Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

Leaving Certificate Applied Examination

2014

Chief Examiners' Report

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Assessment and certification in the Leaving Certificate Applied

The Leaving Certificate Applied is a single award based on a unified programme, rather than a set of grades achieved in discrete subjects. Candidates accumulate credits by three different routes over two years and are then certified on the basis of the total number of credits accumulated. Their certification gives the overall level of the award (*pass*, *merit* or *distinction*), as well as a detailed breakdown as to how the candidate's credits have been accumulated.

The programme of learning is modular. Each of the two years of the programme is divided into two sessions. Over these four sessions, students complete 44 modules (including 4 elective modules) in a range of courses across three broad curricular areas: *Vocational Preparation*, *Vocational Education*, and *General Education*. They also complete seven substantive *Student Tasks*, which are practical and/or reflective activities through which they integrate and apply their learning experiences.

A student can accumulate a maximum of 200 credits. The three means by which these credits are accumulated are: *satisfactory completion of modules*; the *student tasks*; and the *final examinations*. The receipt of credits for satisfactory completion of modules does not involve assessment by the State Examinations Commission. Candidates are awarded these credits once they meet the relevant criteria for attendance and completion of key assignments, as notified to the State Examinations Commission by schools and centres.

The student tasks and the final examinations are externally assessed by examiners appointed by the State Examinations Commission. Most of the final examinations involve several forms of assessment (written, aural, oral, practical skills tests, coursework). In the case of both the student tasks and any practical or coursework components of the final examinations, the school or centre authenticates that the work submitted is the candidate's own work and that it has been completed under supervision and in accordance with the regulations.

The 200 credits available are allocated as follows.

	Number of credits	Percentage
Satisfactory completion of 44 modules*	62	31%
7 student tasks at 10 credits each	70	35%
Final examinations	68	34%

*The 14 modules involved in the four non-examination courses, along with the four elective modules, each attract two credits. The remaining 26 modules (in courses that have final examinations) each attract one credit.

Based on the accumulated credit, the award is then made at one of three levels, as follows:

Pass	120 – 139 credits	(60 – 69.5%)
Merit	140 – 169 credits	(70 – 84.5%)
Distinction	170 – 200 credits	(85 – 100%)

Candidates who do not accumulate at least 120 credits do not gain the award but they do receive a record of credits obtained.

1.2 About this report

This report deals with the achievements of candidates graduating from the Leaving Certificate Applied in 2014. Statistical data on the performance of these candidates on the programme as a whole and on the individual elements of it are included. Comparative data for the preceding five years (2009 – 2013) are also included. The report also includes detailed commentary from the Chief Examiners of the various components of the programme that are externally assessed – the student tasks and the final examinations. This commentary is compiled on the basis of information and observations furnished by individual examiners when they report individually on what they have encountered in the course of their work.

In order to certify appropriately, the assessments conducted by the State Examinations Commission seek to establish the extent to which each candidate has met the aims and objectives of the learning programme concerned. In the case of the Leaving Certificate Applied, the purpose, aims, and assessment criteria for the student tasks are given in the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Task*s. The aims of the individual modules of the various courses examined in the final examinations are manifest in the sets of *learning outcomes* in the module descriptor documents. The final examinations, therefore, seek to establish the extent to which each candidate has achieved these learning outcomes. For this reason, the commentary of the Chief Examiners in this report makes frequent references to these task specifications and the module learning outcomes, and the report should accordingly be read in conjunction with those documents. It will also be useful to have copies of the examination papers and marking schemes to hand when reading the report.

All of the curricular documentation relevant to the programme is available at the website of the *Professional Development Service for Teachers* at www.pdst.ie. This includes the overarching document *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Task*s, along with the module descriptors (syllabi) for the various courses. The examination papers and marking schemes for the final examinations, including the marking schemes for the student tasks, are available in the examination material archive on the State Examinations Commission's website at www.examinations.ie.

1.3   A note on some of the statistics presented

Presenting annual statistics on various elements of the leaving Certificate Applied is somewhat less straightforward than for other examinations due to the modular nature of the programme and the way that students accumulate credit. Most of the data presented in this report relates to the candidates who completed the programme (finished Year 2) in 2014, and correspondingly for other years mentioned. However, these candidates will have completed some of their student tasks – and indeed possibly some of their examinations – in 2013. The Chief Examiners' commentary relates to the tasks and examinations *carried out* in 2014, and there is therefore not always an exact match between the group of candidates concerned in the commentary and the final data in the tables. Nevertheless, candidate strengths and weaknesses are quite stable over short periods of time, so this should not be regarded as a significant problem.

In Chapter 4, as well as giving the overall results for each subject (percentage of candidates achieving each number of credits), in some cases data are also presented on the distribution of credits for individual components of the final examination (such as a written component and practical coursework). Readers may note some anomalies between the component results and the overall subject results. These anomalies arise for the same reason mentioned in the previous paragraph: the component-level data are gathered by examiners in the course of their work and correspond to the candidates taking the examination in 2014, while the overall results are the ones that finally issued to the graduating class of 2014. It should also be noted that credits are awarded in a subject based on totalling the *marks* across all components of the examination, and not by accumulating or averaging the credits for the individual components. Hence, the distributions of credits at component level are not "real" credits, but serve only to offer an illustration of the standards achieved by candidates in the different components, which one can compare across components or over time.

2. Programme-level outcomes

2.1 Awards by level

Table 2.1 shows the number and Table 2.2 the percentage of candidates achieving awards at Distinction, Merit, and Pass level, or receiving record of credits only, in 2014 and the preceding five years.

Year	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Record of credits	Total
2009	589	1663	548	464	3264
2010	634	1769	513	442	3358
2011	577	1569	494	555	3195
2012	669	1657	445	457	3228
2013	552	1376	477	405	2810
2014	**609**	**1496**	**402**	**458**	**2965**

Table 2.1   Number of candidates achieving each level of award, Leaving Certificate Applied, 2009 to 2014.

Year	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Record of credits	Total
2009	18%	51%	17%	14%	3264
2010	19%	53%	15%	13%	3358
2011	18%	49%	15%	17%	3195
2012	21%	51%	14%	14%	3228
2013	20%	49%	17%	14%	2810
2014	**21%**	**50%**	**14%**	**15%**	**2965**

Table 2.2   Percentage of candidates achieving each level of award, Leaving Certificate Applied, 2009 to 2014.

2.2 Satisfactory completion of modules

In order to be awarded the credit available for the satisfactory completion of each module, the candidate should attend the classes and the out-of-school activities related to the module and complete the *Key Assignments* related to the module. Records of evidence of completion of these assignments is compiled by the student and retained by the school until after the appeals period. Based on this evidence and its attendance records, the school or centre notifies the State Examinations Commission at the end of each of the four programme sessions as to the modules that each candidate may be awarded credit for.

Table 2.3 summarises the distribution of credits obtained for satisfactory completion of modules by the candidates completing the programme in 2014 and the preceding five years. The maximum number of credits that a candidate can gain in this way is 62. For the purpose of summarising, the numbers of credits are grouped in the table into ranges corresponding to distinction, merit, pass, and below. The percentage of candidates falling into each range is shown, along with the mean number of credits obtained.

Year	Distinction 85% – 100% 53 – 62 credits	Merit 70% – 85%⁻ 44 – 52 credits	Pass 60% – 70%⁻ 38 – 43 credits	Below pass < 60% 0 – 37 credits	Mean number of credits achieved
2009	65%	16%	6%	13%	52.0
2010	68%	15%	4%	13%	52.9
2011	64%	16%	6%	14%	51.6
2012	67%	14%	6%	13%	52.5
2013	66%	15%	5%	14%	52.4
2014	**68%**	**14%**	**5%**	**14%**	**52.5**

Table 2.3   Distribution of credit achieved for satisfactory completion of modules, 2009 to 2014.

Comparing table 2.3 with table 2.2 reveals that the majority of candidates achieve considerably more credit (proportionally) for satisfactory completion of modules than they achieve from the other two sources of credit – the student tasks and the final examinations. However, for candidates with lower levels of achievement, such a difference is not evident: the proportion of candidates failing to obtain the 60% of credits that is necessary to achieve the overall award is similar to the proportion who fail to obtain 60% of the credit available for satisfactory completion of modules.

The strong distribution of credit achieved for this aspect of the award, with a mean number of credits that is close to the distinction boundary, indicates that very high levels of attendance and engagement with key assignments is evident in schools. This is very positive.

As the amount of credit available for satisfactory completion of modules is substantial (31% of the total credit for the award), the integrity of the award of this credit is critical to the integrity of the qualification itself. The State Examinations Commission is grateful for the ongoing co-operation of students, teachers, co-ordinators, and the management of schools and centres in ensuring that credit is claimed ethically and in full adherence to the programme requirements. Without this ongoing co-operation, an award structured in this way would not be possible.

3   Student tasks

3.1   Overview of the student tasks and their assessment

Each student is required to complete seven student tasks over the two years of the Leaving Certificate Applied programme and these are sourced in the three elements of the programme: Vocational Preparation, Vocational Education, and General Education. Within the Vocational Education element of the programme, students are required to take two vocational specialisms and to complete one student task based in each of these specialisms. The Vocational Preparation task must be based in the Vocational Preparation element of the programme. The General Education Task and the Contemporary Issue Task are based in the General Education element, while the Practical Achievement Task and the Personal Reflection Task are based on the Leaving Certificate Applied programme in general.

Each student task is a practical activity through which learning is applied to the development of a product, the investigation of an issue or the provision of a service[1]. The recommended time for completing a student task is a minimum of ten hours, excluding the preparation of the task report.

The tasks are externally assessed by examiners appointed by the State Examinations Commission, In the case of all tasks except the Personal Reflection Task, the assessment is carried out in the school, and each candidate must present for interview as part of the assessment. The interview involves a discussion between the examiner and the candidate about the work involved in the task. The duration of the interview is generally a minimum of five minutes. However, in the case of the Contemporary Issue Task, the interview with the examiner is of ten minutes' duration, as the candidate is required to make a brief, simple presentation to the examiner about the issue investigated and the experience of investigating it. This presentation is of two to four minutes' duration.

The total credit allocation for each student task is 10 credits. The detailed specifications for all tasks are given in the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks*. This document is available on the website of the *Professional Development Service for Teachers* at www.pdst.ie. The marking schemes for the tasks are available in the *Examination Material Archive* on the SEC website at www.examinations.ie. Depending on the nature of the task (product, investigation, event, etc.), somewhat different marking schemes are applicable; all versions are available on the website.

The different student tasks are assessed and managed independently of each other. Nevertheless, many of the observations and recommendations that emerge are similar across all of the tasks that involve assessment by visiting examiners, (that is, all but the Personal Reflection Task). For this reason, this chapter deals first with the issues that are common across all of these tasks (Section 3.2) before going on to deal with the additional information, observations, and recommendations specific to each of them (Sections 3.3 to 3.7). Section 3.8 then deals with the Personal Reflection Task.

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[1] Many of the statements about student tasks in this report do not apply in the case of the Personal Reflection Task, which differs in its focus from the others and has different assessment arrangements.

3.2 Observations and recommendations common across all tasks (excluding the Personal Reflection Task)

3.2.1 General Arrangements in schools and centres

The practical arrangements for student task assessment were reported to be excellent in the majority of schools and centres visited and this facilitated the effective assessment of the student tasks. The following examples of good practice and areas where improvements could be made were noted.

Good practice observed

Except where otherwise noted, the following examples of good practice were observed in the great majority of cases.

- Schools and centres provided the examiner with suitable accommodation, relevant equipment and a running order of candidates for assessment. Rooms were spacious and tables, desk and chairs were well laid out to accommodate comfortably the examiner, the advising examiner (who may or may not be present to monitor the work of the examiner), the candidate, and a designated school representative, if applicable.

- Schools and centres had kept the week of examination in each session clear of other commitments for their Leaving Certificate Applied candidates.

- It was noted by examiners this year that many principals and/or deputy principals were actively involved in the assessment arrangements in schools. This was welcomed as it served to underline to all in the school community that the assessment of the tasks is as important as the terminal written components of the Leaving Certificate Applied and other Leaving Certificate programmes.

- Opportunities were provided for examiners to meet the class groups briefly before beginning the assessment of tasks, in order to brief the candidates on the interview process, to listen to any concerns they may have had, and to reassure them. Examiners are instructed to meet the class group in each school or centre before the assessment commences, so it is important that schools continue to facilitate this.

- P2 forms were signed[2], a running order was provided, and candidates were present for the introductory meeting with the examiner before the assessment commenced.

- The tasks were clearly labelled, collated and available to examiners on arrival, so that examiners could examine the tasks prior to, and in preparation for, the interviews with candidates. This greatly facilitated the work of the examiners and allowed them to adhere to their schedules.

- Candidates were well prepared and understood their role in the assessment process. Candidates were at ease with the interview component and were available for interview when required.

- The examination centres were quiet, warm, and well lit. In most cases, there was a glass panel allowing sight into the room, which is recommended in all circumstances where a student is being interviewed by an adult. In most cases, the task reports were arranged in running order of candidate for assessment and were placed on the examiner's desk on arrival at the centre.

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[2] P2 forms are signed by candidates and co-signed by the school management and the class teacher as confirmation of the authenticity of the student tasks.

- Examiners were made aware of candidates with special needs in advance of the assessment, particularly when the special needs had an impact on the interview component of the assessment, such as in the case of speech and language difficulties.

Areas for development

In a small number of centres, the assessment process did not transact successfully due to certain practices which should be addressed.

- Some schools and centres continue to organise work experience or other out-of-school activities during the assessment week, making it very difficult for examiners to schedule assessments.

- In a small number of cases, there was some difficulty in making contact with a Leaving Certificate Applied co-ordinator or a designated representative of the school or centre to make arrangements for student task assessment and to provide the examiner with exact number of candidates presenting.

- In a small number of schools, the interview rooms were situated close to social areas where the noise levels were such that examiners had to request school authorities to intervene.

- P2 forms were not signed or readily available in some schools or centres.

- Some schools had permitted candidates to take the day off school and come to the school at a time scheduled for the interview. This is not good practice, as it prevents the examiner from meeting the class as a group before the assessment and it can also delay the assessment process, as some candidates may not arrive at the appointed time.

- There was evidence that some candidates had continued to work on the tasks after the published completion dates. In order to encourage better planning on the part of candidates and to ensure the equitable treatment of all candidates, all task work should be completed by the published completion dates, which are issued by the SEC annually and are available on the SEC website.

3.2.2   Selection of Tasks

Examiners were generally satisfied that the majority of candidates had presented tasks that were relevant and appropriate.

Good practice observed

Except where otherwise noted, the following examples of good practice were observed in the majority of cases.

- Where candidates personally selected their tasks they generally demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm and commitment in the preparation and presentation of those tasks. Such candidates displayed great pride in their work and were keen to discuss every aspect, from the design process through to the execution of their task. Such tasks were generally more creative, original and personally meaningful to the candidates than tasks that had been, in effect, selected by the teacher.

- Students were well-motivated and creative, especially when the choice of task was innovative and individual.

- The use of primary research methodologies generally resulted in more meaningful candidate involvement and hence better outcomes.

- Candidates who scored well included copies of completed questionnaires, copies of letters sent and received and other evidence of research undertaken to indicate the various activities engaged in during the process.

Areas for development

In some cases, poor practice prevented candidates from achieving the aims of the task as well as they might have or from demonstrating that achievement to examiners:

- It was evident that some student tasks, especially in the lower credit range, did not adhere to the requirement that the student task should take at least ten hours to complete, excluding preparation of the task report. In general, candidates achieving a low number of credits had demonstrated very limited engagement with the task.

- A poor choice of task often resulted in limited progression and achievement. Some tasks presented were very limited in scope, making it difficult for the candidate to demonstrate achievement under the various assessment criteria.

- At the other extreme, it was clear that the complexity of tasks undertaken by some candidates and the high level of skill required in their execution demanded significantly more than the minimum of ten hours recommended for task completion. This was particularly the case in many of the tasks involving the development of a product or artefact that were presented in the Vocational Education specialisms.

- Reporting on task activities was not always comprehensive and in many instances it was evident at interview that candidates had engaged in many different activities that they had failed to record in their task reports. Candidates should note that, as they are assessed on the quality, organisation, accuracy, and relevance of the information presented, they should ensure that the report fully reflects the work they have done.

3.2.3   Group Tasks

With the exception of the Practical Achievement Task and the Personal Reflection Task, a student task may be undertaken on a group basis. In his or her individual report, each candidate should include an overall description of the group task and show a clear understanding of the nature and objectives of the whole task, as well as reporting clearly on his or her individual contribution to the group task. It should take each individual student in the group at least ten hours to complete the work that constitutes his or her contribution to the task, excluding the time taken to prepare the task report.

Good practice observed

Except where otherwise noted, the following examples of good practice were observed in the majority of cases.

- Schools ensured that a sufficient number of groups were formed so as to ensure that no one group was too large. This enabled each candidate to make a meaningful contribution to the task.

- Group tasks were most successful when all candidates had an appreciation of the nature and objectives of the whole task, together with a clear understanding of their own roles. This was reflected in candidates' task reports, which outlined an overall description of the group task but remained focused on their own individual contribution to that task.

- Where candidates involved in a group task scored well, both individual aim(s) and group aim(s) were stated clearly, with each participant having his/her own individual aim(s). Candidates who had been assigned specific roles within group tasks fared better in the assessment than candidates who participated in a group task without having a clearly defined role.

Areas for development

In some cases, poor practice prevented candidates from achieving the aims of the task as well as they might have or from demonstrating that achievement to examiners:

- In some instances, group tasks were not substantial enough to support an adequate amount of work for each student. That is, examiners found that the number of participants in some group tasks was too large for the task concerned.

- Careful delineation of roles is essential to ensure meaningful involvement by candidates in group tasks. Candidates who performed well tended to be those who had selected roles that interested them and provided a personal challenge. In most cases where low credits were awarded, it was due to very limited meaningful individual involvement with the task.

- Each candidate is required to submit a report that includes reporting on the entire task, and also on his/her own involvement with the task. In some cases, candidates gave insufficient attention to one or other of these aspects – usually the latter. In some such cases, even with the opportunity afforded by the interview, examiners still had great difficulty identifying and crediting the individual contribution of each candidate.

