



L-Università  
ta' Malta

MATSEC  
Examinations Board



# Examiners' Report

## SEC HOME ECONOMICS

Main Session 2024

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## A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered to sit for Home Economics was **365**. Of these registrations, **206** opted for **Paper IIA** and **159** opted for **Paper IIB**.

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the Main 2024 session of the examination.

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	ABS	TOTAL
PAPER A	29	42	63	34	15	-	-	21	2	206
PAPER B	-	-	-	29	15	39	30	29	17	159
TOTAL	29	42	63	63	30	39	30	50	19	365
% OF TOTAL	7.9	11.5	17.3	17.3	8.2	10.7	8.2	13.7	5.2	100.0

*Table 1: distribution of grades for SEC Home Economics 2024, Main Session*

### General Remarks on Coursework

The candidates were expected to present two practical assignments carried out under time-controlled conditions and an investigation that contributed to 30% of the global mark.

## B. GENERAL REMARKS

### General Remarks on the Written Examination

#### Paper I

##### Question 1

- A good number of candidates were able to explain the term digestion with a number of them explaining that digestion includes both mechanical and chemical breakdown of food as well as the absorption by the body.
- The majority of the candidates managed to clearly explain the roles of the given parts in the digestive process.
- Candidates' performance in this question was poor. Only few candidates managed to identify correctly three valid enzymes produced by the pancreas.
- A good number of candidates just named the various enzymes rather than provided an outline of the role they have in the digestive process.
- Most candidates correctly named the fluid produced by the liver.
- A significant number of candidates were able to suggest valid ways how to maintain a healthy digestive system.

##### Question 2

- The majority of the candidates did not find any difficulty in identifying two ways how one can ensure that the food bought is fresh and safe to eat.
- Most candidates provided at least one correct answer for this question with the most common answer written was to store the food bought at the correct temperature.

- c. Most candidates correctly named the food poisoning bacteria associated with the consumption of undercooked chicken.
- d. The majority of the candidates were able to identify the correct symptoms of food poisoning.
- e. This part of the question about the practical ways how to reduce the risk of food poisoning during a barbeque posed a challenge for most candidates.
- f. Most candidates correctly outlined food safety tips to follow when defrosting food.

### Question 3

- a. Candidates performed well in this question about the factors that influence adolescents when making some food choices.
- b. The majority of candidates managed to suggest correct health problems associated with high consumption of take-away foods. Many candidates managed to obtain the marks allotted to this question.
- c. Responses indicate that some candidates found this question challenging. Some responses incorrectly suggested eating out in restaurants or hiring a private chef.
- d. Most of the candidates managed to describe correctly at least one dietary change to reduce high blood pressure. The most common answers given for this part were avoiding stock cubes as well as avoiding salt when cooking.

### Question 4

- a. The general performance of the candidates in this question was adequate. Most candidates were able to define convenience foods.
- b. A good number of candidates obtained high marks by identifying the different types of convenience foods and providing good examples.
- c. Many candidates managed to obtain the marks allotted to this question related to the advantages and disadvantages of using convenience foods.
- d. A small number of candidates performed poorly as the attempt to describe valid ways how a couple can make informed food choices to maintain a balanced diet despite relying on convenience foods was inadequate.

### Question 5

- a. Most candidates were able to identify an important characteristic when buying fresh fish.
- b.
  - i. Most candidates identified correctly the advantages of buying fish in season.
  - ii. The majority listed the steps to follow when freezing fish correctly.
  - iii. Many candidates suggested suitable dishes that could be prepared using the frozen Dorado fish. The most common dishes suggested were Fish Soup and Lampuki Pie.
- c. Only a few candidates were awarded all the marks to this question. A significant percentage of candidates were able to identify a valid effect of canning or vacuum packing on the fish. However, responses indicate that it was challenging for most candidates to explain why the canning and vacuum packing is carried out.

### Question 6

- a. Most candidates answered this part of the question correctly. Some described constipation well, including its causes, but the attempt to provide a valid description and cause for haemorrhoids and

diverticular disease was poor. Often, these candidates provided answers unrelated to fibre and water intake.

- b. Some candidates provided valid ways for preparing rock buns and a packed lunch to reduce the risk of constipation. However, responses indicate that others did not comprehend the question. Instead of suggesting practical ways to reduce constipation, they explained methods to reduce fibre intake. Additionally, a common incorrect answer was to use margarine instead of butter.

