

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
SEC

HOME ECONOMICS

May 2007

EXAMINERS' REPORT

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS BOARD

**SEC HOME ECONOMICS
MAY 2007 SESSION
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Part 1: Statistical Information

Table 1 below shows the distribution of grades for the May 2007 session of the examination.

Table 1: Distribution of grades awarded for the May 2007 session

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	Abs	Total
Paper A	26	107	125	78	20	-	-	25	1	382
Paper B	-	-	-	73	123	72	32	44	6	350
Total	26	107	125	151	143	72	32	69	7	732
% of Total	3.6	14.6	17.1	20.6	19.5	9.8	4.4	9.4	1	100%

Part 2: Comments regarding the candidates' performance**2.1 General comments**

The examination consisted of two parts:

Part I: Written papers consisting of Paper I (Food, Nutrition and Health) and Paper 2.

Part II: Coursework including Portfolio, Investigation and Two practical assignments.

For a pass at Grade 5 or better, the minimum mark required for the written papers was 45% of 60 (i.e. 27) as Paper I and Paper 2 each carry 30% of the total marks of the examination. The coursework minimum mark required was 45% of 40 (i.e. 18). It should be noted that 28 (3.9%) candidates would have been awarded Grade 5, but they qualified for Grade 6 or 7 as they did not manage to get the minimum mark required in either coursework or papers or both.

2.2 General Comments about candidates' answers in Paper 1, 2A and 2B

The standard of English used by some candidates is still rather poor. Students should give more attention to spelling, and uses of verbs. Some students still resort to using Maltese. This should be discouraged, particularly when a full sentence is written in Maltese. Some candidates failed to read the questions well and this led to incorrect or very confusing answers. Some students (in Paper 2B) did not attempt to answer all the questions. Candidates are encouraged to answer in simple English, and answer to the point. Full answers require more than one word answers, if candidates aim to achieve the highest mark possible.

2.3 Comments about candidates' answers to Paper 1

Candidates were required to answer all ten questions. The majority of the candidates attempted to answer all the questions. This shows that they were familiar with the syllabus.

Question 1 This question dealt with food choices and cooking for the family.

- a. Several candidates gave answers related to meal planning and nutrition in general.
- b. Some candidates placed the emphasis on "daily home cooked meals" rather than on "eating together."
- c. Surprisingly a number of candidates were unable to suggest an example of a dish that was rich in calcium, in protein or in both calcium and protein. Some wrongly suggested cream as a way of ensuring sufficient calcium.
- d. The space provided for answering this question was insufficient. Candidates did not focus on how the listed topics influenced food choices but gave general comments instead. For example for "Supermarkets special offers" they replied that "they save money".

Question 2 This question was related to a traditional soup, 'Soppa ta' l-Armla' and a popular Maltese snack 'Qassatat ta' l-irkotta'.

Most candidates answered part (ai) correctly but some failed to name the proper vitamin or mineral for the green vegetables given in (i). Only a few candidates gave incorrect nutrients and functions for cheeselets and eggs (iii). For part (b) of the question, some candidates mentioned ham or bacon as a healthy ingredient that could be added to the filling of 'qassatat', which was marked as incorrect due to the amount of saturated fat, sodium and additives contained in the ingredient. Most candidates answered (ii) and (iii) correctly. In part (iii), only few candidates marked more than three ingredients from the given list or marked the same type of ingredient more than once, such as broad beans and red kidney beans.

Question 3 This question was about processed foods.

- a. Candidates were quite knowledgeable on food additives and their possible ill-effects on health. The majority cited added sugar, salt and fat as additives to avoid.
- b. Most candidates were able to suggest the best choice when the use of processed food was necessary.
- c. Almost all chose the muffin as being the healthiest food choice. Few however were able to suggest a suitable alternative snack. It is possible that some candidates did not know the meaning of the word "alternative".
- d. Very few candidates gave good examples of sensible use of processed food.

Question 4 This question was related to diabetes and dental care.