- Some group tasks tended to be very similar in layout, often lacking creativity, and in some cases appearing to be more teacher-driven than teacher-led. The teacher input (such as the use of common templates) was very evident in some centres. This made it very difficult for candidates to avoid the problems identified above regarding their individual contribution. It also made it difficult for them to score well for creativity, originality, and self-evaluation.

3.2.4 Balance between teacher guidance and student self-responsibility

The nature and quality of teacher involvement in guiding candidates is crucial. At all times the main responsibility for the student task rests with the student. It must be his or her own work.

Good practice observed

The better student tasks were those where an appropriate balance had been struck between teacher guidance and the individual candidate responsibility. Candidates tend to produce better quality tasks where they have regular mentoring, support and affirmation of their progress on the task from their teacher, while retaining responsibility for the direction and progress of the task. See page 28 of the *Programme Statement and Outline of Student Tasks* for further detail on the nature of the guidance and support that students may require.

Areas for development

There was evidence of an inappropriate level of teacher guidance in some centres. This was evidenced by a high level of uniformity of tasks within a class group, a lack of understanding of the aims and purpose of the task, and, in particular, inconsistency between the task report and candidate knowledge and understanding, as demonstrated at interview.

Some investigation-type tasks lacked originality and were, in the view of the examiners, excessively teacher-led. In such cases, many candidates failed to analyse findings, reach conclusions, and integrate learning in their investigations.

3.2.5   Cross-Curricular Integration

The requirement for cross-curricular integration is designed to enable the candidate to develop a stronger awareness of the links that exist between the concepts, skills, competencies, experiences, knowledge, and understanding involved in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme. The student task must draw learning together from the different elements in the programme, thereby supporting curricular integration in the context of a modular programme. The cross-curricular applications required are specific to the different student tasks.

Good practice observed

Some candidates demonstrated a good awareness of relevant cross-curricular links and successfully integrated these links into their student tasks. The relevance and quality of the cross-curricular integration in the student tasks has improved in recent years.

Areas for development

Cross-curricular applications and integration were, in many instances, contrived, especially in the Vocational Education Tasks, where many candidates did not achieve effective and meaningful integration in the mandatory area of Mathematical Applications. This resulted in low scores for candidates on this criterion.

3.2.6   The Task Report

The student task report is a description of the various stages required to complete a student task. Refer to page 30 and pages 69 to 72 of the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks* for details on how it should be presented and the information it should contain.

Good practice observed

Except where otherwise noted, the following examples of good practice were observed in the majority of cases.

- In the majority of cases, the presentation of the material in the task report followed the structures recommended in the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks*, which are reflected in the assessment headings used in the marking schemes; this assisted examiners in applying the relevant marking criteria and thereby facilitated candidates in being justly rewarded for their achievements. The layout and organisation of some task reports were excellent.

- Good task reports displayed clear aims and good planning and remained focused throughout. Such reports were concise and well presented. Candidates who engaged in genuine research, gave detailed explanations of aims, and carried out planning and self-evaluation, performed well.

- When candidates used a diary or logbook to record the progress of their work on the student tasks, this helped to provide a focus and order in the preparation of the task report.

- Good research skills were evident in cases where candidates used a variety of appropriate information-gathering techniques and a discriminating approach in the selection of material relevant to their task. The better-researched tasks included both desk and field research, such as

information from local libraries, local enterprise boards, guest speakers, interviews and questionnaires.

- The best task reports included a table of contents, well-organised content, and evidence of relevant research, planning or investigation undertaken, such as copies of correspondence sent and received, relevant photographic evidence, copies of questionnaires, records of interviews, and bibliographies.

- Examiners were impressed by the effective use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the preparation and presentation of task reports.

- In the better cases, findings were summarised and analysed clearly and related back to the original aim(s).

- In the better examples of self-evaluation, evaluative comments were personal and were therefore convincingly presented.

Areas for development

In some cases, poor practice prevented candidates from achieving the aims of the task as well as they might have or from demonstrating that achievement to examiners:

- Some student task reports were very brief and were no more than key assignments. Candidates have already received credit for completing these assignments through the credits awarded for satisfactory completion of modules. While key assignments can be included in a student task, the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks* notes that in such cases "…the task must build upon and be greater than the key assignments" (p. 30).

- In some cases it was evident that, while a lot of work had gone into carrying out the tasks, the reports were very brief. They were lacking in essential information and did not allow candidates to demonstrate their achievements.

- Some reports were poorly structured, lacked logical sequence, had poor presentation, and failed to provide evidence related to one or more of the assessment criteria.

- In some cases, basic skills such as letter writing, online research, and summarising and reporting were poor.

- Some candidates did not include appropriate evidence of the research methods used in their tasks. For example, candidates reported the use of methodologies such as interviews and questionnaires but failed to provide any evidence of these. Sources of information, including books and web sites, were frequently not credited.

- There continues to be evidence of over-reliance on photocopied materials, transcription, and indiscriminate use of information downloaded from the internet.

- Candidates are required to interpret the results or outcomes of the investigation or task against the stated aims and to present their own conclusions. Very often, the outcomes were not recorded in the task report and the examiner had to rely on the interview to get this information.

- Candidates continue to experience difficulty in the area of self-evaluation. The critical skills of reflection and evaluation were often not evident in the task reports. Candidates should be taught how to reflect, should be given the language of reflection and evaluation, and encouraged to reflect throughout the process.

- There was limited evidence – in some cases no evidence – of analysis of findings. Some analyses presented were not related to the stated aims of the task.

- Some task reports showed little or no evidence of research and planning or investigation.

- In some cases, there was evidence that reports had been written up as a group activity and were only to a very limited extent the individual work of the candidates concerned. This was evident both from the nature of the reports and from the interviews with candidates. The credits awarded were generally very low in these cases, as these reports did not demonstrate the achievements of candidates under several of the assessment criteria in the task specifications – ability to select and plan the task; quality of engagement and evidence of progress and achievement; ability to reflect and evaluate; quality of communicative ability.

3.2.7   The Interview

Each candidate must present for an individual interview. The interview involves a discussion between the examiner and the candidate on the work involved in completing the task. The interview lasts for a minimum of five minutes (ten minutes in the case of the Contemporary Issue Task) of the twenty minutes allocated to the assessment of each candidate's task. Candidates generally engage very well with the interview component of the assessment and usually demonstrate that they have a good knowledge and understanding of their presented task.

Good practice observed

Candidates generally demonstrated a high level of competency in the area of oral communication. Candidates were, for the most part, comfortable with and confident in their approach to the interview component of the assessment.

3.2.8   Recommendations for Students, Teachers, Co-ordinators, and Schools
General arrangements for the assessment of Student Tasks

- Accommodation provided by the school should be appropriate for the assessment process – a comfortable and quiet environment with sufficient space for the work being carried out, and ideally with lines of visibility into the room.

- All material for assessment, including products or other artefacts, should be clearly labelled, collated and made available to examiners on arrival at a centre. A running order of candidates for assessment should also be provided.

- Schools should have all their paperwork in order. In particular, it is imperative that the P2 forms have been signed and are given to the examiner.

- In order to ensure the equitable treatment of all candidates, it is also important that schools ensure that all notified deadlines for the completion of task work are adhered to and that students are not permitted to continue work on their reports after the specified dates.

- Examiners should be made aware in advance of the assessment of candidates with special needs, particularly if the special needs may have an impact on the interview component of the assessment, such as may be the case for certain speech and language difficulties.

- The Leaving Certificate Applied co-ordinator or a designated representative of the school or centre should be available to meet with the examiner to make arrangements for student task assessment and to provide the examiner with any information relevant to the assessment process.

- While each task is primarily situated in one curricular area, the students draw on the learning from other areas. Some opportunity should be provided for teachers to work in pairs or groups when preparing students for the student task. For example, it may be beneficial for the Vocational Preparation teacher and a Business teacher or IT Teacher to work together in supporting students with the Enterprise Task, or for the English and Communications Teacher and the Guidance Teacher to do so for the Career Investigation Task.

- Communication between the Leaving Certificate Applied co-ordinator and the teacher anchoring the student task is vital. The completion of a task should not be the responsibility of only one teacher. Increased cross-curricular integration would support the anchoring teacher, improve learning, and help students gain credit under this criterion.

- Schools should ensure that all candidates are present for the initial group meeting with the examiner.

- School management should allow and encourage at least one member of staff to work regularly with the SEC as an examiner in at least one of the six student tasks. They will gain much from participating in marking conferences, where examiners are trained in the assessment of these tasks, and from the experience of examining. Teachers with such experience are better able to support students in taking a coherent and properly focussed approach to their tasks.

- Teachers new to the Leaving Certificate Applied programme should be facilitated and encouraged to participate in relevant in-career development, as there are many challenges for teachers in implementing the course effectively for the benefit of students.

- Work experience or other out-of-school activities should not be scheduled during the assessment week, as it makes it very difficult for examiners to schedule assessments.

The process of selecting and undertaking the Student Tasks

- Tasks undertaken by candidates should meet the specification for the task concerned, including relevance to the curricular area involved, and be consistent with the time recommended for task completion.

- Teachers should be familiar with the module descriptors (syllabi) for all of the courses that might be relevant to any task that is anchored in their area. These module descriptors are available on the PDST website at www.pdst.ie. Students and teachers should be familiar with relevant documentation on assessment – both the information in the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks* and with the student task marking schemes, which are available on the SEC website.

- Early planning is vital. Students should be informed of the parameters and requirements of the task, including the final deadline. Intermediate target dates for various stages of the work should be agreed in advance and adequate time should be given for completing the task report.

- Opportunities for the meaningful and relevant integration of cross-curricular application should be fully exploited and developed in the student tasks.

- An appropriate balance should be struck between teacher guidance in task selection and preparation, and the individual responsibility of students. Students should select their own issue for investigation, insofar as this is practicable, as this allows for uniqueness and creativity.

Students should be allowed to make mistakes and put their own individual stamp on their reports, and should be further encouraged to exhibit creativity.

- The size of groups engaged in group tasks should be such as to allow each candidate to have a clearly defined individual role, which allows him/her to make a meaningful contribution.

- It is essential that all participants in a group task have an appreciation of the nature and objectives of the whole task, together with a clear understanding of their own individual roles. Each individual's report will need to deal with both aspects. Inadequacies in this respect are more likely to arise from not dealing sufficiently well with the individual's own role, so this requires attention. Keeping an individual journal of the process, focussing on one's own activities and contribution, is helpful when it comes to preparing the final report.

- Careful delineation of roles in a group task is essential to ensure meaningful involvement by candidates. Very often, low credits are awarded because there is very little meaningful individual involvement with the task.

- In the case of a task carried out by a group and involving the development of a product or artefact, the contribution of each individual candidate to the product itself should be clearly marked for easy identification by the examiner.

- In the case of any task involving the organisation of an event, the making of a product, or engaging in any practical activity, students must prioritise Health and Safety.

- Candidates should receive further guidance and practice in order to develop critical skills of reflection and evaluation.

The task report and the interview process

- The importance of including relevant evidence and materials to support research, planning, or investigations undertaken should be further emphasised.

- Students should be encouraged to be selective about what they include in their task reports, and should not rely solely on photocopied materials, transcription, and the indiscriminate use of information downloaded from the internet.

- Supporting material, in any medium, should be carefully chosen for its relevance to the task report.

- Greater attention should be given, through appropriate guidance and practice, to the development of the skills of reflection and evaluation.

- In the case of group tasks, each candidate's report must deal both with the nature and objectives of the whole task and with the candidate's own individual role. In cases where this is not done, it is typically the latter aspect that is inadequate.

- The importance of the interview component of the task assessment should be further emphasised. Candidates should be aware that the interview provides them with an opportunity to improve their marks. It is therefore recommended that adequate preparation for the interview be undertaken in class to enable candidates to maximise their performance in this important component of the assessment. Mock interviews are likely to be helpful in this regard.

- Candidates should be encouraged to show enthusiasm at the interview and respond with additional information and clarifications in an engaged way.

3.3 General Education Task

All of the observations and recommendations made in Section 3.2 above apply. In addition, the following information, observations, and recommendations are specific to the General Education Task.

The General Education Task may be an individual or a group task, which is completed in Session 1, which is the first half of Year 1. It is therefore the first task undertaken by students.

The specification for this student task is given on pages 34 to 39 of the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks*.

3.3.1 Statistics on Performance

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	7.1	13.4	21.0	25.1	18.8	8.5	3.7	1.6	0.4	0.2	0.1	3180	7.1
2010	6.3	14.9	22.9	23.2	17.1	8.8	4.4	1.4	0.5	0.4	0.1	3280	7.1
2011	8.4	16.4	23.8	21.8	15.1	8.5	3.7	1.4	0.6	0.3	0.1	3104	7.3
2012	8.9	17.1	24.5	20.3	15.3	7.5	4.0	1.3	0.9	0.2	0.1	3126	7.3
2013	7.2	13.3	18.4	20.5	19.0	11.2	5.6	2.6	1.7	0.4	0.1	2726	6.9
2014	**9.1**	**13.7**	**20.6**	**22.7**	**17.2**	**10.4**	**3.9**	**1.5**	**0.6**	**0.3**	**0.2**	**2876**	**7.1**

Table 3.1   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, General Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

This task is undertaken in Year 1 of the programme. The statistics above relate to graduating cohort of the specified year. In each case, the credits were awarded during the preceding year. For example, the 2876 candidates referred to in the last line of the table were awarded these credits in 2013.

3.3.2 Additional observations related to the General Education Task

In addition to the observations in section 3.2 above that apply to all tasks, the following further observations are made in relation to the General Education Task in particular.

Range of coursework presented

A mixture of group and individual task work was presented. The range of work displayed was exceptionally varied and interesting in its scope and variety: investigations, community projects, production of art pieces, organising and hosting exhibitions, and organising events.

A trend has developed whereby teachers are moving from encouraging students to carry out investigations to encouraging them to organise group events. Since many candidates at this stage of the programme find investigative work challenging and many investigative tasks are therefore not carried out with sufficient depth and effectiveness, this trend may assist more candidates in achieving more highly. Group tasks that involve the organisation of an event provide a great opportunity for each student to be active, to learn from doing, and to work as part of a team. These potential benefits are subject to all the caveats expressed in section 3.2 above in relation to group tasks generally.

Standard of skill demonstrated

In general, a broad range of skills was demonstrated and the standard was good or very good in most cases, with some excellent centres. One observation made in Section 3.2 was particularly widely noted by examiners of the General Education Task: candidates were especially well motivated and creative when the choice of task was innovative and when they were themselves responsible for the choice of topic and task.

3.3.3 Additional recommendations related to the General Education Task

In addition to the recommendations in section 3.2 above that apply to all tasks, the following additional recommendations are made in relation to the General Education Task in particular.

- As the General Education Task is the first one carried out by students, particular care should be taken in establishing expectations, promoting good practice, establishing student self-responsibility, assisting students in setting timelines, helping them understand how the task will be assessed, and so on. Early preparation is essential.

- Communication between the Leaving Certificate Applied co-ordinator and the teacher anchoring the task is vital, so as to ensure that students' first experience of this fundamental component of the programme – the completion of Student Tasks – is properly supported and sets the appropriate tone for further tasks.

- Generic documents are to be discouraged. Some students do not know what the purpose of these documents is, and do not use them particularly well. Also, they can inhibit a more critical engagement with the features of a good report and with the task specifications and assessment criteria.

- Students should be facilitated and encouraged to select a topic which interests them.

- Students should ensure that they are very clear what they want to achieve. Furthermore, if they state in their aims that they are going to do something, they should make sure to do it (or else deal in the report with why it was not done).

- Students need to provide evidence of the planning work done and all documentation relevant to that planning. They should deal with the possible alternative approaches they considered, and their reasons for selecting the approach they took.

- Students should use their own words in their reports as much as possible.

- The difficulty with identifying students' individual contributions to group tasks is dealt with comprehensively in Section 3.2 above. To assist in addressing this, students should be encouraged to use 'I' statements rather than 'we' statements throughout the report as this helps them to focus on and analyse their own contribution.

- Mock interviews may be particularly helpful in preparing for the assessment of the General Education task, as it is their first.

3.4   Vocational Preparation Task

All of the observations and recommendations made in Section 3.2 above apply. In addition, the following information, observations, and recommendations are specific to the Vocational Preparation Task.

The Vocational Preparation Task may be an individual or a group task, which is completed in Session 2, which is the second half of Year 1.

The specification for this student task is given on pages 34 to 39 of the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks*. In addition, the module descriptors for the *Vocational Preparation and Guidance* course give further detail on what is expected of candidates undertaking tasks in this area.

One enterprise module is mandatory in Session 2. This enterprise module runs concurrently with the *Communications and Enterprise* module in the *English and Communication* course and with the *Maths for Enterprise* module within the *Mathematical Applications* course. For this reason, the majority of vocational preparation tasks continue to be based on enterprise. The enterprise task may involve a mini-company (Enterprise 1) or the staging of a not-for-profit event (Enterprise 2). Candidates can also do a Career Investigation Task and there has been a significant growth in the number of candidates selecting this task in recent years. However, the majority of tasks continue to be sourced in Enterprise 1 – the mini-company.

The change in the proportion of candidates opting for each of the different kinds of task is illustrated in Table 3.2, which compares the proportion in each category in 2014 with the same information for 2005, when the last Chief Examiner Report was published.

	Enterprise 1 (mini-company)	Enterprise 2 (service/event)	Career Investigation	Other (e.g. work exp.)
2005	65%	18%	12%	5%
2014	52%	16%	32%	0%

Table 3.2   Percentage of candidates taking each type of Vocational Preparation Task, 2005 and 2014.

3.4.1   Statistics on Performance

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	3.5	7.8	12.8	16.6	18.5	18.0	11.2	6.7	3.8	0.8	0.2	3178	6.0
2010	4.8	8.9	15.0	18.9	19.7	14.4	9.6	5.2	2.2	1.1	0.2	3257	6.3
2011	4.0	7.1	14.6	21.8	18.7	14.2	9.4	5.9	2.8	1.3	0.3	3101	6.2
2012	5.2	11.4	16.3	17.3	17.5	13.8	8.8	5.4	3.2	0.9	0.3	3116	6.4
2013	7.4	12.3	16.7	17.8	17.2	12.2	8.7	4.6	2.3	0.6	0.2	2717	6.6
2014	**5.0**	**8.7**	**16.4**	**19.5**	**18.4**	**13.7**	**8.9**	**5.8**	**2.3**	**0.9**	**0.5**	**2875**	**6.3**

Table 3.3   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Vocational Preparation Task, 2009 to 2014.

