

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

**SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
SEC**

HOME ECONOMICS

May 2012

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD**

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SEC Home Economics May 2012 Session Examiners' Report

Section 1: Statistical Information

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the May 2012 session of the examination.

Table 1: Distribution of candidates' grades for SEC Home Economics 2012

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	ABS	TOTAL
PAPER A	36	144	164	106	28			50	1	529
PAPER B				72	84	109	36	40	14	355
TOTAL	36	144	164	178	112	109	36	90	15	884
% OF TOTAL	4.07	16.29	18.55	20.14	12.67	12.33	4.07	10.18	1.70	100

Part 2: Comments regarding candidate's performance

2.1 PAPER 1

Question 1: Fish

- a. The high achieving candidates had no difficulty with this question and easily named the other two types of fish. However, the majority of low achievers had difficulty answering this question. Answers ranged from examples of different fish such as cod or salmon, to different colours such as red or black.
- b. The majority of candidates got this question right. However, there were a few candidates who confused the characteristics of oily and white fish and consequently got the answers wrong.
- c. The majority of candidates ignored the word *outline* in the question and listed instead. High achievers answered this question correctly and received full marks. Low achievers, however, had difficulty with this question. Answers given were carbohydrate and vitamin C- two nutrients which are not supplied by fish. This shows a possible jumbling of information which was studied by the candidates.
- d. Most candidates answered this question correctly. However, there were some candidates who focused more on the cleanliness of the shop and seller rather than on the actual fish. There were also a few candidates who had difficulty explaining that fish should have prominent eyes. Some candidates explained that the eyes should be "popped out" while others needed to resort to Maltese to express their answer. This shows that the main problem in answering this question was not lack of understanding, but rather the candidates' inability to express themselves in English.
- e. Most candidates answered this question correctly. However, there were a few who simply wrote *oven*. It should be noted that such an answer is considered incorrect. The cooking method in that case would be *baking* and the oven would simply be the equipment needed to execute this cooking method. There were also candidates who simply wrote *forn* indicating that they had difficulty remembering the word in English. Some candidates also ignored the word *method* and instead, gave dishes which could be prepared using these fish.

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Question 2: Shopping and Meal Planning

- a. The majority of candidates answered this question incorrectly which was rather surprising seeing as they produce a shopping list for each practical executed at all levels of secondary school. Most candidates wrote down suggestions for wise shopping while others left the question out completely. The candidates seemed to have understood that the question focused on shopping but failed to understand the meaning of the word *headings*. Consequently, the main problem here seemed to be, again, an issue of poor understanding of English.
- b. In general, high achievers found this question easier than low achievers. However, it should be noted that in most answers, the word *dish* was disregarded. Answers which were expected included complete dishes such as *lasagne*, *timpans* or *ricotta pie*. However, some students, particularly the low achievers, simply gave lists of random ingredients in the hopes that they would somehow form a dish.
- c. Several candidates misunderstood this question and did not understand what was meant by *ready packed fruit and vegetables*. Most students focused on the use of artificial pesticides or artificial fertilisers which, unless organic, would also be used on loosely sold fruits and vegetables. Many of the candidates also did not realise that such ready packed fruits and vegetables may be local and simply pre-packaged locally.
- d. The majority of candidates answered this question correctly giving suitable advantages for shopping online. However, there were a few candidates, both high and low achievers, who ignored the word *supermarket* and focused instead on advantages of shopping online for clothes, accessories and technology. Very few low achievers confused the word *advantage* for *disadvantage* and consequently did not answer the question correctly.

Question 3: Vegetarianism and Soya Products

- a. The majority of candidates answered this question correctly giving suitable reasons as to why people may choose a vegetarian diet.

The majority of students also gave correct benefits and detriments to health as a result of following a vegetarian diet. However, some students did not read the question well and did not realise that both answers had to be relevant to the individual's health. Consequently, some answers focused on animal welfare and these could not be accepted.

- b. The majority of high achievers answered this question correctly. However, some of the low achievers struggled with this question. Some students did not offer any alternative soya product and instead, simply listed different dishes which could be made using the provided animal products. This shows that some of these candidates did not understand the point of this question. Some candidates also offered quorn as a possible soya alternative. Although quorn is a suitable meat substitute used by vegetarians, it is not a soya product and consequently was not accepted as a correct answer.