In part (a), the majority of candidates gave a poor definition of diabetes. Some mentioned that an individual "cannot take sugar" or that "a person suffers from sugar". When asked about the reason for the increase of type 2 diabetes in children in part (b), some candidates

failed to mention that the over-consumption of snack foods, (both high sugar and high fats), lack of physical exercise and being overweight/obese will also contribute to this type of diabetes. The majority of candidates gave correct answers for parts (c) and (d).

Question 5 This question dealt with the use of a Pressure Cooker and a Food Processor.

- a. (i) A few candidates confused the pressure cooker with a microwave cooker. Most gave all the requested advantages of a pressure cooker.
- (ii) Some candidates gave the name of a food e.g. meat, instead of a dish suitable to be cooked in a pressure cooker e.g. meat stew.
- (iii) Approximately half of the candidates knew about the safe use of a pressure cooker.
- b. Several gave the name of a dish that can be made using a food processor instead of the task e.g. sponge instead of whisking.

Question 6 This question was related to coeliac disease.

Most candidates fared well in this question. Part (a) of the question was answered correctly by the majority of candidates, but very few gained a mark for (b). Some failed to read the question well and were misled by the coeliac symbol found on the products that are gluten-free. Part (c) was answered well by those candidates who really knew what the condition is all about. There were some who suggested chicken pie as a main course, others a fruit flan as a dessert. Both were incorrect as candidates failed to mention that the type of flour to be used was gluten-free.

Question 7 This question dealt with calcium in the diet of a variety of people.

- a. Nearly all candidates knew that calcium formed an integral part of bones and teeth. Few mentioned that the body draws calcium from the bones and teeth when it is in short supply in the blood stream. A number of candidates mistakenly said that calcium helps in the absorption of vitamin D thus reversing the function of vitamin D
- b. Answered correctly by most candidates.
- c. Several candidates mentioned cream and eggs as food rich in calcium. This springs from the fact that the cream and eggs together with other calcium rich food form part of the dairy products group of food. In fact some gave dairy products as an example. Some quoted cereal without referring to the milk that is served with it. Others named bread as one of the food rich in calcium referring to the fact that in the UK flour fortified with calcium is available. This is not the case in Malta.
- d. Nearly all candidates were aware of the reason for calcium requirement of a pregnant woman.
- e. Candidates frequently gave the same examples of food rich in calcium for vegetarian pregnant women and lactating women.

Question 8 This question was about microwave ovens and electric steamers.

Candidates did well in parts (a) and (b) but some mentioned unsuitable containers that could be used in microwave ovens (c). Parts (d) and (e) were answered correctly by most candidates, but a few failed to mention a suitable meal that could be cooked in a tiered steamer. Some meals that were mentioned were meat stew, vegetable pie and spaghetti. Some candidates did not keep in mind that chicken, meat or fish should be placed in the

bottom layer so as to avoid the food from dripping onto the vegetables. Very good meals were mentioned by some candidates, showing that the latter made use of such a steamer during their course of studies.

Question 9 This question dealt with Proteins.

- a. Most of the candidates were aware that protein is required for growth and repair; some mentioned that it can be used as a source of energy but did not indicate that this happened when taken in excess. Very few candidates explained that proteins are required for the formation of hormones and of anti-bodies and for fluid balance.
- b. Few could describe non-essential amino acids.
- c. Very few candidates could define complementary amino acids.
- d. Several candidates did not indicate the protein rich content of the dish giving "salad" instead of "salad with beans" or "custard" instead of "custard with Soya milk"
- e. Surprisingly, several candidates were unable to give examples of food of low biological value protein.

Question 10 This question focused on menu planning, eating disorders and healthy food choice.

Most candidates gave correct answers to part (a). Unfortunately, a relatively large number of candidates failed to identify anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa as two eating disorders. Obesity was mentioned by many candidates as being an eating disorder when in fact it is a nutritional disorder. Parts (c) and (d) were answered correctly by most candidates.

2.4 Candidates' answers in Paper 2A and Paper 2B

The questions in Paper 2A and Paper 2B had common themes. The candidates had to answer all eight questions i.e. five questions in Section A and three questions in Section B.