3.4.2   Additional observations related to the Vocational Preparation Task

In addition to the observations in section 3.2 above that apply to all tasks, the following further observations are made in relation to the Vocational Preparation Task in particular.

Engaging in an enterprise task in Year 1 of the Leaving Certificate Applied programme is challenging for both teacher and student, due to lack of experience of the student at that stage in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme and due to the time constraints in that session. While the majority of candidates engage in an enterprise for their student task, their performance suggests that the majority have not yet developed the skills required to set up and run an enterprise effectively. Candidates displayed limited knowledge and understanding of the range of terminology and technical vocabulary specific to enterprise and many did not engage adequately with the different entrepreneurial processes, such as research and planning, market research, financial planning, action planning, as required for this task.

The Vocational Preparation Tasks that are anchored in the *Enterprise 1* module involve the setting up of a mini-company with a profit motive, and the focus of the assessment is on the entrepreneurial process the students engage in. While many group tasks produced excellent products in the mini-companies, there was often very little emphasis in their individual task reports on the entrepreneurial process the students engaged in. The tasks that are anchored in the *Enterprise 2* module focus on entrepreneurial skills as they apply to the provision of a service or the staging of an event and again the assessment focuses on the entrepreneurial process engaged in. It was evident in many of the reports of tasks anchored in this module that the students had primarily focused on the service offered or event organised rather than on the entrepreneurial processes engaged in, and this led to them not performing well in the assessment.

In the case of group-based enterprise tasks, under the criterion of *clarity of purpose*, some aims presented were lists of jobs to be done rather than genuine aims. Statements of specific tasks or jobs are not considered aims; rather, they are the actions required in order to achieve one's aims. Candidates who did not identify their role in the enterprise or elaborate on their aims did not perform well in the assessment.

The *Research and Planning* stage and the *Carrying out of Task* stage are very important stages in the student task process and between them accounted for 40% of the total mark allocation for the

task. These two aspects were generally poorly developed in both career investigation and enterprise tasks.

In the case of the *Research and Planning* stage of enterprise tasks, there was evidence that many candidates had not considered how the enterprise was financed, how the price for the product or service was decided on, how the product was costed, whether profit was generated, or how this profit was to be distributed.

The Guidance module within the Vocational Preparation and Guidance element is designed to facilitate the student's vocational development. In the case of the Career Investigation Task the students may include a personal career action plan, which is a key assignment for the Guidance module, as part of this student task, but the student task must show significant development on the key assignment. It was noted in Careers Investigation tasks that candidates often did not engage in primary research, such as by work shadowing, doing work experience, or interviewing someone in the chosen career area. To perform well in this task, candidates should research the duties, skills and qualities required for the careers being investigated, the qualifications and training required, and the different pathways to the career, if appropriate. Planning involves, among other things, deciding on methods of acquiring the information (such as developing questionnaires), deciding on interview questions, arranging interviews or visits, and so on.

The *Carrying out of Task* stage refers to the candidate's participation in the activity and the group participation, if applicable. If the task is a group task the report presented should have an individual account of the candidate's participation in the activity, in addition to the group participation in the activity.

Good practice observed
Within the enterprise task the following were frequently cited as examples of good practice:

- Contents page in the report

- Clearly stated individual and group aims

- Use of primary research such as surveys, usually involving questionnaires

- Use of IT skills to enhance layout and presentation including headings, graphs and so on; use of colour and personalised artwork

- Well-structured applications processes for different positions in the enterprise, often using an outside interviewer as part of the appointment process

- Company organisational chart , with candidate's position identified and outlined

- Display board outlining the different stages in the enterprise process

- Having an actual prototype or production example of the artefact(s) produced by the mini-company available during the assessment, as this assisted the less able candidates in explaining their involvement in the group task.

Areas for development
- There continues to be an over-emphasis on the product produced or the service provided for the enterprise task at the expense of the entrepreneurial process engaged in.

- Some groups had clearly put a great deal of effort into the staging of the event (Enterprise 2), but the reports presented by candidates were very brief and lacked essential information on the entrepreneurial process.

- The financial aspects of some enterprise tasks were poor. The sourcing of finance was often omitted from enterprise tasks. At the interview, many candidates had only a vague notion of the financial matters involved in operating a mini-company or other enterprise.

- In relation to the criterion headings used in assessing the Vocational Preparation Tasks:
    - *clarity of purpose* has improved in recent years but remains a problem for some candidates who participate in group tasks
    - *research and planning* needs to be further improved
    - *carrying out of task / investigation* is generally of a good standard in the case of individual tasks, but is less well handled in the case of individual contributions to group tasks
    - *analysis of the findings* in career investigation tasks could be improved
    - *self-evaluation* was sometimes misunderstood, with candidates evaluating the product or service rather than their own learning and development
    - the relevance and quality of *cross-curricular applications and integration* has improved in recent years
    - *effectiveness of communication and presentation* is generally of a high standard.

3.4.3 Additional recommendations related to the Vocational Preparation Task

In addition to the recommendations in section 3.2 above that apply to all tasks, the following additional recommendation is made in relation to the Vocational Preparation Task in particular.

- Teachers should note the examples of good practice and areas for development referred to immediately above, and take account of these when supporting students in the completion of and reporting on tasks.

3.5   Vocational Education Tasks

All of the observations and recommendations made in Section 3.2 above apply. In addition, the following information, observations, and recommendations are specific to the Vocational Education Tasks.

Students complete two Vocational Education Tasks – one based in each of the two Vocational Specialism courses followed by the student. The first of these tasks is completed in session 2, which is the second half of Year 1, and the second in session 3, which is the first half of Year 2. Each task may be an individual or a group task.

The specification for this student task is given on pages 34 to 39 of the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks*. In addition, the module descriptors for the course in the relevant specialisms give further detail on the knowledge and skills that students are expected to display through their completion of the tasks.

3.5.1   Statistics on Performance

Statistics are presented for each specialism separately. In each case, the statistics relate to all candidates graduating in the specified year. Some of these candidates will have been awarded the relevant credit in the specified year (as their Year 2 Vocational Education task), while others will have been awarded it in the preceding year (as their Year 1 Vocational Education task). For example, in the case of the 1470 candidates in the last row of table 3.4 below, some of these candidates were awarded these credits for a *Hotel Catering and Tourism* task carried out in 2013 while others were awarded them for a task carried out in 2014.

Hotel Catering and Tourism

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	17.5	19.2	19.8	16.0	12.7	6.9	4.6	2.0	0.6	0.3	0.3	1564	7.6
2010	14.7	18.5	23.8	17.1	11.4	6.5	4.1	1.9	1.4	0.4	0.2	1609	7.5
2011	13.7	19.2	22.1	18.2	13.5	7.6	2.7	1.6	1.0	0.3	0.1	1559	7.5
2012	15.7	21.9	22.0	17.7	10.8	5.1	3.2	1.3	1.2	0.8	0.4	1584	7.6
2013	16.7	21.5	21.0	17.3	10.1	5.7	4.7	1.5	0.7	0.6	0.3	1361	7.6
2014	**21.2**	**24.4**	**23.9**	**12.8**	**8.0**	**3.9**	**2.3**	**2.0**	**0.9**	**0.5**	**0.1**	**1470**	**8.0**

Table 3.4   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Hotel Catering and Tourism Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

Information and Communication Technology

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	7.1	14.4	23.0	24.0	15.8	8.3	4.2	1.8	1.0	0.1	0.4	1337	7.1
2010	8.6	13.0	15.2	21.8	16.0	13.9	6.5	3.5	1.1	0.5	0.1	1333	6.8
2011	5.1	13.2	20.3	20.2	18.4	11.3	7.8	2.2	0.8	0.5	0.2	1314	6.8
2012	8.2	17.4	25.5	18.3	16.8	7.4	3.1	1.6	1.0	0.7	0.2	1273	7.3
2013	7.1	17.2	20.4	20.7	16.7	10.3	5.0	1.9	0.6	0.3	0.0	1007	7.1
2014	**11.8**	**18.8**	**25.0**	**18.5**	**13.2**	**5.7**	**3.9**	**1.1**	**1.3**	**0.6**	**0.1**	**1127**	**7.5**

Table 3.5   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Information and Communication Technology Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

Graphics and Construction Studies

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	6.7	14.9	20.5	26.1	15.2	8.8	3.6	2.0	1.2	0.7	0.4	1127	7.1
2010	5.6	15.9	25.8	21.4	12.2	7.5	6.4	2.7	1.6	0.6	0.3	1151	7.0
2011	5.0	16.4	23.2	21.0	15.2	9.9	3.4	1.8	1.5	1.3	1.3	1190	6.9
2012	8.0	20.0	22.8	21.8	15.7	5.7	2.9	1.6	0.5	1.0	0.1	1094	7.4
2013	8.4	18.3	24.4	19.9	12.8	8.4	3.7	1.6	0.7	1.0	0.7	1121	7.2
2014	**9.3**	**22.3**	**26.3**	**20.1**	**11.3**	**5.4**	**2.2**	**1.1**	**0.8**	**0.8**	**0.4**	**1102**	**7.5**

Table 3.6   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Graphics and Construction Studies Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

Craft and Design

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	21.3	22.2	19.1	17.8	9.3	6.2	2.2	1.3	0.4	0.2	0.0	535	7.9
2010	9.8	20.0	23.8	21.9	12.9	6.0	2.5	1.9	0.4	0.4	0.6	521	7.4
2011	20.0	17.5	19.1	17.0	11.2	8.3	3.2	1.4	1.3	0.7	0.2	554	7.6
2012	13.2	19.4	22.6	20.2	13.1	5.1	2.8	1.5	1.0	0.9	0.3	687	7.5
2013	10.7	16.5	25.8	22.1	14.1	4.8	1.6	2.1	1.8	0.6	0.0	625	7.4
2014	**21.3**	**19.5**	**21.3**	**17.8**	**13.8**	**2.7**	**1.5**	**0.8**	**0.3**	**0.3**	**0.5**	**595**	**7.9**

Table 3.7   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Craft and Design Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

Engineering

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	8.2	11.0	16.9	20.8	15.3	13.2	7.1	3.0	2.2	1.8	0.6	674	6.6
2010	7.8	13.7	21.9	24.1	16.2	8.5	3.9	2.3	0.5	0.8	0.3	613	7.1
2011	9.3	13.9	19.2	19.4	15.9	11.5	4.9	2.4	1.8	1.3	0.4	547	6.9
2012	6.4	14.2	23.1	19.4	13.0	10.7	5.5	2.6	2.4	1.2	1.4	577	6.8
2013	11.6	15.8	26.4	17.7	11.6	8.7	2.8	1.7	1.2	1.9	0.7	424	7.3
2014	**8.5**	**18.5**	**25.5**	**15.0**	**13.9**	**5.3**	**4.9**	**2.9**	**2.5**	**1.6**	**1.3**	**552**	**7.1**

Table 3.8   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Engineering Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

Childcare / Community Care

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	11.0	29.0	34.1	14.1	4.1	3.8	2.1	0.5	0.8	0.0	0.5	390	8.0
2010	10.0	24.0	33.3	16.4	10.0	2.9	2.0	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2	408	7.8
2011	14.6	22.5	19.7	24.0	11.3	5.3	1.2	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.0	417	7.8
2012	12.4	29.9	26.3	19.8	5.4	3.1	2.1	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.0	388	8.0
2013	13.6	21.0	22.9	20.4	13.9	5.4	1.6	0.8	0.0	0.3	0.0	367	7.7
2014	**26.2**	**22.0**	**23.5**	**18.4**	**7.2**	**1.8**	**0.6**	**0.0**	**0.3**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**332**	**8.3**

Table 3.9   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Childcare / Community Care Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

Office Administration and Customer Care

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	1.7	4.9	9.9	21.7	23.2	16.8	9.3	9.6	1.7	0.9	0.3	345	5.9
2010	6.8	8.6	19.4	26.5	17.2	9.8	6.8	3.0	1.5	0.0	0.3	396	6.8
2011	4.9	11.7	14.3	18.8	14.9	14.9	15.6	4.2	0.6	0.0	0.0	308	6.4
2012	7.3	6.4	18.2	21.3	18.8	11.2	10.6	4.0	1.5	0.3	0.3	329	6.5
2013	7.4	3.0	15.6	32.0	14.7	12.6	9.5	3.5	0.9	0.4	0.4	231	6.5
2014	**10.1**	**26.6**	**19.8**	**14.8**	**15.2**	**10.1**	**2.5**	**0.8**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**237**	**7.6**

Table 3.10   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Office Administration and Customer Care Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

Active Leisure Studies

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	7.1	6.3	7.9	7.9	14.2	20.5	16.5	13.4	1.6	1.6	3.1	127	5.4
2010	2.3	9.5	12.3	22.3	27.3	12.3	8.6	2.3	1.4	1.4	0.5	220	6.3
2011	7.3	10.2	14.7	19.2	16.9	16.9	7.3	4.5	1.7	1.1	0.0	177	6.5
2012	15.8	19.7	17.8	23.0	12.5	4.6	3.3	0.0	1.3	0.0	2.0	152	7.5
2013	6.7	24.0	27.3	18.7	8.7	5.3	4.7	3.3	1.3	0.0	0.0	150	7.4
2014	**7.3**	**13.1**	**20.4**	**16.8**	**13.1**	**15.3**	**5.1**	**2.9**	**2.9**	**2.9**	**0.0**	**137**	**6.7**

Table 3.11   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Active Leisure Studies Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

Agriculture, Horticulture

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	3.5	9.6	21.3	28.7	22.2	9.1	3.0	2.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	230	6.9
2010	6.5	13.6	19.2	22.9	15.9	9.8	5.6	5.6	0.5	0.5	0.0	214	6.9
2011	9.4	14.4	18.9	22.2	17.8	7.8	7.8	1.1	0.0	0.6	0.0	180	7.1
2012	12.7	13.2	21.2	14.3	16.9	12.2	5.3	2.6	1.6	0.0	0.0	189	7.1
2013	19.0	16.9	17.4	12.8	15.4	10.8	4.1	1.5	1.0	1.0	0.0	195	7.4
2014	**15.1**	**14.6**	**18.4**	**10.8**	**18.9**	**7.0**	**9.7**	**3.2**	**0.5**	**0.5**	**1.1**	**185**	**7.0**

Table 3.12   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Agriculture, Horticulture Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

Hair and Beauty

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	31.3	14.6	20.1	11.8	16.7	3.5	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	144	8.1
2010	24.5	19.4	25.5	16.7	6.5	5.1	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	216	8.1
2011	30.2	12.3	24.7	9.3	11.1	10.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.0	162	8.0
2012	30.8	26.4	17.0	12.6	9.9	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	182	8.5
2013	27.0	15.8	17.8	19.1	9.9	5.9	3.9	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	152	7.9
2014	**41.7**	**22.2**	**11.1**	**12.2**	**8.3**	**2.2**	**1.1**	**1.1**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**180**	**8.6**

Table 3.13   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Hair and Beauty Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

Technology

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	9.7	11.3	9.7	8.1	12.9	1.6	19.4	6.5	11.3	9.7	0.0	62	5.5
2010	2.2	9.0	11.2	14.6	23.6	15.7	10.1	5.6	7.9	0.0	0.0	89	5.9
2011	23.1	5.1	12.8	17.9	7.7	0.0	20.5	7.7	2.6	2.6	0.0	39	6.6
2012	0.0	0.0	2.7	5.4	2.7	32.4	29.7	16.2	5.4	2.7	2.7	37	4.2
2013	0.0	5.0	25.0	10.0	10.0	15.0	15.0	12.5	5.0	2.5	0.0	40	5.6
2014	**3.3**	**13.3**	**31.7**	**25.0**	**10.0**	**6.7**	**3.3**	**3.3**	**1.7**	**0.0**	**1.7**	**60**	**7.0**

Table 3.14   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Technology Vocational Education Task, 2009 to 2014.

3.5.2   Additional observations related to the Vocational Education Tasks

In addition to the observations in section 3.2 above that apply to all tasks, the following further observations are made in relation to the Vocational Education Tasks in particular.

The types of tasks presented across the range of specialisms included the development of products or other artefacts, the staging of events, the provision of services, and the investigation of issues and topics. A very broad range of tasks was seen.

Good practice observed
- The majority of candidates presented tasks that were relevant and appropriate to the vocational specialism concerned.

- Examiners noted that candidates who performed well in the tasks frequently showed evidence of relevant cross-curricular applications that went beyond the mandatory areas for such integration.

- In most cases where products or artefacts were produced, health and safety considerations were evident in the planning process.

- The majority of candidates demonstrated a very satisfactory level of practical skills, with excellent standards evident in some cases. However, the standard of skills varied considerably, ranging from very poor in a small number of cases to some tasks that comfortably exceeded the standard required for full credit. Examples of specific skills that were commended by examiners included
  o manufacture and assembly skills
  o manual dexterity in the use of tools and equipment
  o computer aided design (CAD) skills
  o art and design skills
  o photographic and modelling skills.

Areas for development
- In some cases, products made by candidates for particular tasks were not available in the school for assessment on the day of the examiner's visit.

- Some tasks displayed minimal or no relevance to the vocational specialism within which they were purported to be situated.

- In product-type tasks in particular, some teachers had evidently provided candidates with specific design briefs which limited candidates' creativity and initiative and thereby prevented them from scoring as well as they might otherwise have

- Many candidates did not achieve effective and meaningful integration in the mandatory area of Mathematical Applications.

- Candidates continue to score poorly in the following areas in particular:
    o analysis of findings in reporting on an investigation
    o self-evaluation.

- In some specialisms, weaker candidates in particular chose to carry out investigations, while experience elsewhere suggests that such candidates would fare better by being involved in a product-type task. Candidates also find it easier to evaluate products than to engage in the kind of evaluation required by an investigation.

- In some cases, the complexity of tasks undertaken and the high levels of skill required in their execution had clearly demanded significantly more than the minimum of ten hours recommended for task completion. This was the case in many of the product-type tasks presented.