The majority of high achievers answered the rest of the question correctly planning suitable meals using alternative soya products. However, it should be noted that in most cases, the word *traditional* was disregarded.

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Question 4: Health and the CINDI Food Guide Pyramid

- a. Most of the high achievers answered this question correctly. However, most of the low achievers simply explained the acronym *WHO* or simply left the answer out. This question was based on recall which could be one reason as to why low achievers had more difficulty with this question.
- b. As with the previous question, high achievers did well in this question while low achievers struggled to remember this concept. Most saw the picture of the food guide pyramid on the next page and simply answered *follow the food guide pyramid*.
- c. Most candidates got this question wrong. The problem seemed to be a lack of understanding of the word *feature* again hinting that candidates have problems reading and understanding English fluently. Very few candidates got this question right and they were candidates who clearly had a very good grasp of the English language and who were comfortable expressing themselves using English throughout the exam. The incorrect answers given show that the candidates seem to be studying the pyramid by heart and do not fully comprehend the reasons behind the choice of shape and colour for said pyramid.

While most candidates planned suitable meals, little regard was given to the word *sedentary*. This was an issue with both high achievers and low achievers and consequently not all answers given reflected the needs of the teenager.

Question 5: Carbohydrates

- a. The majority of candidates defined the term *macronutrient* correctly. However, there were a few low achievers who defined it as being a nutrient which was the most important in the body. This answer was not given any marks.
- b. Most candidates did not have problems answering this question. However, some low achievers got confused and gave the different forms of saccharides instead.

Most candidates gave correct sources for the different types of carbohydrates. However it was noted that certain answers were repeated- for example, rather than give fruit as one source of sugar, candidates gave kiwi and banana. This pattern was seen for both high and low achievers. Candidates who did not answer the first part of this question correctly did not, understandably, get this section correct.

- c. Most candidates got this question correct. However, apart from energy, most candidates also added *for warmth* indicating that they may have been confusing the topic of this question- carbohydrate- with fat, so much so, that the energy value given was often that of fat. Low achievers did not do very well in this question indicating again, that such candidates may have problems with recall.
- d. The majority of candidates got this answer wrong and very few were able to give the correct answer. This part of the question was often left out by low achievers and answered incorrectly by high achievers.

Question 6: Food Poisoning

- a. Very few candidates got full marks in this section. Most candidates explained that high-risk foods may easily cause food poisoning, but did not explain why. Some candidates also confused high-risk foods with perishable foods.

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- b. Most of the high achievers answered this question correctly. Some low achievers did not understand the point of the question and gave suggestions of foods which could be chopped or cooked. Others gave very limited information or left it out completely.
- c. Most candidates answered this question correctly and gave a suitable form of food poisoning.
- d. Many candidates responded by giving types of animals, such as chicken or turkey, which carry salmonella or listeria food poisoning. This clearly indicates that candidates did not understand the term *population group*. This was noted for both high and low achievers.

Question 7: Digestive system

- a. Whilst the majority of candidates scored well in this question, the way how chewed food is pushed down the oesophagus into the stomach was wrongly given.
- b,c. Some candidates got their answers perfectly correct while others failed to give a good reason for their answer. Very few were the ones who listed wrong answers.
- d. Most of the candidates stated the correct two organs of the digestive system where nutrients takes place and most of the candidates explained in detailed how after it is completed.

Question 8: Cake Making

- a. The majority of the candidates did not find any difficulty in modifying the ingredients from the given list and it could be noted that the low achievers answered this question very well.
- b. The majority of the students did give a good reason why the flour and spice are sifted.
- c,d. Overall candidates mentioned the correct part of the hand for the rubbing-in followed by a good reason.
- e,f. When it came to reasons for over rubbing the fat into flour and the texture achieved when over rubbing fat into flour, most of the candidates gave an incorrect answer.
- g. Most of the candidates gave the correct oven temperature for baking small rubbed-in buns.
- h. Also most of the candidates explained well how to test the readiness of a cake.