#### Question 7

- a. Most candidates managed to identify strong plain flour or wholemeal flour as the correct type of flour for yeast dough.
- b. Varied reasons were given for why this flour should be used. However, most candidates did not mention its high gluten content.
- c. Most candidates correctly suggested two important rules for using yeast. Giving the yeast enough time to ferment and ensuring the water is lukewarm were the most common answers.
- d. Some candidates performed poorly.
- e. Describing the scientific principles proved to be the most challenging aspect of this question.
- f. Most candidates correctly identified the use of hot water as the main reason why the yeast dough would not rise.
- g. Responses indicate that some candidates misunderstood what was expected. Rather than suggesting quick alternatives that can be used as a pizza base instead of yeast dough, they suggested three different pizza toppings.

#### Question 8

- a. Candidates performed quite well in this question, with most explaining valid benefits of consuming milk.
- b. Most candidates provided correct reasons for milk to be pasteurized.
- c. A good number of candidates correctly identified important points to keep in mind when buying fresh milk.
- d. Most candidates successfully suggested one type of milk for each of the given situations.

#### Question 9

- a. Some candidates' attempt to identify what triggers coeliac disease was inadequate. Instead, only mentioning an intolerance to wheat products.
- b. Most candidates outlined correctly the symptoms of coeliac disease.
- c. The majority of the candidates listed correctly four foods that need to be avoided in the diet of a person who suffers from coeliac disease.
- d. Many candidates failed to mention that prolonged consumption of gluten-rich foods damages the lining of the intestines preventing the absorption of other nutrients by the body. Some students only stated that the intestines are irritated, while others misunderstood the question and repeated the symptoms.
- e. Most candidates provided adequate suggestions on how a person suffering from coeliac disease can plan meals for the whole family.

- f. Most candidates gave a valid outline how a person with coeliac disease can still attend social events, such as a birthday party.

#### Question 10

- a. Almost all candidates answered correctly. The most common reasons given were 'being a quick method', 'giving a good flavour to food' and 'plenty of food can be successfully fried giving a good texture'.
- b. Candidates performed well in this question, most provided valid alternative healthy cooking methods for the given foods that are usually fried.
- c. Most candidates suggested three valid advantages of buying and using a compact grill.
- d. Most foods suggested by the candidates were good to be cooked successfully in a compact grill.
- e. A good number of candidates listed barbeque and grilling as the ideal method for cooking tough cuts of meat, instead of referring to a moist cooking method. These were marked incorrect. Some candidates suggested correct modern cooking methods, such as, sous vide.

### Paper 2A

#### Question 1

- a. Many of the candidates performed well in this question. Most candidates effectively suggested three factors that could harm an unborn child, with the majority citing smoking, alcohol intake, and drug abuse.
- b. Most responses indicate appropriate understanding when explaining the purpose of attending appointments at the well-baby clinic post-birth.
- c. Many candidates gave valid reasons for immunising babies and children.
- d. The majority of the candidates accurately described ways in which parents can promote healthy eating habits in babies and toddlers.
- e. A good number of candidates successfully suggested two suitable methods for working parents to manage childcare responsibilities when their child is unwell. The most commonly correct answers included seeking assistance from relatives or friends and taking leave from work.
- f. A few candidates misinterpreted the question, instead discussing the importance of visiting a doctor or eating healthy food.

#### Question 2

- a. When defining the term "budgeting," most responses only mentioned the importance of managing the money being spent. However, they often did not emphasize the necessity of prioritizing needs over wants or the importance of saving a portion of the income.
- b. Pocket money and stipend were the most commonly identified correct sources of income for a full-time student provided as answers by the majority of the candidates.
- c. A good number of candidates correctly suggested a savings account as a suitable bank account for a student to deposit his income.
- d. Most candidates were unable to provide appropriate reasons for choosing a savings account.
- e. The majority of candidates were able to give reasons why it is important to start saving money.
- f. Most candidates were able to suggest appropriate strategies to avoid over-spending, such as buying only what is necessary, sticking to a shopping list, and checking the prices of items.