- While report-writing skills were generally satisfactory, in some cases the reports that accompanied products did not match the high quality of the products presented.

- In summary, in relation to the criterion headings used in assessing the Vocational Education Tasks:
    o *clarity of purpose* has improved in recent years but remains a problem for some candidates who participate in group tasks
    o *research and planning* could be further improved
    o *carrying out of task / investigation* is generally of a good standard
    o *analysis of the findings* in investigative tasks could be further improved
    o *self-evaluation* and *product evaluation* are sometimes confused and are weak in many cases
    o *product evaluation* is often omitted for product-type tasks
    o the relevance and quality of *cross-curricular applications and integration*, particularly in the area of Mathematical Applications, continues to be weak in many tasks
    o *effectiveness of communication and presentation* is generally of a high standard.

3.5.3   Additional recommendations related to the Vocational Education Task

The recommendations in section 3.2 above apply. In addition to noting the *areas for development* immediately above, the following administrative issue should also be noted in relation to the Vocational Education Task.

- In some cases, schools enter candidates for the incorrect specialism. This is frequently not noticed and rectified when the State Examinations Commission collates the information entered and returns it to schools for checking. Examiners from the wrong specialism are then appointed to carry out the task assessments in the school, and the matter only comes to light when they are making appointments to visit schools. Rectifying the problem at this stage is very problematic,

as it disrupts examiner appointments and scheduling, causing inconvenience to other schools, and often leading to late assessments for the candidates concerned. To avoid this, schools are requested to check the "turnaround" document carefully when they receive it earlier in the school year.

3.6 Contemporary Issue Task

All of the observations and recommendations made in Section 3.2 above apply. In addition, the following information, observations, and recommendations are specific to the Contemporary Issues Task.

The Contemporary Issues Task may be an individual or a group task. It is completed in Session 3, which is the first half of Year 2.

The specification for this student task is given on pages 40 to 46 of the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks*.

3.6.1 Statistics on Performance

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	13.5	15.5	18.6	18.1	13.4	10.8	5.6	2.4	1.5	0.4	0.2	3123	7.2
2010	12.3	17.5	19.8	17.9	15.5	9.5	4.7	1.8	0.7	0.2	0.1	3237	7.3
2011	12.9	16.4	18.7	17.3	13.8	9.9	6.1	2.6	1.5	0.5	0.1	3059	7.2
2012	14.0	18.5	20.6	19.5	11.9	8.7	3.7	1.7	1.0	0.3	0.1	3099	7.4
2013	13.8	18.0	21.9	18.1	12.7	8.1	4.5	1.8	0.7	0.2	0.2	2673	7.4
2014	**14.1**	**20.0**	**18.2**	**16.8**	**12.9**	**8.7**	**5.6**	**2.0**	**0.9**	**0.6**	**0.1**	**2837**	**7.4**

Table 3.15   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Contemporary Issues Task, 2009 to 2014.

3.6.2 Additional observations related to the Contemporary Issues Task

In addition to the observations in section 3.2 above that apply to all tasks, the following further observations are made in relation to the Contemporary Issues Task in particular.

The range and variety of issues investigated continues to impress examiners and provides evidence that the Contemporary Issue Task engages the majority of candidates very positively. A high level of interest in social issues was demonstrated.

Good practice observed

- In most cases, the action component was planned, focused, recorded, and evaluated.

- The action component was capable of influencing the issue – for example, raising awareness.

- Evaluative comments were personal and therefore convincingly presented. It was evident that completing the task had had a clear and positive effect on candidate self-esteem

- Many candidates gave excellent oral presentations – the best using prompts. They made easy eye-contact and, where they had chosen the topic themselves, gave a very convincing and effective performance.

Areas for development

- In some cases, the action component was not adequately outlined or was absent entirely. The action should be designed to have positive impact of on the issue investigated, whether by directly improving the situation or, for example, by raising awareness among others. Some

actions described had no prospect of having any impact on the issue and were therefore not appropriate forms of action for this task.

- A minority of candidates appeared to have been unaware of the need to make an oral presentation. Others displayed limited levels of preparation. Some merely read out a prepared account, with little expression or eye contact, and others failed to speak for the required amount of time.

3.6.3 Additional recommendations related to the Contemporary Issues Task

In addition to the recommendations in section 3.2 above that apply to all tasks, the following further recommendation is made in relation to the Contemporary Issues Task in particular.

- Teachers and students should ensure that actions are relevant, focused and appropriate. The action should be clearly related to the issue investigated and be capable of affecting it.

3.7 Practical Achievement Task

All of the observations and recommendations made in Section 3.2 above apply. In addition, the following information, observations, and recommendations are specific to the Practical Achievement Task.

Unlike the tasks dealt with in previous sections, the Practical Achievement Task must be an individual task. It is completed in Session 3, which is the first half of Year 2.

The specification for this student task is given on pages 47 to 54 of the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks*. Further information on this task is given in Department of Education and Skills circular letter S42/01, (see Appendix 1).

The SEC supplies a pro-forma assessment booklet to candidates outlining in detail the requirements of the different stages of the student task and incorporating a logbook.

To receive credit for the task, the candidate must produce externally verified authentic evidence of task completion, complete the pro-forma booklet, and present for interview.

3.7.1 Statistics on Performance

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	6.2	12.0	18.1	20.5	18.1	10.8	6.8	3.4	1.9	1.4	0.8	3015	6.6
2010	6.2	10.9	19.3	22.2	15.8	10.7	6.9	3.3	2.1	1.9	0.6	3156	6.6
2011	5.6	12.1	18.8	19.9	16.6	10.8	7.3	4.0	2.6	1.2	1.2	2935	6.6
2012	6.0	12.8	18.1	21.4	18.6	11.0	5.9	2.8	1.8	0.9	0.7	3002	6.7
2013	6.3	12.1	17.1	20.4	17.7	10.8	6.6	4.0	2.6	1.3	1.0	2602	6.6
2014	**5.2**	**15.6**	**19.1**	**20.7**	**18.4**	**9.5**	**5.6**	**2.6**	**1.6**	**1.2**	**0.5**	**2734**	**6.8**

Table 3.16 Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Practical Achievement Task, 2009 to 2014.

3.7.2 Additional observations related to the Practical Achievement Task

In addition to the observations in section 3.2 above that apply to all tasks, the following further observations are made in relation to the Practical Achievement Task in particular.

Good practice observed
- Candidates engaged in a wide variety of tasks, many of which were highly creative, original and individual. Such tasks required a lot of planning, collaboration with the verifier, and hard work in their execution. Successful candidates took advantage of this challenge to give expression to their talents and interests, and invested worthwhile time in a creative and productive practical pursuit, such as in one case restoring a vintage tractor.

- In most schools there was a good understanding of the requirements of the task. Candidates presented task booklets that contained all the elements for task evaluation and chose a goal that was both realistic and achievable. Candidates were able to follow the learning process and could

provide information in all the required areas – selection, aims, planning, log entries, evaluation, and evidence.

- The standard of completion of the booklet varied; candidates who had chosen their task well and worked independently had clearly gained confidence from their involvement with the task and were successful. Those who had chosen a task that was meaningful to them were able to demonstrate engagement and a sense of achievement, along with an improvement in skills and original, unique input.

- Candidates who kept a diary of their progress and followed the guidance on each page in the pro-forma booklet tended to give a better account of their carrying out of the task.

- Candidates who described with enthusiasm their own work, using 'I' statements and referring to personal feelings, improved the overall impression of the task, and had clearly gained a significant sense of achievement and self-confidence.

- The presence of artefacts and objects allowed candidates to show ownership of their task at interview.

Areas for development

- Many candidates were put at a serious disadvantage when the whole class group was organised into doing an identical task, such as the driver theory test, which lacks the necessary action-based practical element, or other whole-group courses. Motivation and personal investment in the task can be significantly lower in such cases. Furthermore, the criteria in the task specification include *quality of engagement* and one aspect of such engagement that is specifically allocated marks is *individuality* (see marking scheme). This requires the demonstration of inventiveness, innovation, resourcefulness in the selection and organisation of the task, and evidence of original input. Candidates whose Practical Achievement Task is organised in such a whole-group manner will struggle to gain any of these marks. Furthermore, in these instances, log entries tend to be repetitive and to focus on a list of activities undertaken at each class, with little sense of engagement, excitement, or resourceful problem-solving.

- The 2005 Chief Examiner's report pointed out that "studying for the Driver Theory Test on its own is not sufficient, unless the student actually sits the driving test and takes driving lessons which can be verified by a suitable verifier". It is disappointing to find classes in successive years all presenting as doing the Driver Theory Test in lieu of a genuine action-based individual task.

- Some tasks presented did not fulfil one or more of the requirements for the Practical Achievement Task: to be highly practical; to generate regular engagement over a prolonged period of at least two months; to provide a challenge for the student to achieve measurable success; to have potential for the accumulation of evidence of Practical Achievement; and to engage with an adult verifier.

- The standard varied considerably from school to school. Where attainments were low, it often seemed that candidates had received little guidance from the anchor teacher for the task. Some candidates had no verifier and presented no evidence of achievement.

- Some logs gave an account that, while being factually descriptive of what had occurred, lacked detail, engagement, personal involvement and evidence of progression. The use of 'we' instead of 'I' statements throughout the booklet tended to detract from a sense of the candidate's ownership of their task.

- A poor choice of task with limited potential, where the candidate set the bar too low, tended to result in limited progression and achievement. It is essential that the task shows measurable achievement and demonstrates definite progress.

- Where research and planning were found to be weak, there was little focus on costing the task, considering potential obstacles and doing adequate background research.

- Many candidates commented that they loved engaging in the practical work but struggled with writing up their task in the Practical Achievement Task booklet. This may in some cases be due to literacy issues. In such cases, schools should make it a priority to support candidates in improving their level of literacy, which is a vital life skill, the development of which is a core function of schooling.

- Some candidates failed to complete the booklet in its entirety, sometimes omitting entire sections.

- In a few cases, candidates who did not have an approved *reasonable accommodation* allowing use of a word processor had presented typed log entries instead of having them handwritten as required.

- There were difficulties with verification of evidence in some centres.

3.7.3 Additional recommendations related to the Practical Achievement Task

In addition to the recommendations in section 3.2 above that apply to all tasks, the following further recommendations are made in relation to the Practical Achievement Task in particular.

- While this task is done outside of school, there is nonetheless a need to provide opportunities in school time for monitoring and guidance.

- Schools that have been providing whole-group courses should take on board the need to address the requirement for an **individual**, **practical**, as opposed to theoretical, task.

- Teachers should discuss the Practical Achievement Task with students before the end of Year 1, briefing them on the specifications for the task, its nature, purpose, structure and the criteria for assessment.

- Teachers should encourage students to undertake individual tasks that are meaningful to them and that they are passionate about, as this will help keep them motivated. They might discuss realistic, relevant and suitable challenges that take account of their own personal contexts.

- Teachers should guide the student in selecting a task which has clear stages which can be quantified for progression and verification, and should provide guidance on the requirements of the task by reading through the pro-forma booklet and other relevant documentation with the students.

- The anchor teacher or another nominated teacher needs to be in contact with the student's selected verifier, to ensure that monitoring and progression is taking place. It is important to ensure that the verifier signs the booklet, has the appropriate qualifications, and is not a member of the student's family.

- Students should be guided as to what constitutes an aim and its development, as weakly-formulated aims at the outset have a ripple effect on attainment in log completion and meeting the brief.

- Students should be encouraged to keep a detailed diary and record in it every time they do anything relevant. This will assist them greatly in completing the log-book entries in the pro-forma booklet.

- If the student's challenge is dependent on good weather or bright evenings, they should start early in September or during the summer.

- Students should make a clear plan of action, note obstacles and opportunities, and record any changes to the plan and the reasons why they were made.

- Students should pay particular attention to the guidelines on the top of each page in the booklet and remember to include how they feel about everything as they proceed.

- Any relevant health and safety aspects of the task should be referred to in the log entries.

- Where the student plans to use photographic evidence, they should take pictures of at least three different stages in the task.

- Students should ensure that their booklets are neat and legibly written.

- Students should keep a copy of their written document (even the rough draft) to help them prepare for interview.

3.8 Personal Reflection Task

The Personal Reflection Task differs significantly from the other tasks in its nature and purpose. Its assessment arrangements are accordingly different.

The assessment of the Personal Reflection Task is based on two reflective statements that the candidate submits – a *Year 1 statement* at the end of Year 1 of the programme and a *Year 2 statement* at the end of Year 2. The two statements are then collated by the SEC and marked together, out of a total of 200 marks, by a single examiner. The Year 1 statement accounts for 80 marks (40%) and the Year 2 statement accounts for the remaining 120 marks (60%).

The full specification for this task is given on pages 55 to 59 of the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks*, and the marking scheme is available on the SEC website.

3.8.1 Statistics on Performance

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	5.5	18.0	27.9	24.0	12.1	5.1	1.8	1.6	2.0	1.8	0.2	3131	7.2
2010	7.5	27.4	31.6	17.5	6.4	2.2	1.5	1.8	3.0	1.0	0.1	3289	7.6
2011	4.7	13.7	23.7	24.3	13.8	8.0	3.3	2.1	3.6	2.2	0.5	3091	6.8
2012	6.5	18.6	26.8	20.5	11.7	5.3	2.9	1.6	4.1	1.5	0.4	3159	7.1
2013	5.9	18.5	30.6	22.4	9.1	4.0	2.3	1.7	3.7	1.6	0.3	2744	7.3
2014	**4.8**	**16.9**	**26.7**	**21.8**	**12.9**	**5.9**	**3.4**	**2.0**	**3.8**	**1.4**	**0.4**	**2894**	**7.0**

Table 3.17   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Personal Reflection Task, 2009 to 2014.

The shape of the distribution is a little unusual in that each year there is a small bulge at 2 credits where one might expect the distribution to be tailing off. This is accounted for by the fact that, each year, there are a number of candidates who present a Year 1 statement but no Year 2 statement; the modal score for such candidates is 2 credits.

3.8.2 Observations of the Chief Examiner

Candidates' statements are assessed in a manner that takes account of the following criteria: foci of reflection, ability to reflect and media of reflection. The structure of the marking scheme is informed by these criteria but is organised to reflect the structure specified for the Personal Reflection Task on pages 56 and 57 of the *Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks*. The comments below should be considered in conjunction with the marking scheme and the task specification.

Foci of Reflection
Year 1 focus/foci

The majority of candidates were awarded full marks for identifying two concrete learning experiences related to their engagement with the programme as the foci of reflection. These foci included work experience, tasks, subjects, enterprise, trips, guest speakers, among other things.

Year 2 focus/foci

The majority of candidates were again awarded full marks for identifying two *vocational* aspects related to their engagement with the programme as the foci of reflection. Acceptable foci included work experience, vocational specialisms, open days, or career exhibitions at educational institutes, interview practice, enterprise, career guidance, guest speakers from training programmes. Some candidates did not give a focus or foci with a vocational link, as required.

Personalisation

Candidates were required to personalise the descriptions in their Year 1 and Year 2 statements with several meaningful 'I' statements. Most of the 'I' statements were factual descriptions but some also referred to feelings (e.g. '*I was very nervous about going on work experience....*','*I was proud of how I dealt with the injured child...*' and '*I was really annoyed at how much detergent the others in the class wasted...*'). Statements that included references to a candidate's fears, ambitions, pleasure, frustration, and so on, were awarded more personalisation marks than those that were factual accounts of events with no reflection on how the experience was meaningful to the candidate on an emotional level. Some descriptions of group activities that used a lot of 'we' or 'the class' statements often failed to emphasise sufficiently the candidate's individual involvement or contribution to the activity and usually omitted any reference to feelings.

Ability to Reflect
Year 1 starting point

Each reflective statement is required to describe the initial position or starting point of reflection. Candidates frequently gave reasons for choosing Leaving Certificate Applied (e.g. '*I knew LCA would involve work experience and I thought the Leaving Cert course would be really hard....*') as their starting position and good statements also recalled and reviewed or described how their past experiences influenced their decision or launched their starting position, (e.g. '*My teachers thought the LCA would suit me better because it was more practical and I knew I often became bored sitting in class listening to the teacher and wasn't great at study....*').

Year 2 starting point

Candidates generally reviewed some past experiences and often included mini-starting positions throughout their statement. Some gave their starting position as their reasons for choosing to do Leaving Certificate Applied, rather than reviewing their Year 1 experiences and thereby establishing a fresh starting position at the beginning of Year 2. Many starting positions lacked depth and often included vague references to foci.

Year 1 description of focus/foci

The candidates were required to describe in some depth the learning experiences related to their chosen foci and make some analysis about how these affected them, changed their way of thinking, or reinforced their way of thinking. Most candidates gave good general descriptions of fact (e.g. '*On work experience placement helping in a nursing home I had to help feed some of the old people whose hands were too shaky to feed themselves...*') but fewer gave analysis (e.g. *I thought I'd like working in the nursing home helping old people the same age as my Nan and granddad but I got really sad dealing with sickness all the time and some of them were very cranky....*') and fewer still reached conclusions ('*and therefore I definitely won't be looking for a job with old people when I leave school...*'). Some candidates described one experience in reasonable detail and the others insufficiently.

Year 2 description of focus/foci

Candidates were required to describe in depth the learning experiences related to their chosen **vocational** focus or foci and make some analysis about how these affected them, what was learned from these experiences, how these experiences changed their way of thinking or reinforced their way of thinking, with particular emphasis on decisions about a future career. Some good general descriptions were given, most gave some analysis, but few reached clear conclusions. (e.g. *At first I hated the idea of the mock interviews especially because they were to be videotaped and played back. But when the teacher only played my videotape to me on my own, I relaxed a bit and could see the point of doing them because they might help me get a job..'.*). Where a focus or learning experience had no vocational dimension, its description was awarded no marks.

Summary of present position

Few candidates were awarded full marks for their summary of their present position based on an analysis of their key learning experiences. Few candidates drew at least two conclusions about self (e.g., "*after doing work experience in the co-op shop I now know how to get along well with others in the workplace because I understand work mates are not friends and I have to sometimes bite my tongue for the sake of getting the job done...*' or '*When the teacher played back the video of my second mock interview I could see that I had improved because I was sitting up straighter and my voice was clear and steady. Now I have more confidence for any interview.*') Candidates needed to make connections between their experiences and themselves, their strengths, weaknesses or future career. Where the conclusions about self were supported by 'because' statements, this assisted candidates in being awarded more marks.