Question 9: Energy Saving Measures

- a. Most candidates did not find any difficulty in explaining how to make full use of your oven when preparing a two course meal. However, it was noted that at times, low achievers gave answers that were repeated from one point to another.
- b, c. Most candidates gave good reasons why the oven door should not be opened during baking time and why an electric hob can be turned 15 minutes before the end of cooking time with food still on it.
- d. The question where candidates had to name two types of kitchen equipment that can be used to cook a complete meal, most of them named equipment usually found in the kitchen such as knives rather than equipment to cook a complete meal.
- e. Most of the candidates did write a good energy saving equipment when reheating a slice of pizza (i) and when boiling water to make a cup of tea (ii).
- f. Most of the candidates ticked the correct statement about energy saving measures.

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Question 10: Organic farming and GMOs

- a. Overall, this question was poorly completed by both the high and low achievers, and candidates did not comprehend the scope of the question, failing to name the symbol given and what it means.
- b,c. The benefits given both to the consumer and to the environment were simply a repetition of the words not related to the question and most candidates failed to give examples.
- d. When it came to GMO's some of the candidates did know what it stands for but only the few gave clear explanation of how GMO products are made.

Question 11: Fruit and Vegetables

- a. Whilst the majority of candidates scored well in this question, and factors cited were more often than not well-explained, it is pertinent to note that the word 'fresh' was often disregarded and 'buying local fruit and vegetables' was commonly listed as one of the wrong factors to consider when buying fresh fruit and vegetables.
- b,c. Question (b) did not pose any major difficulties to the majority of candidates and both the green leafy vegetables and root vegetables were correctly stored after purchasing them. This was also noted in fill in the blanks exercise.
- d. The question where candidates had to mention steps to take to ensure the least amount of losses of vitamins was mostly answered correctly by most of the candidates.
- e. However ways of making use of the remaining cooking liquid after boiling vegetables was wrongly given by some of the candidates as they gave energy saving procedures to follow to save water.

Question 12: Convenience Foods

- a,b. Question 12 did not present a lot of difficulties for the candidates to answer. The majority of the candidates got this question right and also gave good reasons why convenience foods have become popular in recent years.
- c. Something that should be commented is that for this question there were candidates who listed wrong examples for ready to serve convenience foods.
- d. The last question did not pose any difficulties and most candidates read and interpreted the food label given successfully (i). It could also be noted that low achievers answered this question very well too. Most of the candidates also gave a good reason why the product should be piping hot before serving.

2.2 PAPER 2A

Question 1: Factors influencing choice of home

- a. Most of the candidates listed correct ways how a house can satisfy the physical needs of the occupant. However, at times candidates mentioned other needs rather than physical ones.
- b. i) On the whole this question was completed appropriately.
- b. ii) This question did not pose any major difficulties to the majority of the candidates. The most common correct answers were 'it is less time consuming to go shopping' and 'if something is required unexpectedly, they can easily purchase it'.
- c. At times safety features were listed in lieu of security features.

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Question 2: Senior citizens in society

a. i) This question was answered correctly by most candidates. Several ways how elderly persons can be active in the community were given.

a. ii) Some misunderstood this question and gave examples of how they can help their families in general instead of the younger members of their families. Therefore, 'helping in household chores' was not considered as a correct answer.

b. The majority of the candidates demonstrated appropriate knowledge regarding the services the Department for the Elderly and Community Care provides so that elderly live comfortably in their own home. In addition, they were able to describe a service mentioned in question b.i. Meals on wheels was the most common service described.

c. Quite a few candidates confused the night shelter with the day care centre.

Question 3: Environmental Awareness

a. For most candidates there was no difficulty to explain how each of the given measures could reduce waste.

b. A common incorrect answer to this question was 'food leftovers'. They did not specifically mention fruit and vegetable peelings or egg shells. However, once again a good percentage of students answered correctly to this part of the question.

c. Most candidates gave correct answers to this part of the question.

d. The majority of the candidates knew how one can dispose of bulky household waste. A good percentage stated that one should call the local council and a truck will pick it up from your doorstep. Others also mentioned the Civic Amenity Sites.