### Question 3

- a. The majority of the candidates scored very well in this question. Most were able to suggest two appropriate positive implications of enjoying meals with family and friends, typically mentioning socializing, and spending more quality time together.
- b. Candidates often outlined appropriate benefits that regular sport has on the body and mind, frequently referring to maintaining a healthy body weight, increasing fitness levels, and reducing stress.
- c.
  - i. When identifying sources of stress for teenagers, the most commonly mentioned factors were, family problems, difficulties with studies, and examinations.
  - ii. Most candidates were able to list at least two correct ways to manage stress, such as speaking to professionals, family, or friends, and planning ahead.

### Question 4

- a. Responses indicate that a significant number of candidates encountered some difficulties to answer the first part of this question appropriately. However, most candidates correctly stated the uses of bleach and fabric conditioner.
- b. A good number of candidates' attempt to identify two correct characteristics of environmentally friendly laundry detergents was inadequate.
- c. Responses indicate that most candidates found it challenging to draw the four different care labelling symbols, resulting in full marks being rarely awarded.
- d. The majority of the candidates scored well in the last part of this question, where they had to outline things to consider before buying a tumble drier.

### Question 5

- a. The majority of the candidates performed well in this question.
- b. Most candidates correctly identified the advantages and disadvantages of both types of freezers.
- c. Some candidates provided responses that were intended for question (d).
- d. Only a few candidates managed to achieve full marks. The most common correct answers were to open the freezer as little as possible and to pack and label all food correctly.
- e. Most candidates were able to identify three correct dishes which could be prepared in advance and frozen, with the most common answers being different sauce, lasagna, chili and stews.
- f. Responses indicate poor knowledge on the blanching process. Several candidates opted to describe the process of freezing green peppers without referring to the blanching of this vegetable.
- g. The majority of the candidates did very well and mostly obtained the full marks when suggesting suitable recipes when using frozen green peppers, with the most common answers being as a side salad to different types of meat, in wraps and also in chili or tacos. Answers which were too vague were not accepted e.g. as a snack or boiled.
- h. A good number of candidates were able to justify the purpose of blanching, however a very common error was that rather than referring to the enzyme activity, the reason they gave was to kill bacteria.

### Question 6

- a. In general, candidates did quite well in this question. At the beginning, most candidates were able to mention other difficulties which the elderly men may face, with the most common answers being going up and down the stairs and doing other daily activities, such as cooking and showering.
- b. Some candidates performed poorly since rather than suggesting what can be provided to these people, they wrote what the people who lack mobility can do.
- c. Most candidates answered this part of the question correctly. The most common answers were that hand-rails should be installed, bathrooms can be adapted with walk in showers and that the rooms should be out of clutter to ensure that the wheelchair can pass by.
- d. Candidates were less confident when suggesting how the elderly person can get help to buy a stair lift. A good number mentioned that the government can help, however they were not specific about who can help them. Few candidates also suggested that the person can buy a second-hand 'lifter', since this was still a good answer for the question presented, it was also accepted as a valid response. There were a number of answers which were not accepted, including that of getting a loan and asking family members to buy it.
- e. This question posed a difficulty for a number of candidates. Most gave answers related to elderly people rather than to people with a disability. A number also mentioned different entities and not actual services offered by the state, and therefore couldn't be accepted as a correct answer. Some of the most common correct answers were the disabled parking spaces and the disability card.
- f. Most candidates performed very well on this question by suggesting activities in which elderly people can participate within their local community. The most common valid answers were to attend local council activities and church activities such as Bingo, prayer spaces and food fairs. Some answers could not be accepted as they could not be considered as local/community events e.g. going for a walk.
- g. When candidates were asked about advantages and disadvantages of elderly people living in a home versus living in a residential home, it was evident that they were quite knowledgeable about this and in fact most candidates obtained the full mark. The most common advantage for living in a private home was that the person would have all the privacy as opposed to living in a residential home. On the other hand, the most common disadvantage mentioned for living in a private home was that if something happens, the person would not have any help, as opposed to living in a residential home where carers and nurses would be more available.
- h. Responses indicate poor performance when outlining the services offered to elderly, most answers lacked detail and therefore the full marks could not be awarded. Two common mistakes noted were that Telecare was mixed up with free telephone service.
- i. The performance of most candidates in the final part of the question was very poor. The attempt to explain the grant and say who can benefit from the Senior Citizen Grant was inadequate. Mostly all those who attempted this question mixed the grant with the elderly pension.