Outline of Future Position
Year 1 future position

A short-term plan based on the described learning experiences must be presented. Some candidates found it difficult to make a future plan beyond Year 2 of Leaving Certificate Applied and referred to working harder, improving attendance, and "getting a distinction". Some plans were vague or aspirational in nature (e.g. *I would like to work with horses....* or *I hope that I'll get a job there after leaving school...*).

Year 2 future position

Candidates are required to outline a specific future career plan based on their key learning experiences, which should give some detail, such as: the name of a future training course or apprenticeship, its duration, the associated entry requirements, how to apply, the associated qualification or award, whether full-time or part-time, and so on. Sufficient detail about further education courses was generally provided by the candidates, but where apprenticeships were mentioned, often the required detail about the duration, the qualification or award and how to apply was lacking. Some candidates referred to the economic situation as an obstacle preventing them from making a specific career plan. An excellent future position might include an alternative plan should the first one not succeed. Aspirations (e.g. '*I want to have my own business...*'), unless supported with a concrete, practical, detailed plan were not considered to constitute a future plan. Where plans did not follow on from the foci, marks were lost unless reasons were given.

Media of Reflection

Effectiveness of communication

Most candidates made effective use of word processors and spell checkers to present statements varying from good to excellent. Literacy standards varied but most candidates presented work with minimal spelling, capitalisation and grammatical errors, and, where such errors did occur, they generally did not interfere with the legibility of the statements. However, some candidates showed poor fluency of expression, their statements containing many spelling and grammatical errors, and their ideas being sometimes unclear. Some hand-written statements were difficult to read and the layout of hand-written statements, in terms of paragraphing and headings was generally less impressive than those that were word-processed. Some candidates used a template or a prescribed question/answer format to make their statements: since such formats do not encourage the personal reflective process, these candidates generally did not score well.

The vast majority of presentations were written statements of approximately one A4 typed page in length and a small number of audio presentations was also submitted. No supportive illustrative materials, such as drawings or photographs, were presented.

Organisation of thought

Excellent statements were structured with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Excellent statements were devoid of repetition and the ideas were presented in a logical sequence. Full marks were not awarded to any statement that omitted any of the key elements of reflection. Where all key elements were present, the mark depended on the depth of engagement with the reflective process. As might be expected, an increased maturity and improved focus on learning was displayed in the Year 2 statement of many candidates compared to their Year 1 statement.

3.8.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

▪ Teachers should help students appreciate the value of reflection as a necessary life skill.

▪ Teachers should encourage students to draft and redraft their statements.

▪ An integrated approach to the preparation of the Personal Reflective Statements involving the Leaving Certificate Applied teaching team and the guidance department is recommended.

▪ To help students take ownership of their own statements and encourage *personal* reflection, teachers should not issue a template or list of questions as a rigid framework for the reflective statements.

▪ Exemplar statements should only be used as a teaching aid, if at all. Some candidates had clearly been overly influenced by such exemplars.

▪ Some students might find it useful to use a photograph or an illustration to support their reflections.

3.8.4   Recommendations to schools and centres

- Year 1 statements are held in store in the SEC after submission until the Year 2 statements of the same candidates are submitted a year later. Where possible, both statements of the same candidate are marked by the same Examiner. Discrepancies arise between the two sets of statements due to candidates leaving the Leaving Certificate Applied course without submitting any Year 2 statement, or transferring to another school. The ongoing cooperation of schools and centres in resolving the large number of discrepancies that arise is appreciated and it is hoped that this will continue.

- A large number of statements that are not labelled with the candidate's number and school or centre number are encountered every year. It is difficult and time-consuming to identify them and to pair Year 1 and Year 2 statements of the same candidate if one or both are not labelled correctly. Schools and centres are requested to ensure each statement carries the number of the candidate and the roll number of the school or centre.

4. Reports on external examinations

4.1 English and Communication

The English and Communication syllabus consists of four modules: *Communications and the Working World*; *Communications and Enterprise*; *The Communications Media* and *Critical Literacy and Composition*.

Candidates are assessed in two separate events: an oral examination in May (80 marks) and a written paper in June (160 marks). The content of the oral component is based on the four modules of the syllabus and is marked on the basis of both this content and an assessment of candidates' general communicative ability. The duration of the oral examination is between ten and fifteen minutes per candidate. The written examination, of two hours duration, is also designed around the syllabus modules and includes an audio-visual section, conducted through the use of a DVD.

In Part One of the written examination, (the audio-visual section, carrying 40 marks,) candidates were required to attempt all of the questions (nine in total). In Part Two, (carrying 120 marks,) candidates were required to answer one question from each of four sections, corresponding to the four syllabus modules. There was a choice of at least two questions in each of these sections.

4.1.1 Statistics on Performance

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	7.8	15.9	20.8	21.4	15.8	8.9	4.6	2.2	1.2	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.0	3103	9.1
2010	7.4	13.2	19.7	21.0	16.5	9.9	6.0	3.0	1.8	1.0	0.4	0.2	0.0	3215	8.8
2011	7.9	16.5	20.8	20.2	12.7	9.0	6.0	3.1	1.9	1.0	0.3	0.4	0.2	3022	8.9
2012	8.3	16.0	20.5	18.2	13.9	9.7	6.3	3.2	2.0	0.9	0.6	0.3	0.2	3075	8.9
2013	8.0	14.5	18.1	18.1	14.6	10.5	7.3	4.5	2.0	1.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	2649	8.7
2014	**8.6**	**15.2**	**17.6**	**16.4**	**12.9**	**11.0**	**8.0**	**4.9**	**3.2**	**1.3**	**0.6**	**0.2**	**0.1**	**2791**	**8.6**

Table 4.1   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, English and Communication, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	6.1	16.1	23.9	22.4	15.3	8.2	4.0	2.0	1.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.0	3,121	9.1
2010	4.7	14.5	22.4	23.0	16.1	9.9	4.5	2.5	1.3	0.5	0.6	0.2	0.0	3,239	8.9
2011	5.3	17.3	22.4	21.5	13.9	9.5	4.4	2.2	1.5	0.9	0.8	0.2	0.1	3,053	9.0
2012	6.0	17.9	23.9	20.2	12.6	8.7	5.1	2.2	1.9	0.8	0.6	0.1	0.1	3,098	9.0
2013	4.7	14.5	20.7	21.2	15.3	10.4	6.6	3.1	1.8	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.1	2,670	8.8
2014	**4.4**	**16.0**	**20.0**	**19.3**	**16.2**	**10.2**	**6.2**	**3.6**	**2.2**	**1.3**	**0.5**	**0.1**	**0.0**	**2,817**	**8.7**

Table 4.2   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, English and Communication, 2009 to 2014.

4.1.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the oral examination

Examiners conducting the oral component of the English and Communications examination this year observed that in general candidates were well prepared and confident. Examiners particularly noted that a very good standard was evident among many students for whom English was a second language.

Examiners found candidates to be most comfortable and knowledgeable when discussing their work placements and enterprise/mini-company experiences in relation to questions on modules on Communications and the Working World and Communications and Enterprise. Some candidates were less capable when answering questions in the examination that related to the modules The Communications Media and Critical Literacy and Composition. A number of examiners reported that some candidates appeared either unfamiliar with or uninterested in the literature they had studied. In relation to general communicative ability, most candidates encountered were personable and engaging. Examiners observed that some candidates would have benefitted from more highly developed listening skills.

When dealing with content on **Module 1, Communications and the Working World**, examiners found that some candidates were unsure of how to prepare for an interview or compile a Curriculum Vita. Candidates familiar with the terminology particular to the module scored more highly than those who lacked this information. Candidates with interview experience in a real-life setting benefitted from such experience in the examination.

In relation to **Module 2, Communications and Enterprise,** in many cases, candidates who took part in an enterprise or mini-company scored better in this section than those who had not done so. This was particularly evident where the mini-company had been run and organised well, and the candidates therefore had experience of properly run meetings and well-conducted market research and had developed skills in team work and project management.

With **Module 3, The Communications Media**, examiners found that candidates generally were knowledgeable about advertising, and that cinema remains a popular recreational activity. Unsurprisingly in an age of social media, examiners found fewer candidates routinely watched television than in the past.

Candidate performance in relation to **Module 4, Critical Literacy and Composition,** caused some concern. Significant numbers of candidates appeared unfamiliar with a suitable range of poems, songs, films and particularly novels and short stories. Some examiners expressed a view that in a minority of cases candidates appeared to be drawing on their recollection of texts studied as part of their Junior Certificate English programme. In some instances, candidates said they had seldom engaged in the type of personal writing laid out in the learning outcomes in Units 1, 2 and 3 of the module.

Despite this, examiners also reported encountering examples of good practice, such as cases where students had engaged in a form of comparative study that involved both the written and film version of a text. Examiners universally observed that when the texts studied appealed to the candidates they were both willing and able to discuss them with fluency and insight.

Examiners reported that the majority of schools were helpful and cooperative in the organisation of the examination and that most examination centres were fit for purpose. Many examiners expressed their appreciation for the level of assistance they received from school Principals and LCA Co-ordinators. Examiners particularly appreciated when schools limited their use of the school intercom while the assessment was taking place as this facilitates clear recording of the examination. Other examples of good practice observed by examiners include posting the running order for candidates on the centre door and on the examiner's desk, facilitating the smooth conduct of the examination. Examiners noticed that candidates who had participated in a "mock" oral examination in English and Communications prior to the examination appeared to benefit from this experience.

Observations related to the written examination

Candidates who answered the required number of questions with fluency, in precise and relevant answers, scored highly in the examination. Examiners reported that a significant minority of candidates did not appear to be familiar with the layout of the paper as some did not answer the required number of questions. Candidates who answered either fewer or more than the required number of questions tended to score less well overall.

It was also noted by examiners that some candidates did not appear sufficiently familiar with some of the instructional words normally used in an examination, and their correct interpretation in that context e.g. "explain", "outline", "suggest", "identify". Candidates frequently did not distinguish between lower-order questions that required a simple listing or identification and more complex ones which required developed descriptions or explanations.

Examiners also observed that, in some cases, candidates did not appear familiar with some of the module-specific terms, listed in the syllabus and used in the examination. These terms included: vox pop, market research, target audience, editorial, feature article, broadsheet, tabloid, producer, director and setting.

In each of the sections on the 2014 examination paper, the final part of each question (part (d)) was worth the most marks (12). These questions carried higher marks as they required candidates to demonstrate a synthesis of higher-order skills in completing tasks such as report writing and critical analysis of texts appropriate to the level. In recent years, these questions have been laid out in a structured fashion in order to encourage candidates to complete all parts of the questions. This scaffolded approach to assessment appears to have had the desired effect, with examiners reporting that more candidates complete these questions more fully than heretofore. Candidates who did well in the examination usually scored highly in these questions. The tasks required of candidates to answer these questions in the 2014 examination, and the learning outcomes (LO) to which they are linked, are outlined below.

Tasks to be carried out in part (d)	Syllabus Reference
Write a report – Q.1 & Q.5	Module 1 – Unit 6 (LO 5)
	Module 2 – Unit 4 (LO 5)
	Module 3 – Unit 1 (LO 7)
Write a letter – Q.2	Module 1 - Unit 5 (LO 2)
Answer typical interview questions - Q. 3	Module 2 – Unit 2 (LO 4)
Write the text of a talk – Q.4	Module 1 – Unit 2 (LO 6)
Write an article – Q.6	Module 3 – Unit 1 (LO 7)
Write a film review – Q.7	Module 4 – Unit 6 (LO 2)
Write about the setting of a novel or short story Q. 8	Module 4 – Unit 4 (LO 2)
Write about a song or poem you have studied Q.9	Module 4 – Unit 1 (LO 3)
	Module 4 – Unit 2 (LO 3)

Table 4.3   Tasks required in part (d) of each question, with syllabus references, English and Communication, 2014.

Examiners reported that most candidates scored well in answers to short questions that required basic reading comprehension skills. Candidates who scored poorly in the examination frequently lacked these essential skills. Examiners observed that some less successful candidates tended to answer questions in bullet points rather than providing developed answers using full sentences. Successful candidates demonstrated more developed higher order skills and were better able to draw inferences from information provided and develop answers as required.

Examiners were surprised to find some candidates with undeveloped letter writing skill. This was all the more surprising given that an entire unit (Unit 5) in Module 1 of the English and Communications course is devoted to such skills and they are common to other elements of the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, such as Vocational Preparation and Guidance.

In **Part One** of the 2014 examination, the featured audio-visual clip was an edited excerpt from a documentary, produced by Icebox Films for RTE, about the late Seamus Heaney called *Out of the Marvellous*. Candidates generally scored well in this part of the examination, with the majority of candidates scoring 28 marks or more out of a possible 40 marks. Candidates with good levels of audio-visual comprehension scored well in Questions 8 and 9, both of which required candidates to draw inferences from the clip. Some candidates lost marks in this section for not developing their answers when required to do so. Examiners noted that many successful candidates used the notes column on page 2 of the examination paper as an aide memoire during the examination.

In **Part Two** of the examination, candidates often wrote with confidence and at some length when drawing from their own real life experience. This was evident in answers to questions on work placement and enterprise or mini-company in **Section 1 (Communications and the Working World)** and **Section 2 (Communications and Enterprise).**

In **Section One – Communications and the Working World**, Question 1 proved to be the most popular in this section and in general, candidates scored well in this question. In Question 2, (c) the

two skills most commonly identified as important while on work experience were punctuality and politeness. Part (d) of Question 2 required candidates to write a letter. While letters written following the directions given in the question scored well, a significant number of candidates did not pay attention to the layout of the letter and did not include essential components such as addresses and appropriate salutations.

In **Section Two – Communications and Enterprise**, candidates were asked to answer one question from Questions 3, 4 or 5. Questions 3 and 4 were the more popular questions in this section, with Question 3 being marginally the most popular. A significant number of candidates answered more than the single question required from this section.   In keeping with examiners' observations that candidates usually wrote well about their own experiences, most candidates scored highly when writing answers to typical interview questions (Question 3 (d)). Likewise, candidates who had participated fully in their class enterprise or mini-company scored very well in the parts of Questions 4 and 5 which related to this experience. Candidates who employed an appropriate tone and register in answer to Question 4 (d) – a talk to be delivered to a gathering of local business people – scored better than candidates who did not write appropriately for the intended audience. Part (d) of Question 5 – a report on market research undertaken – was not so well handled, with a significant number of candidates appearing to either not understand the term 'market research' or not to have read the question carefully.

In **Section 3 – The Communications Media,** Question 7 was the slightly more popular of the two questions. In Question 6, the majority of candidates were able to name a tabloid and a broadsheet paper and to outline differences between them. In Question 7, part (c), a significant number of candidates wrote extensively about their favourite soap opera without necessarily referring to the aspects required in the question i.e. the setting, special effects, soundtrack or cliff-hanger endings. Part (d) – a film review – was generally well answered with good focus on the elements of a review rather than merely summarizing the plot.

Reflecting candidates' performance in the equivalent section of the oral component of the examination, a significant number of candidates in the written examination either did not answer the questions in **Section 4 – Critical Literacy and Composition** or wrote extremely brief answers. Candidates who had studied material (songs, poems, short stories, novels and films) from a range of genres and had covered a variety of themes and issues tended to score better than those candidates who demonstrated a more limited repertoire.

While both questions (8 and 9) in this section were popular, the standard of answering in this section was generally disappointing. Examiners particularly noted the significant number of candidates who did not attempt Section 4 at all or who only partially answered questions from the section. Question 9 (c) (i) gave candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their creative side by writing additional lines for John Cooper Clarke's poem, "I Wanna be Yours…". Some examples of appealing responses to this question included: "I wanna be your blanket to keep you nice and warm", and "I wanna be beside you when you wake up in the morn." In Question 9 (d), songs tended to be more popular than poetry. A number of examiners questioned whether candidates are studying songs appropriately in a critical sense or whether the songs cited are simply ones that candidates are familiar with from their own everyday experience.

A wide range of texts were referred to by candidates in answering the section. Text referred to included the following:

Novels and Short Stories
- *Skellig* by David Almond
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *Brooklyn* by Colm Tobin
- *Wilderness* by Roddy Doyle
- *Ganglands: Brazil* by Ross Kemp
- *The Sniper* by Liam O'Flaherty

Poems
- "Stealing" by Carol Ann Duffy
- "The Thickness" of Ice by Merrill Glass
- "Antarctica" by Derek Mahon
- "Nettles" by Vernon Scannell
- "Mid-term Break" by Seamus Heaney
- "In Memory of my Mother" by Patrick Kavanagh

Songs
- "Stan" by Eminem
- "A Boy Named Sue" by Johnny Cash
- "Fast Car" by Tracey Chapman
- "The Hurricane" by Bob Dylan
- "Free" by Emile Sande
- "Small Bomb" by Ed Sheerin

Films
- *Inside I'm Dancing* Dir Damien O'Donnell
- *Cinema Paradiso* Dir Giuseppe Tornatore
- *Saving Private Ryan* Dir Steven Speilberg
- *Of Mice and Men* Dir Gry Sinise
- *The Shawshank Redemption* Dir Frank Darabont
- *Billy Elliot* Dir Stephen Daldry

4.1.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the oral examination
- Greater attention should be paid to developing students' listening skills.

- Teachers should ensure that students have a good knowledge of all aspects of the English and Communication course.

- Careful consideration should be given to the selection of texts studied as part Module 4: Critical Literacy and Composition.

Recommendations related to the written examination

- Students should be familiar with the layout and requirements of the examination paper.

- Keywords used in questions such as 'describe', 'outline', 'identify', 'list' and 'explain' need to be clearly understood by all students.

- To score well in the examination, candidates need to complete the required number of questions and to answer all parts of the questions they attempt. Candidates should take time to check over these answers before completing the examination. It is recommended that candidates remain in the examination centre for the full duration of the examination in order to facilitate this.

- Candidates should consider highlighting the key words in questions prior to writing answers in order to better focus on the key aspects of questions.

