

10 Tips to Help Candidates Pass

Level 4 Awards in Managing Food Safety

Having reviewed a large number of Level 4 papers, there are a number of factors that continually contribute to candidates failing to gain pass marks for this qualification.

Many candidates may be able to verbally produce information during their course or at work but when it comes to putting it down on paper they are unable to do themselves justice. For many the last time they sat an examination is many years ago and few will be used to writing for the length of time required in the examination. Wherever possible we suggest a mock examination under examination conditions is part of their course. A review of this may show up some of the weaknesses below which can be corrected before the 'real event'. Tests done at home rarely give a true reflection of the candidate's ability under exam pressure.

The following are all examples that frequently occur:

- 1. Answer all questions:** A number of candidates fail to answer all the questions. This immediately puts them at a distinct disadvantage as they will need to achieve higher marks on all the other questions to compensate. This rarely happens.
- 2. Time apportionment:** Each question states its allotted marks but frequently a candidate will write over twice as much for a question worth 10 marks than for one worth 5. Ideally they should allocate time per question based on the available marks and when they have answered all questions, spend extra time on questions they feel able to add further detail to.
- 3. Generalisations:** candidates often use terms such as 'the correct temperature', 'the right clothing' where a specific temperature could be quoted or a clothing description given. The general statement is unlikely to get marks whereas something specific will. Lack of answer detail is the main weakness in all candidates; they seem to expect the examiner to 'read in' all the underpinning information to their broad statements. Statements such as 'not feeling well' being a reason for not working with food gains no marks as it could just be a headache.
- 4. Read the question:** Candidates frequently do not read the question carefully enough and answer the question they think is being asked or they wish had been asked. Reading the whole paper carefully and highlighting the key words at the start of the exam often helps.
- 5. Correct number of examples:** If a question asks for a specific number of examples, credit will only be given for the number of examples given in the order written. If candidates give more than the requested number of examples, examiners will not select the best ones from all of the examples given and this means that better answers may not get marked. Leaving out examples instantly loses marks. There is nothing to stop candidates using lists or bullet points to ensure they get the numbers of examples correct.

6. **Legislation:** Food safety is controlled by a large amount of legislation which can be referred to in almost all answers. Frequently, unless specifically asked for, legislation will not be mentioned in any answer. For example, simply stating that the Due Diligence defence may be found in the Food Safety Act 1990 is likely to gain a mark.

7. **Keep to food safety:** Candidates often start quoting health and safety in answers to their questions especially with cleaning related questions. Although their answer is correct it does not relate to the topic of the examination so will probably get no marks.

8. **Wasted words:** We frequently see the question written out as the start of the answer. More often than not this is a waste of time and candidates should be encouraged to start writing the answer straight away.

9. **Lack of a holistic view:** This qualification is about managing food safety so it is expected that candidates will have some ability to relate specific parts of a manager's role that might be asked for in questions, to other things such as the company Food Safety Management Systems or HACCP. If the question relates to cleaning, they could easily mention that this is one of the pre-requisites of their FSMS. Such linking of information demonstrates that they have a breadth of understanding. Managing food safety is about managing the hazards that are likely to occur when handling food and wherever possible the evidence of understanding this should be brought into answers.

10. **Definitions:** Throughout food safety legislation there are a few definitions that it would benefit candidates to learn e.g. the Defence of Due Diligence or the layout design and construction of food premises requirements. Although writing out the definition may not be a requirement of the answer knowing it will assist in ensuring that a detailed answer is given. A candidate might be asked to identify a specific monitoring procedure at a CCP. A candidate who is able to *define* monitoring (either in Codex form or in their own words) demonstrates a better understanding than one who does not.