Paper 2 A

Question 1 This question dealt with washing machines and laundry work.

- a. (i) (ii) The majority of the students gave valid answers.
- b. (i) Some students equated the term biological with bio-degradable, whilst others did not give a complete answer e.g. contains enzymes/removes stains. In this case, students were awarded half a mark. However there were some students who did manage to give a good definition, specifying the use of enzymes to assist with the removal of protein stains.
- b. (ii) Several students answered this question correctly.
- c. Few students managed to get full marks here. Most students did not realise that they had to identify a textile item e.g. a nylon shirt. In most cases they just mentioned a type of clothing e.g. shirt. However, in the case of the 'dry cleaning' symbol and 'do not tumble dry' symbol, full marks were still awarded when students listed a suitable

type of garment without addressing the type of material for example: 'blazer', 'wedding dress', 'jacket' and 'quilt'.

A couple of students did not interpret well the 'dry cleaning' symbol. The use of solvent was mentioned without any reference to dry cleaning.

Question 2 This question was on Foodborne Illnesses.

- a. Many students left this question completely unanswered. There were few students who answered it all correctly; the majority of students *either* identified the food borne illnesses *or* the four practices. Of the latter, the majority had difficulty with identifying *four* different food borne illnesses.

Most students answered parts (b),(c) and (d). correctly.

Question 3 This question was about 'Alternative Energy'.

- a. Several correct answers were given here.
- b. Several students answered correctly. Others mentioned that we are running out of oil but failed to mention the ill-effects of oil on our environment.
- c. Several students were able to name four different types of renewable resources.
- d. For this question, there were a good number of correct answers but also several incorrect ones. Students need to be more aware of latest environment-friendly incentives available and to be encouraged to use familiar words such as grants, subsidies, rebates and refunds.

Question 4 This question was about families and the pressures they have to face.

- a. The majority of the students gave correct answers. Several students suggested reasonable ways of how to cope with family pressures however there were some students who gave unreasonable answers.
- b. Most students answered correctly.
- c. d. The majority of the students suggested suitable answers here.

Question 5 This question dealt with 'Waste Spearation' and 'Environmentally Friendly products'.

- a.(i), (ii), (iii).The majority of students answered these correctly.

b (i). Many students gave very vague (and therefore incorrect) answers in reply to this question (eg. "look for environment-friendly symbol", "see that it does not harm the environment"). More specific answers such as "a biological detergent" or "effective in cold water" were given the marks due.

b (ii). Most students answered this question correctly.

Question 6 This question was about a couple who both work and now have a new-born baby, and touched on Teenage Stress.

a. (i) Many students could not give the exact meaning of 'parental leave'.

a. (ii) Few were the students who could suggest two correct family-friendly measures.

a. (iii), (iv) Most students answered these questions correctly.

b. (i), (ii), (iii), c (i), (ii) Most students answered these questions correctly.

Question 7 This question was on 'Housing' including the prospect of buying a property.

a. Many students gave correct answers here. However, in some cases students seem to have some misconceptions. For example, several students equated the term first floor with ground floor.

b. Several students gave incomplete answers for which they were penalised, e.g. bedrooms, without stating the number of bedrooms and that children will eventually need more space as they grow up.

c. Few students got full marks here. Several students managed to name the ideal choice but did not justify their choice in full e.g. central... and that's it. There were some students who did not comprehend the question well since they mentioned the villages given for the location of the couple's job or parents rather than the location of the accommodations for sale.

d. Few students managed to acquire full marks in this question. Several students encountered difficulties when asked to list other kinds of expenses involved when purchasing a house.

e. Few students managed to get full marks here.

f. Several students gave correct answers here, however once again there were some misconceptions. Some students equated first floor with ground floor stating that the former would be ideal for grandma since it does not have any stairs.

g. Most students answered this question correctly.

h. Few students scored full marks here. Some mistakenly referred to security measures instead of safety measures.

i. Several students answered this question correctly.

Question 8 This question is about a housebound elderly lady, some shopping practices and the use of credit and loyalty cards.