- Unless otherwise stated on the examination paper, answers should be written in full sentences rather than in bullet points.

- Answers should be fully developed in line with the requirement of each question.

- The length of individual answers should be guided by the amount of space provided for the answer in the answer booklet. More space is provided to allow more developed answers to questions that carry higher marks.

- Teachers should focus on the learning outcomes outlined in each of the modules in the course.

- Attention should be paid to developing students' reading comprehension skills.

- Students should be familiar with the terminology associated with the various modules in the course. These are listed in the learning outcomes section of each unit.

- Students' skills in the area of audio-visual comprehension could be enhanced by engaging with the learning outcomes outlined in Unit 2 (Oral Communication and Listening Skills) and also Unit 6 (Film) of Module 1. DVDs produced for previous examinations may be a useful resource for this purpose. The audio-visual (DVD) content from previous examinations is now available in the Examination Material Archive on the SEC website at www.examinations.ie. Students should make use of the space for notes provided on the examination paper while watching the audio visual clips in Part 1 of the examination.

- All students should be able to properly construct and compose letters for both personal and business purposes.

- It is important that consideration be given to the function of and audience for a piece of writing and that an appropriate tone and register be employed.

- Sufficient attention should be paid to Section 4 of the course, Critical Literacy and Composition, and students should be encouraged to engage with a wide range of suitable poems, songs, novels, short stories and films.

- Answers to questions on studied texts in Section 4, Critical Literacy and Composition, should reflect time spent engaging appropriately with these texts.

- A critical engagement, as outlined in Module 4, Unit 1, is required when studying the poetry of popular song.

4.1.4 Recommendations to schools and centres

- Schools should refrain, if possible, from using the intercom during the course of the oral examination as this can be distracting for candidates.

- Posting the running order of candidates for assessment both inside and near the examination centre would assist in the smooth conduct of the examination.

- Schools should consider organising "mock" oral examinations prior to the official examination to make candidates familiar with the oral assessment element of this examination.

4.2   Social Education

The course in Social Education consists of six modules. The final examination covers all six modules and is assessed out of 10 credits. The examination comprises three sections: Section A (35 marks) is an Aural Test and all questions must be answered. Section B (20 marks) consists of fifteen multiple-choice questions of which ten must be answered. Section C (45 marks) consists of four multi-part questions; candidates must answer Question C1 and any two of the remaining three questions in this section.

4.2.1   Statistics on Performance

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	3.9	17.1	23.3	23.4	15.3	8.9	4.6	2.0	1.2	0.3	0.0	3103	7.1
2010	4.9	17.2	23.5	21.1	14.8	9.6	5.3	2.2	1.0	0.3	0.1	3227	7.1
2011	4.2	16.3	24.2	22.9	15.1	8.6	5.0	2.2	1.0	0.3	0.1	3025	7.1
2012	4.0	17.6	26.9	21.7	13.7	9.1	3.6	2.4	0.6	0.4	0.1	3071	7.2
2013	4.8	15.6	21.6	21.9	16.0	9.6	5.6	2.8	1.4	0.5	0.0	2657	6.9
2014	**4.2**	**17.0**	**25.6**	**22.3**	**14.8**	**8.3**	**4.6**	**2.1**	**0.8**	**0.3**	**0.0**	**2789**	**7.1**

Table 4.4   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Social Education, 2009 to 2014.

4.2.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Section A – the Aural Test

The theme of the Aural Test was 'Cyber Bullying'. The questions relating to this topic cover a wide range of learning outcomes from across all six modules. Generally, this section was completed well and even the candidates who performed least well were able to show some understanding of the topic and to answer at least some of the questions correctly. Some questions, such as 5(b) and 9(c), required a more extended response than others. In these instances, candidates who did not develop their answers fully lost the opportunity to show their understanding of the learning outcomes involved and therefore scored less well..

Question 10 was based on Module 3, Unit 5, (Contemporary Issues and Human Rights) and posed the greatest challenge for candidates. This question is read aloud on the recording, rather than being printed on the question paper, so as to test the candidates' ability to listen to and correctly interpret a spoken question. Some candidates wrote down the question incorrectly, thus making it difficult for them to answer it appropriately. A number of other candidates correctly wrote down the question but then did not attempt to answer it. Other candidates listed the correct human rights but failed to explain them. Very few candidates listed and explained two relevant human rights, as required. This suggests low levels of achievement of learning outcome 1 and 2 in Unit 5.

It was noted that candidates rarely use the notes page in the examination answerbook. Where candidates did take notes, there was evidence that they were able to use them to answer questions with more clarity, thus demonstrating achievement of the various learning outcomes and facilitating the awarding of marks.

Section B – Multiple-Choice Questions

The questions in Section B were based on a range of learning outcomes across all six modules. Candidates are required to answer ten of the fifteen questions in this section. Most candidates attempted all fifteen questions. In some few cases, candidates ticked two of the available options, which rendered their answer void. Most candidates scored highly overall, showing a good understanding of current affairs and the course in general. However, questions 4, 6 and 13 were frequently answered incorrectly, suggesting that the learning outcomes in Units 1, 2 and 3 of Module 6 (Taking Charge) may need attention.

Section C – Long Questions

Question C1 in Section C which is compulsory, is based on *Social and Health Education I* and *Social and Health Education II,* and was answered by all candidates. The remaining three questions in this section, of which candidates must answer any two, are based on different modules: *My Community* in the case of C2, *Contemporary Issues* in the case of C3, and *Taking Charge* in the case of C4. More candidates answered an extra question in Section C this year than in the previous few years. Question C2 was the most popular of the optional questions, while questions C3 and C4 were about equal in popularity. Where candidates answered all three of the optional questions, they tended to score most poorly on C3. A small number of candidates did not attempt the required number of questions in Section C, thus limiting their potential to be awarded marks. As these candidates tended most frequently to omit both Question C3 (Contemporary Issues) and Question C4 (Taking Charge), this suggests that these areas may require more specific attention.

Question C1 was based on *Social and Health Education* (Modules 1 and 4). The majority of candidates answered these questions well. Generally, candidates answered parts 1(a), (b) and (c) correctly, thus showing that they had achieved the learning outcomes in Module 1, Units 1 and 3. Parts 2(a) and (b) were answered correctly by almost all candidates, which demonstrated an understanding of the learning outcomes in Module 4, Unit 3. The majority of candidates also answered parts 3(a), (b) and (c) correctly, showing an understanding of Module 4, Unit 2. Lower performing candidates did not fully explain their answers; for example, in answer to question 3(b), candidates wrote 'talk to someone' without specifying to whom or why. They may well have achieved the learning outcome 6 in Module 4, Unit 2 but their answers did not demonstrate this. Parts 4(a) and (b), which were based on learning outcome 3 in Module 1, Unit 2, were answered well by most candidates. In some few cases, candidates gave vague answers such as 'relax' or 'talk', which did not demonstrate achievement of the learning outcome involved.

Question C2 was based on Module 2 (My Community). Overall, candidates answered this question well. However, there were aspects of the answering which were quite weak. Part 1(a) involved observing a photograph. Generally, candidates were able to identify significant elements from the photograph which demonstrated achievement related to learning outcomes 2 and 5 in Unit 4 (My Own Place in the Past). Question 1(b) proved problematic for some candidates although it addresses the same learning outcomes as Question 1(a). Part 2(a) was reasonably well answered. Almost all candidates showed that they knew that in order to build, a person requires planning permission, showing at least some achievement of learning outcome 6 of Module 2, Unit 6. Part 2(b) was based on the same learning outcome, and, while many candidates were able to name one action required to achieve planning permission, few gave a second answer. Part 3(a) was based on Unit 2 (My Own Place). The majority of candidates were able to give specific attractions for visitors to their area, while weaker candidates gave vague (less specific) answers. Questions 3(b)

and (c), were based on Module 2, Unit 5 (Community Amenities/Resources), and was answered reasonably well. Parts 5(a) and (b) were based on Module 2, Unit 1 (Introduction to Research Skills) and were answered well by most candidates. Weaker candidates answered vaguely and, in particular, did not give a clear reason for the use of graphs to present the results of research.

Question C3 and Question C4 were the least popular questions. Where they were attempted candidates scored significantly lower than on the other questions. This suggests that Modules 3, 5 and 6 (Contemporary Issues 1, Contemporary Issues 2, and Taking Charge, respectively) require further attention in the classroom.

4.2.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

- As the examination draws near, students should be given opportunities to practice on past papers, so as to become familiar with all aspects of the examination format.

- Prior to the examination, teachers should help students plan how much time to spend reading the examination paper and how much time to spend on each section. This includes planning for the aural section.

- Candidates should take time to select the two optional questions from Section C that best allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Candidates should then focus on answering these questions well.

- Students should be encouraged to read all questions carefully, so as to ensure accurate answering of the question asked.

- Candidates should develop answers where required, so as to demonstrate their achievement of the relevant learning outcomes. One-word answers should be avoided (except in cases where that is clearly all that is being sought).

- Students should be encouraged to stay in the examination centre until they have answered the requisite number of questions and checked their work.

- Teachers and students should give further attention to the learning outcomes in Modules 3, 5 and 6 of the course, (Contemporary Issues I and II and Taking Charge), as questions on these are less popular and answered less well than others.

- Teachers should pay specific attention to those areas of the syllabus that students do not encounter in everyday life so as to reinforce achievement of the learning outcomes involved.

- Teachers should avail of opportunities to reinforce achievement of the learning outcomes by practical means, such as by holding mock elections.

- Teachers should facilitate students in accessing news items, specifically high-profile breaking news items, as they arise.

4.3 Mathematical Applications

Mathematical Applications is assessed out of 10 credits, and is examined by means of a final written examination.

4.3.1 Statistics on Performance

Year	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	7.1	14.5	18.7	19.0	13.7	11.6	7.4	4.9	2.0	0.8	0.4	3092	6.7
2010	3.5	16.9	21.3	17.5	14.6	11.4	7.3	4.4	2.1	0.8	0.3	3218	6.7
2011	4.7	12.5	17.5	18.1	16.6	14.3	8.8	4.4	1.9	1.0	0.4	3027	6.5
2012	4.4	14.7	20.3	19.9	17.1	11.7	6.1	3.0	1.7	0.7	0.4	3064	6.8
2013	4.4	15.7	20.8	20.8	16.7	10.3	6.7	3.2	1.1	0.3	0.2	2636	6.9
2014	**5.6**	**12.1**	**18.5**	**20.7**	**16.0**	**12.0**	**7.9**	**4.0**	**1.9**	**0.9**	**0.3**	**2766**	**6.6**

Table 4.5   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Mathematical Applications, 2009 to 2014.

4.3.2 Observations of the Chief Examiner

The overall standard of answering was similar to that of previous years, with candidates showing strength in questions involving statistics and a continued improvement in the standard of answering in question 1, the compulsory question composed of ten short parts. Candidates also performed well on the topical question of calculating a quota in an election. However, candidates had difficulty in other areas, in particular carrying out multi-step procedures (e.g. Q1(h); Q3(d)(ii)), and dealing with mock-ups of 'real' documents. The former was exacerbated by candidates' continued lack of supporting work, although some examiners did note a welcome increase in supporting work in particular questions.

All of the content of this course has been selected because of its direct applicability to real life. As the course specification recommends: "Students should work with real documents whenever possible (bills, pay slips, invoices, credit notes, lodgement forms, [tax] certificates, brochures, catalogues, timetables, etc.)". This recommendation applies across all four modules of the course, and is fundamental to appropriate and effective learning in Mathematical Applications. As such, it is of significant concern that candidates continue to display a lack of familiarity with 'real' documents. This is borne out by the poor level of answering in questions involving mock-ups of such documents, such as the tax credit certificate in questions 2(a), (b), and (c) and the telephone bill in question 5(a). Candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with these documents, having difficulty in selecting the appropriate information from the documents presented and in using this information in a suitable manner.

Question 1 is the only compulsory question on the examination paper. It consists of ten short questions drawn from all four modules of the course. Candidates appeared to be familiar with what is expected of them in this question, and answered it quite well. Indeed, the standard of answering in this question has improved year on year. Nevertheless, while candidates dealt well with percentages (Module 1, Unit 4, learning outcome 4) elsewhere on the examination paper they struggled, for example, in Q1(h) when asked to work out the cost price of an item given the sale price. Performance in Q1(j) indicates that they also continued to have difficulty working with fractions, as required under learning outcome 1 from Module 1, Unit 4, and they also appeared to be

unfamiliar with the geometric result required to complete Q1(f) (Module 3, Unit 2, learning outcome 3).

The research element topic this year was PAYE / Income Tax. It was examined in question 2 and was attempted by most candidates, but was poorly answered. In fact, for candidates who answered all five questions on the examination paper, this question was most frequently the one for which they were awarded the lowest mark. It is particularly disappointing that candidates were unfamiliar with the mock-up of the tax credit certificate in this question, as the guidelines for the research element topic recommended that "the learning experiences relating to this topic be grounded in the .use of tax-related forms, using a wide range of realistic examples."

An issue that arose in particular in Q2(c) was the lack of supporting work presented. Candidates often presented incorrect answers here with no supporting work evident, thus making it difficult for examiners to find merit in many candidates' answers. This issue also arose in the answering of other questions, and is a difficulty each year. As already notified to schools, the layout of the examination paper is being changed from 2015 onwards. Part of this change is the provision of space below each part of a question for supporting work and an answer, as opposed to the current practice of providing space for supporting work on the opposite page. It is hoped that this will encourage candidates to present more supporting work in the examination.

While a question on geometrical construction (Q3(a), testing outcomes from Module 3, Unit 2) was popular and questions of a similar type have been well answered in recent years, this questions was surprisingly poorly answered, with many students failing to draw a 90º angle. As evidenced by their answering to part (c), candidates continue to have difficulty in applying the Theorem of Pythagoras (learning outcomes 5 and 6 from this unit).

The other topics from Module 3 were generally answered well. In particular, questions on statistics (Q4(a) – (c), testing outcomes from Unit 1 of Module 3) and quotas (Q4(d)(i), a straightforward question related to outcome 5 from Unit 5) were well answered. However, filling in a given formula for calculating a quota (Q4(d)(ii), also testing outcome 5 of Unit 5) and listing outcomes to find a probability (Q4(e) and (f), on learning outcome 8 of Unit 1) proved more difficult for candidates.

Candidates continue to have difficulty with rounding and with the use of correct units. Neither of these matters is especially conceptually challenging, so they would perhaps be readily rectified by receiving some increased attention in class.

4.3.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

▪ Candidates should get into the habit of presenting all of their supporting work. It is very hard for an examiner to award any marks for an incorrect answer without any supporting work, but if candidates show what they were thinking, they may get credit for this.

▪ Whenever possible, students should get used to real documents that are relevant to the course. They should, for instance: examine their household bills, and make sure they understand where all the numbers come from and what they mean; examine invoices, payslips, and tax forms in the same way; practise reading information from tables in websites, timetables, etc.

- Students should get into the habit of rounding their answers appropriately and including the correct units of measurement, as they need to in real life. For example, people are not "180 tall", but they might be "180 cm tall". Candidates may be penalised in the examination for not appreciating such things.

- Students should get into the habit of making estimates of answers before they start questions, so that they have a "ball-park" idea of what the answer should be. They should also think about the answers they get and make sure they are sensible.

- Students should practise using formulae: identifying what numbers need to be substituted for what letters, carrying out the calculation accurately, and checking it afterwards.

- Students should practise making basic geometric constructions clearly and accurately.

- Students should thoroughly research the relevant research element topic, paying particular attention to any relevant real-life documents. Each year, as notified, all of Question 2 will be on the nominated research topic.

- Candidates should read carefully all of questions that they are attempting.

- Close to the examination, students should practise on past papers. These are available on the website of the State Examinations Commission: www.examinations.ie. The marking schemes, including solutions, are also available there. However, students should be aware that the layout of the examination paper (though not the content) is changing from 2015 onwards. A sample paper illustrating the new layout is available on the website of the State Examinations Commission, and copies were sent to schools in early 2014, along with the 2014 and 2015 research topics.

4.2   An Ghaeilge Chumarsáideach

Tá siollabas nuashonraithe i bhfeidhm ó Mheán Fómhair 2010. Tá an siollabas roinnte ina dhá mhodúl: Modúl 1 – *An Ghaeilge thart timpeall orainn* agus Modúl 2: *An Ghaeilge mar theanga bheo*. Rinneadh athruithe ar luacháil na gcomhpháirteanna éagsúla den mheasúnacht sa scrúdú seachtrach (Béaltriail, Cluastuiscint agus Páipéar Scríofa) sa bhliain 2012 de bharr athruithe polasaí a fógraíodh in Imlitir 0042/2007.

	Béaltriail	**Cluastuiscint**	**Scríofa**
Roimh 2012	33%	30%	37%
Ó 2012 ar aghaidh	40%	25%	35%

Tábla 4.6   Céatadán na marcanna sa scrúdú seachtrach.

Bíonn an **bhéaltriail** ar siúl sna scoileanna i dtús mhí na Bealtaine. Gabhann leagan amach cinnte ó bhliain go bliain leis an gcuid seo den scrúdú agus leanann gach scrúdaitheoir an leagan amach seo. Tá cúig chuid sa bhéaltriail:

- Fáiltiú: 5 cheist le freagairt ar shonraí pearsanta an iarrthóra (10 marc)
- Bloc 1: An Baile (20 marc)
- Bloc 2: An Scoil (20 marc)
- Bloc 3: An Ceantar (20 marc)
- Bloc 4: Obair agus Caitheamh Aimsire (20 marc)

Ina theannta sin, tá 30 marc le gnóthú as Cumas Teanga. Maireann gach agallamh idir ocht agus deich nóiméad. Déantar gach agallamh a thaifeadadh.

Tá ceithre chuid sa scrúdú scríofa: Triail Chluastuisceana (75 marc), Léamhthuiscint (30 marc), Scríobh na Teanga (30 marc), agus Taighde (45 marc).