### Question 7

- a. A good number of candidates gave valid reasons why it is important to separate waste at source, with the most common answer being that of facilitating the sorting process and to recover more waste for recycling.

- b. Most candidates were also able to justify the importance of living with a green frame of mind, with the most common answers being to reduce pollution and to have a cleaner environment.
- c. Most candidates did also very well in suggesting ways how to be more environmentally friendly when shopping, the majority mentioned the importance of taking a shopping bag, buying products with less packaging and choosing items with recycled materials. Some answers were not accepted because they were not about buying their groceries, e.g. recycle the packaging.
- d. A good number of candidates were able to mention two items which can be refilled, with the most common answers being water and detergents. Some fewer common answers were pens and nuts.
- e. In general, almost all candidates who attempted this part of the question were able to suggest three ways to use old clothes. The most common answers were to donate them, use the blue recycling clothes bin and hand them down to relatives.
- f.
  - i. A good majority of the candidates answered correctly and mentioned the local council and bulky refuse.
  - ii. Candidates who answered correctly were mostly also able to list another two items which can be disposed of the same way, and these included large appliances and furniture.
- g. The last part of the question focused on summer barbecues and ways of reducing waste. In general, the majority of the candidates did well and suggested ways how to be environmentally friendly for such events, with the most common answers being that reusable cutlery should be used and that one should clean after themselves.
- h. Most candidates also did well in this question by suggesting ways to reduce food waste. Common answers were to calculate well the portions of food, ask people what their likes and dislikes are, and cook food in batches. Many also mentioned the importance of keeping food as leftovers and cooking it another time. Some marks were deducted when candidates suggested how to dispose of the waste rather than how to avoid it, e.g. suggesting that the food is thrown in the organic or compost bin.
- i. The majority of the candidates identified correctly the white/organic bag to dispose of wilted vegetables.
- j. Most candidates were also able to mention two other items which go in the same bag, the most common items mentioned were different fruit and vegetables, egg shells and napkins.

## **Paper 2B**

### Question 1

- a. A good number of candidates performed well in this question. The majority were able to suggest two things that could harm the baby during pregnancy. Few candidates repeated the example given in the question, and thus marks were not awarded for those responses.
- b. A significant number of candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the importance of attending appointments at the well-baby clinic after giving birth.
- c.
  - i. Most candidates were familiar with the importance of immunising babies and children during the first few years.
  - ii. Responses indicate that many candidates did not know that the abbreviation MMR.
- d. When describing how to develop healthy eating habits in babies and toddlers, most candidates provided appropriate examples.

- e. Most candidates successfully suggested an appropriate healthy lunch for a pre-schooler.
- f. Most candidates provided a good reason for their choice of a healthy lunch. However, marks were not allocated when candidates listed orange juice without referring to the importance of using fresh fruit.

#### Question 2

- a. Only few candidates managed to fill in the blanks appropriately to provide a good definition of the term 'budgeting'.
- b. Most candidates were able to identify other sources of income for full-time students, apart from the monthly stipend, commonly mentioning pocket money and money earned from a part-time job.
- c. Responses indicate that most candidates found it difficult to give an appropriate reason why a savings account is suitable for a student.
- d. When asked about the importance of saving money, most candidates referred to the importance of saving for a rainy day or saving up for something expensive.
- e. Most candidates were able to suggest appropriate ways to avoid over-spending.

#### Question 3

- a. A good number of candidates demonstrated appropriate knowledge in this question and managed to suggest two advantages of enjoying meals with family and friends. However, some candidates repeated the example given in the question, resulting in no marks being awarded for those responses.
- b. Most candidates outlined at least two correct benefits that regular sport has on the body and mind, but some repeated the example of losing weight given in the question, which also led to marks not being awarded.
- c. i. Most candidates listed appropriate sources of stress for teenagers.
- d. ii. Most candidates provided correct ways how teenagers can manage stress effectively.

#### Question 4

- a. Most candidates appropriately identified the use of bleach and fabric conditioner when doing laundry.
- b. The most common correct answer was choosing detergents that contain the least amount of packaging.
- c. Most candidates achieved full marks, but some either left the question out completely or attempted only a part of it.
- d. The majority of the candidates performed well in the last part of the question.