- a. Whilst the majority of students answered this question correctly, it seems that quite a number did not know the meaning of 'Housebound'.
- b. As a result, those who answered question (a) correctly also answered (b) correctly, and vice versa.
- c. (i) Most students answered this question correctly. However a good number of them listed food as one of the items that could be purchased through Mail-order shopping.
- c. (ii) The majority of students had a good idea of the two means of shopping, however it was only a small percentage of students who gave enough of a comprehensive answer to warrant the full four marks.
- d. (i) Whilst a good percentage of the students gave the correct definition, a good number of students confused a credit card with a cash card.
- d. (ii) Most students answered this part correctly.
- e. There were few students who did not get full marks in this question.
- f (i) Whilst many students answered this question correctly a good number of others gave an answer which would have been appropriate for question (fii).
- f (ii) A good number of students misinterpreted 'take advantage' suggesting ways in which holders of loyalty cards could abuse of these cards. The remaining students answered correctly.
- g. Most students answered this question correctly.

Paper 2B

Question 1 Washing machines and laundry work.

- a. (i) Several students gave valid answers for this question.
- (ii) There were a good number of correct answers. However there were also several incorrect answers for such a simple question. Some students did not read the question carefully (e.g. many students listed actions that need not be done *before* loading the washing machine with the clothes).
- b. (i) A substantial number of students answered correctly. The rest did not comprehend the question well or lacked knowledge on biological detergents.
- (ii) A small number of students gave the correct definition of bleach.
- (iii) Many students answered this question correctly.

- c. Although this question was much simpler than the one given in Paper 2A, few students answered it correctly.

Question 2 This question was about Food Poisoning.

- a. A good number of students gave a correct answer, whilst there were others who could not identify four concrete points and gave long-winded (partially incorrect) answers. Some students left the question unanswered.
- b. Whilst many students answered this question correctly, others were not specific enough, saying that “bacteria” could “make you sick.”
- c. Many students knew that they needed to defrost chicken; some, however, said “in water”, or, others, “for a few minutes”. Many students did not mention the need to ensure that the chicken was well cooked.

Question 3 This question was about Alternative Energy.

Very few students scored full marks in this question. Several students scored half the marks or less. Moreover several students lacked knowledge about the incentives provided by the Maltese government for the consumers. Those students who managed to comprehend the term ‘incentive’ listed offers and discounts. Once again students need to be more acquainted with the terms grants, subsidies, rebates and refunds.

Question 4 This question was about Families and the pressures they have to face.

- a. Several students identified two different kinds of pressures. However not all managed to give reasonable suggestions of how a family can cope with these pressures.
- b. Several students seemed to lack knowledge of the definition of ‘quality time’.
- c. A good number of students answered correctly.
- d. Several students suggested an adequate support system. Others did not comprehend the question.

Question 5 This question dealt with “Waste Separation” and “Environmentally Friendly Products”.

- a. (i), (ii), (iii) Students who were knowledgeable on the topic answered all three questions correctly.
- a. (iv) Several students gave incorrect answers (e.g. fridge, washing machine, bed, oven)
- c. Most students answered this question correctly.

Question 6 This question was about families: a working mother with a new born baby; how the family can help in the situation. This question was also on “Teenage Stress”.

- a. (i) Most students answered this question correctly.
- a. (ii) Many students answered this question incorrectly. They wrote about ‘sick leave’ and ‘leave’ and not about family-friendly measures.
- a. (iii) Students either answered this question completely correctly or else totally incorrectly, having misunderstood its meaning.
- b. (i), (ii), (iii), c, d (i) Most students answered correctly.
- d. (ii) Many students just suggested a way of tackling **one** of the sources of stress mentioned in *d (i)*.

Question 7 This question was about “Housing” and buying a property.