4.2.1   Anailís ar Ghnóthachtáil na nIarrthóirí

An scrúdú scríofa (an triail chluastuisceana san áireamh)

Bliain	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Líon	Meán-chreidiúint
2009	14.3	26.3	27.1	19.5	9.2	3.2	0.4	2420	4.1
2010	14.6	27.6	26.3	19.1	8.7	3.4	0.4	2320	4.1
2011	14.6	26.7	25.8	18.6	8.7	4.8	0.7	2244	4.0
2012	15.1	26.9	26.8	18.3	8.6	3.8	0.6	2011	4.1
2013	15.2	27.6	26.6	17.7	9.5	3.2	0.2	1911	4.1
2014	**14.2**	**28.0**	**28.2**	**17.2**	**8.9**	**3.1**	**0.4**	**1865**	**4.1**

Tábla 4.7   Céatadán na n-iarrthóirí a ghnóthaigh an líon áirithe creidiúintí, Gaeilge Chumarsáideach, an scrúdú scríofa, 2009 go 2014.

An scrúdú foriomlán

Bliain	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Líon	Meán-chreidiúint
2009	9.6	22.9	28.8	20.2	12.0	5.5	0.7	2,415	3.8
2010	8.4	26.8	27.6	20.7	10.5	4.9	1.1	2,493	3.8
2011	8.4	23.8	26.1	20.9	13.6	6.1	1.2	2,291	3.7
2012	8.4	22.7	28.6	21.2	12.7	5.6	0.8	2,252	3.7
2013	11.7	28.0	27.3	18.5	9.6	4.5	0.4	1,893	4.0
2014	**10.5**	**30.1**	**25.0**	**19.4**	**10.3**	**4.3**	**0.4**	**2,005**	**4.0**

Tábla 4.8   *Céatadán na n-iarrthóirí a ghnóthaigh an líon áirithe creidiúintí amach, Gaeilge Chumarsáideach, 2009 go 2014.*

4.2.2   Nithe a tugadh faoi deara

Maidir leis an mbéaltriail

Ghnóthaigh céatadán ard de na hiarrthóirí na deich marc ar an bhfáiltiú. Is léir gur rud maith é na ceisteanna seo a chur. Tá cuma na simplíochta orthu agus cuireann siad na hiarrthóirí ar a sáimhín só. D'fhéadfadh na hiarrthóirí go léir deich marc a ghnóthú réasúnta furasta ach na nithe seo a chleachtadh go rialta mar atá molta a dhéanamh ar leathanach 6 den Siollabas. Seans go gceapann idir iarrthóirí agus múinteoirí go mbíonn siad ar eolas acu, ach ní mór cúram a dhéanamh de rudaí simplí.

Ba léir go raibh réamhullmhúchán an-mhaith déanta ag na múinteoirí agus ag na hiarrthóirí sna seomraí ranga ar na bloic. Bhí feabhas suntasach le tabhairt faoi deara ar fhreagraí na n-iarrthóirí faoina dteaghlach, a n-áit chónaithe agus a dteach (Bloc 1), faoin scoil (Bloc 2), faoin gceantar áitiúil (Bloc 3), faoi chaitheamh aimsire agus laethanta saoire (Bloc 4). Bhí tuiscint na n-iarrthóirí ar an nGaeilge labhartha agus ar cheisteanna bunúsacha soiléir. Tugadh faoi deara freisin go raibh iarrthóirí ag caint níos faide le linn a gcuid freagraí ná mar a bhí blianta eile. Is léir ón bhfreagairt láidir ar na gnéithe seo go bhfuil formhór na n-iarrthóir ag baint amach an chéad toradh foghlama a bhaineann le *Labhairt* as Modúl 1 (*go mbeadh ar chumas na scoláirí labhairt fúthu féin agus cumarsáid bhunúsach a dhéanamh*) agus na chéad cheithre thoradh foghlama as Modúl 2, a bhaineann le cumarsáid faoi chaitheamh aimsire, spórt, etc. Is léir go gcleachtar an Ghaeilge mar theanga chaidrimh sa rang. Moltar an cleachtas seo agus fáiltítear roimhe.

Bhí céatadán maith de na hiarrthóirí in ann freagraí maithe cuimsitheacha leanúnacha cuí a thabhairt ar roinnt ceisteanna oscailte mar atá molta sna Torthaí Foghlama i Modúl 2 (*go mbeadh ar chumas na scoláirí cur síos ó bhéal a dhéanamh ar ghrúpa ceoil, go mbeadh ar chumas na scoláirí tuairisc scríofa nó béil a thabhairt ar cheolchoirm, go mbeadh an [stór focal] a bhaineann le saol na hoibre ag an scoláire*). Bhain scrúdaitheoirí úsáid as réimse leathan de cheisteanna oscailte, e.g. 'Inis dom faoi ...', 'Cad a dhéanfaidh tú nuair a fhágfaidh tú an scoil?', 'An mbíonn tú ...', 'An raibh tú ...'. É sin ráite, bhí roinnt iarrthóirí ann nach raibh líofacht chainte acu, ná fonn cainte orthu, agus nach raibh ábalta a gcuid tuairimí a chur in iúl dá bharr. Chabhraigh na pictiúir spreagtha go mór leis na hiarrthóirí laga.

Thuairiscigh scrúdaitheoirí go raibh an fhreagairt tríd is tríd níos laige ar bhloc 3 ná ar na bloic eile. Ba dhúshlán faoi roinnt iarrthóirí comhrá a dhéanamh faoi bhia, deoch agus obair mar nach raibh an

stór focal cleachta acu mar atá luaite sa Cur Síos ar na Modúil sa siollabas (*ina gcuirfear ar chumas na scoláirí páirt a ghlacadh ina sainspéiseanna ... trí mheán na Gaeilge ... tuiscint a bhaint as saol na hoibre agus cumarsáid bhunúsach a dhéanamh i suíomhanna éagsúla oibre*). Bhí dul na Gaeilge – comhréir agus struchtúir, gramadach, rithim agus foghraíocht – níos laige sa chuid seo ná mar a bhí sna bloic eile. Bhí roinnt iarrthóirí ann a raibh deacrachtaí acu freagra ar bith a thabhairt. Ba chosúil nach raibh an t-ullmhúchán cuí déanta acu agus bhí an iarracht an-lag dá réir.

Tarraingítear aird an mhúinteora ar Aidhmeanna Ginearálta an tSiollabais agus go háirithe ar an aidhm 'go gcuirfí níos mó béime ar fhorbairt na scileanna cluastuisceana agus labhartha ná mar a chuirfí ar na scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta'.

Maidir leis an triail chluastuisceana

Bhí an fhreagairt anseo an-láidir i mbliana. Ghnóthaigh céatadán ard de na hiarrthóirí iomlán na marcanna agus ghnóthaigh céatadán an-ard díobh os cionn 70% de na marcanna. Is léir go bhfuil tuiscint mhaith ar an nGaeilge labhartha bainte amach ag na hiarrthóirí a rinne an scrúdú i mbliana agus máistreacht ar scil na héisteachta ag a lán acu. Taispeánann an ghnóthachtáil láidir seo go bhfuil an sprioc atá luaite leis na torthaí foghlama i Modúl 1 (*go gcuirfí ar chumas na scoláirí giotaí taifeadta a thuiscint*) bainte amach agus go bhfuiltear ag tógáil air. Moltar sna torthaí foghlama éisteacht go minic le giotaí taifeadta (*Gaeilge á labhairt ag an Uachtarán, ag pearsa spóirt, ag cuairteoirí chun na scoile, ag polaiteoir, ag déagóirí, ag daoine cáiliúla, ag réaltóg teilifíse nó raidió, giotaí taifeadta ar líne ag TG4 agus RTÉ, etc.*) agus, dá bharr sin, go gcuirfí ar chumas na scoláirí giotaí taifeadta a thuiscint. Cothaíonn cleachtadh rialta féinmhuinín agus misneach sna scoláirí. Ach cleachtadh a bheith déanta acu, ní bhíonn na tascanna éisteachta chomh dúshlánach céanna ag na hiarrthóirí. Lena chois sin, cabhraíonn na ceisteanna ilroghnacha leis na hiarrthóirí. Ba leis an seoladh i gceist 2 ba mhó a bhí deacrachtaí.

Maidir leis an scrúdú scríofa
Léamhthuiscint

D'éirigh go han-mhaith le han-chuid iarrthóirí sa Léamhthuiscint. Is léir go raibh a ndóthain den teanga sealbhaithe ag líon mór iarrthóirí le déileáil go han-mhaith le tascanna a bhaineann le haimsiú eolais i bpíosaí scríbhneoireachta faoi dhuine cáiliúil agus i litir a bhaineann le cur isteach ar phost. Is aidhm ghinearálta de chuid na hArdteistiméireachta Feidhmí é an scoláire a ullmhú do shaol an duine fhásta agus do shaol na hoibre. Tá scil na léitheoireachta riachtanach sna saolta sin. Tá sé mar chuspóir ag Modúl 1 (*go mbeadh sé ar chumas na scoláirí píosa cumarsáide scríofa a dhéanamh as Gaeilge: ag lorg eolais, ag lorg poist, ag lorg taithí oibre nó ag tabhairt cuireadh do chuairteoir*) an scil seo a fhorbairt. Ina theannta sin tá an scoláire agus saol na hoibre lárnach i dtorthaí foghlama Mhodúl 2 (*go mbeadh an [stór focal] a bhaineann le saol na hoibre ag na scoláirí*). Is ullmhúchán den scoth iad, agus taithí dhílis saoil don scoláire, na hEochairchleachtaí. In eochairchleachtaí Modúl 1 (*scríobh mé ríomhphost **nó** blag: 1. ag lorg eolais **nó** 2. ag lorg poist **nó** 3. ag lorg taithí oibre **nó** 4. ag tabhairt cuireadh do chuairteoir*), tá an bhéim ar léamh agus scríobh na teanga a chleachtadh. Fiú na hiarrthóirí ab ísle gnóthachtáil, bhí máistreacht acu ar na scileanna gabhchumais atá ag baint leis an léitheoireacht. Ba í an iomarcaíocht an fhadhb ba choitianta sa chuid seo den scrúdú. Bhí an iomarcaíocht le feiceáil i gceist 4(3), áit ar mhinic a luadh TG4 agus RTÉ. I gceist 4(4), bhí an abairt nó an t-alt iomlán ag a lán iarrthóirí. I gceist 5(1), bhí fadhb ag cuid de na hiarrthóirí leis an bhfocal 'cathain' agus i gceist 5(2), bhí an dá sheoladh measctha ag roinnt iarrthóirí.

Scríobh na Teanga

Ba léir go raibh ábhar na gceisteanna an-oiriúnach do na hiarrthóirí agus bhí caighdeán ard freagraí ina lán scoileanna. É sin ráite, is iad na ceisteanna 6 agus 7 is mó a thugann trioblóid do dhaltaí. Tá sé mar chuspóir ag Modúl 2 *go mbeadh ar chumas an scoláire píosa a scríobh abhaile ag cur síos ar laethanta saoire*. Tá na torthaí foghlama dírithe go sonrach ar shainspéiseanna an scoláire (*go mbeadh an [stór focal] a bhaineann le caitheamh aimsire ag na scoláirí, ... torthaí spóirt, ... teilifís agus scannáin, ... cúrsaí faisin, grúpaí ceoil, ... ceolchoirm, etc.*). Bhí deacracht ag cuid de na hiarrthóirí píosa beag leanúnach a scríobh faoi na téamaí sin. Bhí 15% de na hiarrthóirí nár thug faoi cheist 6 ar chor ar bith i mbliana agus 6% eile díobh nár scríobh ach an liosta leideanna a tugadh dóibh ar an bpáipéar. D'éirigh níos fearr leis na hiarrthóirí i gceist 7. Bhí ar a laghad trí phointe eolais acu agus iad cumasach go leor. Is san ainm agus sa seoladh is mó a chailleann daltaí maithe marcanna. In ainneoin treoirlínte a bheith tugtha, bhí na freagraí anseo ar na freagraí ba laige sa scrúdú leis na blianta. Ba léir nach bhfuil an chuid seo den chúrsa 'á clúdach' i mórán scoileanna agus tarraingítear aird an mhúinteora agus na scoláirí ar na torthaí foghlama atá sa siollabas. Bhí céatadán suntasach de na hiarrthóirí nár bhac le ceachtar den dá cheist seo beag ná mór.

Taighde

Tugann obair thaighde saoirse agus neamhspleáchas do scoláirí an teagasc agus an fhoghlaim a fhéinstiúradh agus a dhéanamh trína gcuid sainspéiseanna féin. Ach tá sé riachtanach an t-ábhar sa taighde a cheangal leis an nGaeilge agus le 'féiniúlacht chultúrtha'. Tá sé seo luaite mar chuspóir ag Modúl 1 (*go ndéanfadh gach scoláire tionscadal agus taighde ar ghné éigin den Ghaeilge thart timpeall orainn a chuirfeadh lena thuiscint ar a fhéiniúlacht chultúrtha*), agus sna torthaí foghlama tugtar liosta fada de shamplaí feiliúnacha (*an Ghaeltacht, an Ghaeilge ar an teilifís, an Ghaeilge ar líne, an Ghaeilge agus an raidió náisiúnta/áitiúil, an Naíonra áitiúil, coláistí gaeilge, etc*) ar a bhféadfaí an taighde a bhunú. Bhí an ceangal sin déanta ag os cionn 80% de na hiarrthóirí i mbliana. I measc na n-ábhar a clúdaíodh i mbliana bhí Teangacha Ceilteacha, Tionchar na dteangacha iasachta ar an nGaeilge, Irish Organisations, Canúintí, TG4, Local Naíonra, Gaelscoileanna, Logainmneacha, Féilte, an Ghaeltacht agus an Ghaeilge ar an teilifís. Bhí cuid acu sin ar fheabhas. Ar an lámh eile, bhí taighde déanta ag cuid de na hiarrthóirí ar ábhair a bhí oiriúnach ach nár ceanglaíodh le 'féiniúlacht chultúrtha' ná leis an nGaeilge. Ina measc sin bhí an Damhsa Gaelach, Famous Irish People, Turas go Páirc an Chrócaigh, an Idirlíon, Amhrán na bhFiann agus Storytelling. 16% de na hiarrthóirí, áfach, níor ghnóthaigh siad aon mharc ar an Taighde agus bhí 3% eile díobh nár thug faoin gceist seo ar chor ar bith.

4.2.3   Moltaí do na Múinteoirí agus do na Scoláirí

Tá moladh ar leith ag dul do na múinteoirí as an obair mhaith atá ar siúl acu sa Ghaeilge Chumarsáideach. Tá na moltaí seo a leanas á ndéanamh chun tacú leis an obair mhaith sin, chun tógáil uirthi agus chun cur léi.

▪ Moltar an Ghaeilge a bheith mar mheán teagaisc sa rang. An bhéim a chur ar an gcumarsáid, is é sin ar labhairt na Gaeilge taobh istigh agus taobh amuigh den rang chomh minic agus is féidir. Beatha teanga í a labhairt.

▪ Moltar go mbeadh na scoláirí agus na múinteoirí ar an eolas faoi leagan amach na béaltrialach, go mbeadh cóip acu de na bloic agus de na pictiúir spreagtha.

- Téann sé chun tairbhe do na daltaí éisteacht leis an nGaeilge go rialta, an Chluastuiscint a chleachtadh ar bhun rialta le linn an ranga agus éisteacht leis an nGaeilge ar na meáin éagsúla go laethúil.

- Moltar go mbeadh giotaí léitheoireachta ina mbeadh ábhair spéisiúla a bhaineann le saol laethúil na scoláirí á n-úsáid sa rang ar bhun leanúnach. Tá múineadh agus cleachtadh ar leith ag teastáil anseo.

- Ba mhór an tairbhe do na scoláirí próiseas na scríbhneoireachta a chleachtadh go rialta go dtí go mbeidh siad inniúil ar chur chuige cuí: taighde, plean, dréacht, athdhréacht, eagarthóireacht. Moltar abairtí gearra cruinne a scríobh. Teastaíonn stór focal oiriúnach le haghaidh na dtopaicí éagsúla atá ainmnithe ar an siollabas.

- Moltar straitéisí éagsúla a thriail leis an teagasc a chur chun cinn agus an fhoghlaim a dhéanamh chomh tarraingteach agus is féidir.

- Cleachtadh a dhéanann máistreacht. Moltar úsáid chiallmhar a bhaint as na scrúdpháipéir agus na scoláirí ag déanamh réidh don scrúdú sa chaoi go mbeidh tuiscint acu ar leagan amach an scrúdpháipéir. Ba chóir freisin aire a thabhairt do léamh cúramach na gceisteanna agus do scríobh soiléir na bhfreagraí.

- Moltar do na múinteoirí cóip den leabhar *An Ardteistiméireacht Fheidhmeach – Gaeilge Chumarsáideach* a bheith acu, é úsáid mar uirlis lárnach pleanála sa seomra ranga agus an teagasc a bhunú ar na torthaí foghlama atá luaite ann.

- Moltar úsáid a bhaint as na hacmhainní agus as an saineolas atá ar fáil ag www.pdst.ie/lca agus ag www.examinations.ie, agus ag na naisc éagsúla a ghabhann leis an dá shuíomh gréasáin sin.

4.5   French

French is assessed out of 6 credits. The examination is marked out of 100, and consists of two components: an oral examination (35 marks), and a written examination (65 marks). The written examination consists of a listening comprehension section, (35 marks), and a Reading Comprehension and Written Exercise section, (30 marks).

The oral examination is normally held at the end of May. It is conducted by an external examiner. The test lasts about five minutes and consists of a brief conversation focusing on three distinct areas:
- Greeting, establishing contact and getting started (5 marks)
- Personal details (15 marks)
- Recounting, describing and expressing opinions (15 marks)

4.5.1   Statistics on Performance

Written examination

Year	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	11.1	23.1	30.2	24.3	10.4	0.6	0.2	1479	4.0
2010	11.2	27.3	32.8	19.1	8.1	1.2	0.2	1431	4.1
2011	11.4	24.6	28.0	22.5	10.9	2.3	0.3	1370	3.9
2012	8.9	22.9	32.2	26.4	8.8	0.7	0.1	1260	3.9
2013	6.3	24.9	35.8	23.9	8.1	1.0	0.0	1172	3.9
2014	**10.3**	**23.5**	**28.8**	**24.6**	**11.2**	**1.6**	**0.0**	**1143**	**3.9**

Table 4.9   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, French, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	13.4	28.3	31.7	19.3	5.8	1.6	0.0	1437	4.2
2010	13.9	29.6	31.0	16.6	5.8	2.9	0.1	1473	4.2
2011	13.9	28.5	29.5	17.8	6.4	3.6	0.4	1411	4.1
2012	10.8	28.5	33.4	19.6	5.1	2.5	0.1	1391	4.1
2013	12.1	29.7	33.7	16.6	6.5	1.4	0.0	1177	4.2
2014	**11.6**	**29.4**	**33.2**	**17.9**	**5.6**	**2.3**	**0.0**	**1176**	**4.2**

Table 4.10   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, French, 2009 to 2014.

