three dishes together. Most centres are now using the NEA practical marksheet to explain how and why the marks have been awarded for this section which significantly aids the moderation process.

## **Section D**

Most candidates covered all areas of the evaluation using the headings provided. Most centres were accurate in the marking of this section, although in general, candidates were descriptive rather than analytical, especially in the skills section, as many had listed their skills, rather than saying if they had carried them out effectively. When discussing technical skills, to award two marks, candidates should evaluate the suitability and execution of the skills undertaken. Listing and describing the skills used does not justify the awarding of the full two marks.

### **To conclude**

The NEA tasks change annually and differ from those in England (Eduqas). The new WJEC GCSE Food & Nutrition specification is due to start teaching from this September and so this will be the final year for the current GCSE Food & Nutrition specification – Summer 2026 will be the final full assessment opportunity for this qualification. Learners entering Year 10 in September 2025 must be entered onto the new Food & Nutrition qualification ([GCSE Food and Nutrition | Made for Wales](#)).

### **Task marking**

#### **Comments on approaches to internal marking**

Most centres were accurate in their marking, but there are still quite a few centres whose marking is generous which meant that marks had to be adjusted. The standard of work seen was not as good as previous years and there were less candidates working in the higher mark bands. Where marking has been generous, this has been commented on in the sections above.

## **Supporting you**

### **Useful contacts and links**

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4262

Email: [food@wjec.co.uk](mailto:food@wjec.co.uk)

Qualification webpage: [GCSE Food and Nutrition](#)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

### **CPD Training / Professional Learning**

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

### **WJEC Qualifications**

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