- a. Several students managed to give some correct answers. However, once again several students failed to distinguish between a first floor maisonette and a ground floor. Some students stated that a one-car garage is a disadvantage. This was not accepted since only the Balzan accommodation had a garage inclusive in its price and is actually an asset. The corner feature was most of the times perceived as a drawback.
- b. Several students did not comprehend this question or gave incomplete answers.
- c. The majority of students failed to name correct ways of obtaining money for the maisonette. Few students mentioned a bank loan. Moreover several students did not list any adequate expenses involved when purchasing a property.
- d. Only a few students answered this question correctly.
- e. f. Most of the students suggested adequate answers here. However in some instances, there was a lot of repetition.
- g. Several, students were not clear about the safety considerations involved when planning a house.
- h. In most cases, students identified correctly different kinds of security measures.

Question 8 This question dealt with modern shopping practices, and the use of debit and loyalty cards.

- a, b(i), b(ii) Most students answered these questions correctly.
- c. (i) Many students failed to mention that money is taken from the card holder’s bank account. Others even confused it with a credit card.

- c (ii). Most students answered this question correctly.
- c (iii). A substantial number of students referred to the PIN as a password.
- d. Many students were not clear about the use of a loyalty card.
- e (i), (ii), (iii). Many students answered these questions correctly.

Part 3: Coursework

This year, moderation of candidates' coursework was conducted in thirteen schools in addition to marking the Private Candidates' work. A number of the schools presented the candidates' coursework and included the full component i.e. portfolio investigation, and practical assignments. However several schools still failed to present the breakdown of the marks clearly. It is impossible for the examiners to moderate coursework if the Preparation sheets and the Evaluations are not presented with an attached sheet showing the marks obtained for the various criteria established by the SEC syllabus. This situation makes it very difficult to adequately conduct moderation procedures.

We have kept records on the coursework of the students in the schools we have moderated. At a later stage feedback based on these records will be sent to these schools from the MATSEC office.

3.1 The Practical Component

We repeat that it is of utmost importance that the full Preparation Sheets and the Evaluation are presented. In many cases the moderators had to request these from the teachers concerned, resulting in loss of time as these teachers were either giving lessons or were not available as they worked part-time. Some schools presented the complete works, others had a few available, whilst others had nothing to present at all.

All preparation sheets have to be detailed. For example the list including the amount of all ingredients used, as otherwise one cannot gauge if the current dietary recommendations are being followed, and in some cases they are not. We came across some ingredients used by students which do not conform to the Healthy Guidelines. Examples of these are salt, fresh cream, condensed cream, salami, lard and stock cubes. Unfortunately we came across instances in a few schools where, for their practical assignment, all the students included full amounts of fat for cakes, no trace of wholemeal flour anywhere and full cream used for fillings – a clear indication that by Form 5 not one of these students had any idea of the Current Dietary Recommendations. This clearly shows that there is still a lot to be done to fulfil all that the SEC Syllabus involves, and of course, all this for the students' benefit to achieve the highest marks possible for their hard work. The examples given above show the importance of detailed Full Practical Assignment sheets together with the Evaluation sheets that are to be handed in to moderators for moderation.

3.2 The Portfolio and Investigation

In some schools the portfolios and investigations were very well presented and of a good standard. They included the necessary three investigative techniques. However, in some schools only two investigative techniques were presented. The overall level presented by the various schools differed widely. Some schools presented very good work and the teachers marked the students' work very well. Others presented work that was superficial and marks given were too high. This is quite unfair on those students who work very hard and present very good work. Constant monitoring of the students' work should be carried out to ensure that the adequate standard is being reached.

At this point we ask all schools to help moderators do their moderation work well by posting them in a room which is rather private, and which includes a big table or a number of desks for the work of each student to be well spread out, as otherwise it is impossible to carry out a good job and ensure that each student be given the full number of marks she/he deserves. All moderators inform the schools beforehand about the date when they will visit a particular school. Should this date clash with some school activity that makes it impossible to provide such a room to work in, then another date should be suggested. It is of utmost importance that all teachers follow the correct SEC Syllabus for that particular year. We came across cases where this year 2007, the 2008 syllabus had been followed to the detriment of the students.

The work presented by some private students is still on the whole below the required standard. Unfortunately several private students do not carry out the practical component of the coursework. This is a great pity.

Chairperson
Board of Examiners
July 2007