#### Question 5

- a. A good number of candidates managed to list some relevant factors that need to be considered when choosing kitchen appliances.
- b. Most candidates labelled the different freezers appropriately.
- c. Most candidates identified correct advantages and disadvantages of both chest and upright freezers.
- d. Some candidates found this part of the question challenging.
- e. Most candidates performed well in this question.

- f. Most candidates were able to identify two correct dishes which could be prepared in advance and frozen.
- g. Responses indicate that some candidates were less knowledgeable about the blanching process and quite a number opted to describe the process of freezing green peppers without referring to the blanching of this vegetable.
- h. Most candidates did very well and mostly obtained the full marks when suggesting suitable recipes when using frozen green peppers, with the most common answers being as a side salad to different types of meat, in wraps and also in chili or tacos. Answers which were too vague were not accepted e.g. as a snack.
- i. A good number of candidates were able to select the correct temperature of freezers.

#### Question 6

- a. The majority of the candidates performed quite well in this question. Most mentioned difficulties which the elderly men may face, with the most common answers being going up and down the stair and doing other daily activities such as cooking and showering.
- b. A good number of candidates provided correct suggestions to the amendments to the different rooms in the maisonette. The most common answers were that hand-rails should be installed and that the rooms should be out of clutter to ensure that the wheelchair can pass by.
- c. Responses indicate that the majority of the candidates were less confident when suggesting how the elderly person can get help to buy a stair lift., while a good number mentioned that the government can help, they were not specific about who can help them.
- d. The next part of this question seemed to have posed a difficulty because a number of candidates gave answers related to elderly people rather than to people with a disability. A good number of candidates also mentioned different entities and not actual services offered by the state, and therefore no marks were awarded. Some of the most common correct answers given by some candidates were the disabled parking spaces and the disability card.
- e. Most candidates did very well in this part of the question by suggesting activities which elderly people can take part in in their local community. The most common valid answers were to attend local council activities and church activities.
- f. When candidates were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of elderly people living in a home versus living in a residential home, it was evident that they were knowledgeable about this and most candidates obtained the full mark.
- g. A good number of candidates performed inadequately when outlining the services offered to elderly. Most answers lacked detail and therefore the full marks could not be awarded. Two common mistakes noted were that Telecare was mixed up with free telephone service and Day Care Centres were outlined as places where young children are taken care of.
- h. The performance of the majority of candidates was very poor.

#### Question 7

- a. A good number of candidates provided correct reasons why people should separate waste, with the most common answers being that it facilitates the recycling process and that this would reduce the amount of waste generated.

- b. Most candidates did well in the matching exercise and the majority were able to sort the given waste into the appropriate bag.
- c. Most candidates provided incorrect ways how a family can be environment friendly when doing their grocery shopping. While there were some very good responses, such as choosing products with minimal packaging; a number of candidates repeated what was already given in the question e.g. taking a cloth bag with them.
- d. Some candidates were able to provide the correct items which could be disposed of at the Civic Amenity Site. Responses indicate that some others did not know what this site is used for.
- e. Overall, candidates did well in giving examples of products which would be refilled with the most common answers being detergents and liquid soaps.
- f. Some candidates performed well in this question. There was an array of responses which ranged from using reusable containers and cutlery to cleaning the area where the barbeque is taking place.
- g. The majority of the candidates who attempted this question performed well.
  - i. Candidates were also able to provide different ways how to make use of leftover food. A good number managed to obtain all the marks. However, in some instances, some marks were deducted because the responses were not specific, or were repeated.
  - ii. Most of the candidates who attempted the second part were able to provide good examples how to minimize food waste. The most common answers were to avoid overcooking and to check the likes and dislikes of those who are coming to the barbeque.
- h. Many responses were out of point or not specific enough. Some answers included giving specific examples of items to recycle rather than suggesting how one can reduce, reuse and recycle.

### **C. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

A significant proportion of the candidates demonstrated adequate preparation for the examination. However, when confronted with questions that required the practical application of conceptual knowledge, many encountered difficulties, frequently offering responses that were not directly pertinent to the questions. This highlights the necessity of fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills among candidates, as the development of these competencies is essential for addressing more complex questions that demand a higher analytical thinking skills and abilities.

**Chairperson  
Examination Panel 2024**