Question 4: Saving energy in the home

a. Candidates managed to mention several advantages of saving energy, mostly to save money in electricity bills and by lowering carbon dioxide emissions which contributes to global warming.

b. A common answer of how to make the windows energy saving was double glazing. Not all students were able to give examples of changes that could be made to doors to make them energy saving as well.

c. Some students misunderstood this question as they suggested ways how to make sure that the items are energy saving before purchasing them rather than when they are in use. Others however, answered correctly to this question.

Question 5: Protein

a. Nearly all candidates listed the primary function of protein. Only few candidates were able to list the secondary function of protein.

b. A significant percentage of students were able to list two food groups that supply protein in our diet.

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c. The performance for this part of the question varied. This is because some students did not realize that 'indispensible' is another word for 'essential' amino acids. They mixed it up with 'non essential' and for this reason they gave the definition of both.

d. Most candidates failed to answer this question correctly. The majority of the students stated that LBV protein foods are healthier than HBV since they are plant sources. They failed to point out that a combination of LBV foods should be eaten together to supply all the essential amino acids. Some students stated that LBV foods should be eaten together with HBV foods. However, this was still an incorrect answer to the question presented. The most common correct example was baked beans on toast.

e. The most popular population groups with higher protein requirements were pregnant women, children and adolescents. Correct reasons were also listed to compliment these answers. The most common incorrect answers for this question were vegetarians/vegans and elderly people.

Question 6: Coronary Heart Disease (CHD)

a. The majority of candidates indicated age, family history and being a male as risk factors of CHD that cannot be prevented. Others listed the same answer as that of question 6a)ii. Some students did not really understand the latter question since instead of risk factors, ways how to prevent CHD were listed.

b. When they had to identify the substance attached to the inside of the artery, a lot of students gave a correct answer. Although the picture shown was very clear some thought that it resembles the intestines and not an artery.

c. Mixed answers were listed to describe the role of omega 3 and vitamin E in the diet. The most popular answers were to lower blood cholesterol and prevent diseases or for healthy eyes respectively.

d. For this question students' performance was quite good. Most candidates listed correct dietary measures that need to be followed by a person suffering from CHD. However, some mixed up the answers of dietary and non-dietary measures.

e. Most of the meals identified for a person suffering from CHD were correct. Most of the students included chicken or fish as part of the meal. The majority of the reasons for choice were very brief.

Question 7: The consumer and budgeting

a. When it came to defining the term consumer, the majority gave a correct answer.

b. Students identified different consumer rights, the most common ones being, 'the right to safe products', 'the right to accurate information and labelling', and 'the right to return damaged goods'. A substantial number of candidates failed to mention a correct consumer responsibility. The most known responsibilities were 'to pay for goods/services' and 'to not lose the receipt or guarantee'.

c. When they had to name and explain factors that need to be kept in mind when planning a budget, the most common factors were – to calculate the income, the expenses and to save money for emergencies. Most students also commented on the importance of saving money for electricity bills.

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d. The majority managed to identify correct ways of saving money when shopping for food. The answers varied from buying in bulk, shopping from discount stores, looking for special offers, writing a shopping list, making use of a loyalty card and making use of a cloth bag to avoid paying for one.

e. The answers for this question were mostly correct and students managed to identify different methods of payment.

f. Only a few candidates knew what a term deposit account is and how it can help people to save money. Thus, the majority of the answers to this question were incorrect. Students did not realize that a term deposit account is a fixed account. This is because they described a fixed account in question 7g) as a way of investing. The most common ways of investing money were life assurance plans, bonds and shares.

Question 8: The well-being of children and persons with special needs

a. Candidates did very well in this part of the exam. On the whole, they all gave good examples of ways how parents can provide social, emotional and physical well-being to their children.

b. Nearly all candidates were able to give a correct definition to the term 'specific learning difficulty'.

c, d) Candidates performed well in this question. A variety of difficulties which Sarah's parents may face as a result of her specific learning difficulties were identified. Most candidates described correct ways how Sarah's friends and her sister can help her in class and at home during homework.

2.3 PAPER 2B

Question 1: Factors influencing choice of home

a. This question did not pose any major difficulties to the students. They managed to give two reasons why natural lighting is important in a home. Two common answers were 'to save energy so reduce cost of electricity bill' and 'to see well'.

b. Nearly all students managed to list valid reasons why the location of a house is important for the well-being of the family.

c. Mainly all candidates answered correctly to this question. A common mistake was that some were not able to remember the correct name for the intercom but still gave a good description of the equipment.

Question 2: Senior citizens in society

a. i) The majority of the candidates came up with valid examples of different works a senior citizen can carry to remain active in the community. Voluntary work was among the most popular answer.

a. ii) This question proved not to be difficult since a lot of students listed that grandparents could help in the upbringing of children.

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b. A good percentage of students gave a valid description of the given services for the elderly. However, a common mistake was that candidates tended to confuse the Home Care Help with the MMDNA service.

c. In general, students did not find it difficult to answer this question.

Question 3: Environmental Awareness

A good percentage of students answered correctly to all parts of this question. Some of the students however failed to mention the correct use of organic waste in the home.

Question 4: Saving energy in the home

a. Most candidates managed to complete this fill-in the blank exercise hence gain full marks.

b. Not all students were capable to mention draught extruders as a way to get rid of draught passing through doors. When asked to come up with a solution of how one can create shade in the side garden and at the same time help to absorb CO₂ from the air, some only listed tents and umbrellas. Hence, they did not read the last part of the question well.

Question 5: Protein

a. Nearly all candidates knew the function of protein in the body. This however, does not apply to the next part of the question since only the high ability students were able to give the energy value provided by 1g of proteins.

b. Some candidates gave the definition of the abbreviation HBV instead of listing another name for HBV proteins as asked in this question. A good percentage of candidates gave valid examples of HBV proteins in the next part of this question.

d. Most students found it difficult to state another name for LBV protein foods and list appropriate examples.

e. Students found it quite difficult to identify a correct population group with higher protein requirements. The most common correct answer was 'teenagers'. However, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers were rarely identified.

Question 6: Coronary Heart Disease (CHD)

a. b) Most candidates failed to underline all the four correct answers.

Quite a few candidates mentioned cholesterol as the substance that blocks the arteries which is caused by eating too much saturated fat.

c. Students did not perform so well when answering this question. They did not manage to identify correct reasons why a person suffering from heart disease should stop smoking, do regular exercise, maintain a healthy body weight and take leisure time.

d,e. When it came to listing healthier alternatives to different fatty foods, most candidates did very well. However, a lot did not list appropriate healthier alternative for BBQ chicken wings, fresh cream and grilled Maltese sausage. There were students who listed suitable food items instead of cooking methods in question ii.

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f. A lot of healthy meals were listed which help reduce CHD and somewhat correct reasons were provided. Some students listed a dessert instead of a starter.

Question 7: The Consumer and Budgeting

a, b) The majority, defined the term 'consumer' correctly. Most students also named and explained one consumer right and one responsibility.

c. The term 'newly-weds' confused a few students in this question. This is because instead of naming factors newly-weds should consider when planning their monthly budget, they listed ways how to reduce the cost when planning a wedding. On the other hand, some managed to give correct answers.

d. When it came to describing ways how to reduce costs when shopping for food, the most common acceptable answers were to buy from discount stores, make a shopping list, use discount cards and take a cloth bag.

e. Students found it a bit difficult to list other ways which might help couples to save money, apart from the ones listed above.

f. The most known methods of payment were by cash or cheque.

h. A good number of students were not familiar with the terms, 'term deposit account' and 'private pension plan'. Thus they did not identify how this can help couples to save money and plan for future needs.

Question 8: The well-being of children and persons with special needs

a. Overall the majority of the candidates scored well in this question. They gave varied examples how parents can provide emotional and physical well-being to their children.

b. Quite a few incorrect answers were given for this question. Most students did not provide a correct explanation for the term 'specific learning difficulty'. Some candidates did not even attempt this question. Different feelings and emotions that can be experienced by parents of children with specific learning difficulties were listed. A majority of the candidates managed to get two or more correct answers for this question.

c. Most of the students also gave good examples of how Sarah's friends could help her in class. Some common correct answers were; help Sarah take notes, guide her when she faces difficulties and show her how to be organised. A good number of candidates also managed to list at least one local agency which offers support for persons with special needs.

**Chairperson
Board of Examiners
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