4.5.2　Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the oral examination

Section 1: Greeting, establishing contact and getting started
In general, candidates were extremely well prepared for this section of the examination, and the majority gained full marks. Most candidates arrived with their examination number written down (in figures), and this practice worked well. However, some did not respond to the request to sit down, and so needlessly lost a mark. Many examiners noted that numbers continue to cause difficulty for the less able candidates. Some candidates appeared to confuse the question *Comment allez-vous?* and *Comment vous appelez-vous?*, but generally they performed well apart from this.

Section 2: Personal details
This section of the oral examination, much of the content of which is covered in Module 1 of the syllabus – Social Relationships – continues to prove challenging. The words *date de naissance* (date of birth) were very often misunderstood, although the word *anniversaire* was recognised. The questions on family, age and nationality were generally well attempted. However, *venir à l'école* (travelling to school) continues to cause difficulty in comprehension for students. *Matières* (school subjects) were generally badly pronounced. Questions on *l'heure* (time) were often badly answered, due to a difficulty with numbers. Most candidates also did not offer any verb with their answer.

Section 3: Recounting, describing and expressing opinions
Candidates appeared familiar with the content that is covered by this section and the kinds of questions that typically arise, and many performed well. In general, they were able to use simple verbs such as *j'adore, j'aime* and *je préfère*, thus attaining full marks for these responses. However, the range of verbs used continues to be quite narrow, and most candidates showed little ability to offer an opinion, for example: *c'est amusant* or *c'est intéressant.*

Questions on the topic of *petit boulot* (a part-time job) did not elicit good responses, with many candidates failing to understand the question. The quality of responses on the topic *vêtements* (clothes) varied greatly. Questions on *télévision, musique, cinéma* and *sport* were generally answered best. Questions on the activities of *le weekend* were mostly met with monosyllabic responses, such as *le foot, la disco, le ciné*. Some candidates could only recognise words which were similar to English, e.g. *pizza, coca, film, match, musique pop*, etc. In general, reformulation, repetition and prompting on the part of the examiners were frequently needed, in order to encourage candidates to converse and thus allow them to gain marks.

Observations related to the written examination
The questions were based on both Module 1 – Social Relationships, and Module 2 – Travelling and Finding the Way. Examiners noted that some less able candidates answered all the questions in French rather than English, and were thus unable to gain any marks for these answers. Some also failed to attempt an answer to every question, even those of a multiple-choice format.

Section 1 – Listening Comprehension
Questions 1, 2 and 4 were based mostly on the learning outcomes in Module 1, Unit 1 (Introduction and Greetings) and Unit 2 (Numbers). In Question 1, candidates were generally able to understand the names of the different countries, although part (c) *Angleterre* caused more

difficulty. The higher numbers (*35* and *67*) which they had to identify were generally incorrect. However, the multiple-choice questions on telephone numbers in Question 2 were very well answered. The second part of Question 4, which tested the candidates' ability to recognise an occupation (*mécanicien)*, based on learning outcome 6, proved challenging.

Question 3 was based on learning outcome 1 from Module 1, Unit 3 (Likes/Dislikes), and learning outcome 3 from Unit 4 (Food and Drink). This question was generally very well answered. Candidates were able to identify the majority of the different types of drinks. The most common incorrect answers were *Jus d'Orange* and *Eau*. Candidates were also able to understand whether these drinks were liked or disliked.

Question 5 was based on Module 2, Unit 1 (Travel and Transport). There appeared to be a definite improvement in candidates' answering this year, particularly for learning outcome 5, which tested their understanding of the vocabulary for asking directions. Most candidates correctly identified both sets of directions. Their understanding of the two destinations, however, was less good. *Banque* was fairly well understood, but *Boucherie* was not.

Question 6 was based on Module 2, Unit 3 (Accommodation). This question was not well answered, in particular parts (b) and (c). These two parts required the ability to recognise places *(château, musée, parc)*, as well as a number (*15*) and candidates once again had difficulty with recognising this vocabulary.

Question 7 was based on Unit 3 (Accommodation) from Module 2. It was generally well answered, and candidates showed their ability to deal with learning outcome 3 (book accommodation by phone). However, parts (c) and (d), which again dealt with numbers and periods of time, were less well handled.

Question 8 was based mainly on Module 2, Unit 1 (Travel and Transport), learning outcome 6: buying a train ticket and following directions to a train. It also contained parts based on Module 1, Unit 2 (Numbers). Candidates had less trouble with the first three parts of this question. However, there was a wide variation in the spelling of the word *Bordeaux*, with 'Bordo' being the most common. Candidates' failure to recognise this major French city indicated a difficulty with learning outcome 7 from Unit 1, Module 1 (plan routes from Ireland to [France]). The basic phrases *Première classe* and *Aller retour* were not always recognised either. The last three questions, which involved recognising numbers, were poorly answered. The second-last part indicates that many candidates had difficulty with learning outcome 7 of Module 2, Unit 1: understand and be able to use the 24 hour clock. They regularly gave the incorrect figure of 8 for *18 heures*. For the other numbers, *douze* was often misunderstood to mean 2 instead of 12, and the higher number *cinquante-six* (56) was frequently not understood at all.

Section 2 – Reading Comprehension

Questions 1 to 5: The question on *Salle d'Allemand* (German classroom) was well answered, indicating that candidates were familiar with both school and country vocabulary. The sign *Stationnement Interdit* (No Parking) was very poorly answered. *Chou-fleur* (Cauliflower) was generally identified correctly, again indicating a good knowledge of the vocabulary from Module 1, Unit 4 (Food and Drink). The problem with vocabulary for places and shops arose again with a general failure to understand the word *Coiffeur* (Hairdresser). However, the majority of candidates had no problem with *Dortoirs*, for dormitories.

[65]

Question 6, which was based on a Menu, was generally well answered, again indicating that vocabulary related to food and drink was well known.

Question 7 tested the candidates' knowledge of the learning outcomes from Unit 1 (Introductions) and Unit 3 (Likes/Dislikes). Some candidates wrote the date in French rather than in English, gaining no marks. The question also tested knowledge of colours and clothes items, based on Module 2, Unit 2 (Shopping and Services). Very few candidates understood *jaune* or *chapeaux*, although the sport *le volley* was understood.

Question 8 was based on Module 2, Unit 2 (Shopping and Services). The name of a building, i.e. a library (*bibliothèque*) and a period of time (*dix jours*) caused problems for the less able candidates. These candidates also failed to recognise the methods of payment in part (d).

Question 9, which involved filling in an Identity Card, was quite well-answered, showing an improvement on how similar content had been handled in previous years. The majority of candidates were able to understand *Nom, Prénom,* and *Lieu de Naissance*. However, many failed to include the year in the *Date de Naissance*, and many had difficulty with translating the month of April into French. Only the more able candidates were able to spell the word *Artiste* correctly.

Question 10, a cloze-test, was generally well answered. The more able candidates achieved full marks here, and the majority of candidates correctly identified at least three out of the five words. *Oncle* and *hôpital* were the two answers that were most commonly correct.

4.5.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the oral examination

- Teachers should familiarise themselves with the format of the examination and the examples of questions that may be asked, as set out in the *Oral Guidelines*.

- Teachers should encourage students to answer with a complete sentence and with a correct verb, as this will gain full marks. Even if they can't answer with a full sentence, students should give a shorter phrase, or else at least use "*oui / non*" to show that they have understood the question.

- Teachers should remind students that they will normally be asked a follow-up question on a topic, particularly in Sections 2 and 3.

- Students should ensure that they have their examination number with them, written on a piece of paper. They should be made aware that, when asked to give this number, it is acceptable to do so using single figures.

- Students should give an answer such as "*merci*" when asked to sit down, as such a response attracts one mark as an expected part of normal social discourse in this context.

- Students should make sure that they know how to give their date of birth in French.

- Students should spend time learning numbers and how to state the time in French.

- Students should be made familiar with the words "*date de naissance / matières / près / loin / petit boulot / vêtements*", as these are very regularly used in the oral examination and are not always understood.

- Teachers should ensure that students get a lot of practice with the terms "*j'aime / je n'aime pas / je préfère*".

- Teachers should ensure that students are familiar with the names of at least four school subjects and are able to pronounce them accurately.

Recommendations related to the written examination

- Teachers should refer to the syllabus and ensure that students become very familiar with the key areas, such as food, months of the year, names of types of buildings, 24 hour clock, basic occupations, clothes, etc.

- Numbers are needed in several questions, so teachers should spend time practising them in class, particularly the higher numbers.

- Teachers should familiarise students with the map of France and the main cities.

- Teachers should emphasise to students the importance of completing the Key Assignments. Not only do these attract direct credit as part of the satisfactory completion of modules, but many, such as the Identity Card in particular, are of great help in preparing for their written examination.

- Students should attempt all questions, and also make sure that they answer the questions in the language required.

4.6 German

German is assessed out of 6 credits. The examination is marked out of 100, and consists of two components: an oral examination (35 marks), and a written examination (65 marks). The written examination consists of a listening comprehension section, (35 marks), and a Reading Comprehension and Written Exercise section, (30 marks).

The oral examination is normally held at the end of May. It is conducted by an external examiner. The test lasts about five minutes and has three sections as follows:
- Greeting, establishing contact and getting started (5 marks)
- Personal details, recounting, describing and expressing opinions (20 marks)
- Short situational responses (10 marks)

4.6.1 Statistics on Performance

Written Examination

Year	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	7.5	23.8	31.7	26.1	9.4	1.3	0.2	467	3.9
2010	10.9	32.4	36.8	15.5	3.6	0.4	0.4	503	4.3
2011	12.6	26.9	31.1	22.9	6.1	0.5	0.0	428	4.2
2012	6.7	23.0	36.8	26.9	6.0	0.7	0.0	435	4.0
2013	3.9	27.7	37.0	22.6	7.1	1.0	0.7	411	3.9
2014	**7.2**	**25.2**	**36.7**	**23.0**	**7.5**	**0.4**	**0.0**	**469**	**4.0**

Table 4.11   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, German, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	15.0	27.3	30.4	18.5	6.3	2.5	0.0	520	4.2
2010	13.7	31.5	27.7	16.8	7.6	2.5	0.2	524	4.2
2011	14.8	28.1	30.2	17.1	6.1	3.2	0.4	473	4.2
2012	11.5	27.7	33.4	19.6	5.7	1.9	0.2	419	4.1
2013	13.0	33.9	28.2	15.3	6.2	2.6	0.8	386	4.2
2014	**9.8**	**30.6**	**32.1**	**17.6**	**8.4**	**1.5**	**0.0**	**523**	**4.1**

Table 4.12   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, German, 2009 to 2014.

4.6.2 Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the oral examination

There was a marked improvement in candidates' achievement level with regard to the *Situational Responses* and examiners expressed the belief that this is now embedded in classroom practice. The use of full sentences was evident. This improvement is welcome and encouraging. The pronunciation of *Hunger, Durst* and *Entschuldigung* did prove somewhat challenging to certain

candidates, highlighting the need to concentrate more on the oral aspect of the learning outcomes of Module 1 Unit 4 (Food and Drink).

Many candidates found stating their birthday – learning outcome 5 of Module 1 Unit 2 – a challenge. Some candidates found questions involving time challenging (Module 2, Unit 1, learning outcome 7). Certain elements of introductions proved difficult for many candidates: the difference between *Wo wohnst du?* and *Woher kommst du?* was one such, which would suggest that outcomes 5 and 9 of Module 1, Unit 1 continue to cause difficulty.

Expressions of opinion, likes and dislikes (Module 1, Unit 3, learning outcomes 1 and 4) tended to prove challenging to some candidates who often lacked the vocabulary (such as an appropriate adjective) to express their thoughts and feelings on a particular issue such as school.

Some candidates tended to give a cursory answer to a question and then be ill-prepared to speak in further detail about what they have said when probed. For example, when asked about their hobbies, they may have said that they like playing football, but were then unable to talk in further detail about this – what team they play for, their training regime, matches, and so on. (This applied also to other topics.) This suggests that they had simply learned off brief responses to likely questions, rather than having had experience of engaging in natural conversations about the topics concerned.

Improvements are evident in a number of areas, including: questions relating to family (Module 1, Unit 1, learning outcomes 3 and 8), expressions of 'when' (Module 1, Unit 2, learning outcome 4), stating one's examination number correctly (Module 1, Unit 2, learning outcome 2). It was also noted that answers given by many candidates were longer than in previous years.

Observations related to the written examination
Section 1: Listening Comprehension

Questions 1 (**Introducing yourself**) and 2 (**Telephone Number**) reflect the content and competencies associated with Units 1 (learning outcomes 1 to 3 relating to greetings/introductions, and 9, relating to where people live) and Unit 2 (learning outcomes 1 and 6 – stating numbers/ages) of Module 1. Almost all candidates attempted both questions and did reasonably well. It was noted, however, that candidates scored better on numbers when they had a multiple choice question as in Question 2, whereas Question 1 required that they write down the ages of the speakers – a task some found challenging. This difficulty also presented itself in Question 7, where candidates were required to state two money amounts.

Question 3: (**Likes and Dislikes** – Module 1 Unit 3). This question was answered very well with many candidates scoring full marks, demonstrating their competency in learning outcome 2, relating to expressing social activities the speaker likes to do.

Question 4: (**At the snack stall / in the café**): This question comprises elements from Module 1, Unit 2 (numbers: learning outcome 1), Unit 4 (Food & Drink: learning outcomes 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7, related to understanding items on basic menus), Module 2, Unit 2 (Shopping and Services: learning outcome 2) and Unit 4 (Money). While candidates scored relatively well on the food and drink items, many were unable to differentiate between large and small (learning outcome 2 of Module 2 Unit 2).

Questions 5 and 6: (**Asking for directions** and **At the train station**). Some candidates were unable to give the name of the building sought, suggesting that learning outcome 5 from Module 2, Unit 1 needs attention. On the other hand, candidates fulfilled learning outcome 4, in that many got full marks for the directions given. Candidates evidently found fulfilling learning outcome 7 challenging, as they had difficulty in understanding the 24-hour clock.

Question 8: (**Making a reservation**). Candidates' performance in this question varied; they demonstrated considerable competency in learning outcome 4 of Module 2, Unit 3 (Accommodation) but found outcome 5 challenging, as evidenced by the answering to part (d), which required them to recognise the spelling of the speaker's name.

Section 2: Reading Comprehension and Written Exercise

Question 1: This was generally well answered with most candidates scoring at least three of the five marks available.

Question 2: As evidenced in Question 4 of the Listening Comprehension, candidates seem to demonstrate good competency regarding the learning outcomes – as listed above – in the recognition of food items on menus. It was noted, however, that some candidates lost marks by not giving enough detail in their answers.

Question 3: This question was well answered. Some candidates wrote the month in German rather than in English and therefore lost a mark.

Question 4: Candidates did reasonably well in this question, which encompassed a number of different learning outcomes, including ones from Module 1 Unit 3 (social activities). They had some difficulty fulfilling learning outcome 4 of Module 2, Unit 3 (Accommodation), in that many were unable to describe the type of accommodation available and therefore lost a mark.

Question 5: Candidates' responses to this question suggest that many did not fulfil learning outcome 9 of Module 2, Unit 1 (Travel and Transport – know about the transport system of [Germany]).

Question 6: The majority of candidates answered this question well, suggesting they are competent in this key assignment as set out in the Modern Languages syllabus document. Difficulties arose, however, when candidates mixed up *Vorname* and *Nachname*, and some wrote the date in English rather than in German.

Question 7 (a cloze test, based on the topic of giving basic information about oneself) was well answered.

4.6.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the oral examination
- It is recommended that students present for the short 'briefing session' prior to the commencement of the oral examinations in each school. This gives the students the opportunity to meet with their oral examiner prior to entering the examination centre. This can have a positive effect on their confidence.

- Although it is clear that many teachers and students use German in the classroom, it is important to continue to state here the value of this for all. It has positive outcomes for the students regarding both their competence and confidence in the oral examination. A variety of methods for getting students to use the language regularly is recommended, including, for example, the use of pair-work. Another worthwhile activity is for students to record themselves speaking German. They should not worry about making mistakes – they can learn from them, and worrying too much about one's mistakes will interfere with building confidence.

- The regular use of German in the classroom will help students with pronunciation difficulties in words such as *Hunger*, *Durst* and *Entschuldigung*. Students should be encouraged to use German as much as possible in the classroom and in the oral examination.

- Students should be encouraged to:
  - learn the date of their birthday and be confident using numbers
  - listen carefully to the questions the examiner asks and take the time to ensure they are answering the correct question
  - learn the numbers accurately, perhaps through classroom games or other activities, and ensure that students do not, for example, make the recurring error of *ein* instead of *eins*
  - learn to use a variety of adjectives that will help them express their likes and dislikes and their general thoughts and feelings on the subject areas within the syllabus.

- Encourage students to see the link between the content of the oral examination and the content of the written examination. There is huge overlap, as both components of the examination are based on the same syllabus.

Recommendations related to the written examination

- Encourage students to become familiar with
  - numbers (prices / ages / telephone numbers)
  - times (including 24 hour clock)
  - dates (including months)
  - names and spelling of common German cities
  - buildings and signs
  - the alphabet.

- As the examination approaches, students should be given plenty of practice in doing examination questions. Such practice will help ensure that students answer in the appropriate language, give enough detail, and consider which option they will chose where there are multiple options within a question. This will not only result in a familiarity with the layout and content of the examination paper, but it will also increase the level of confidence among students.

- Students should be encouraged to take time to read the instructions and to attend carefully to the phrasing of each question, to ensure they know and understand what is required of them.

- Students should be encouraged to attempt every question.

4.7 Spanish

Spanish is assessed out of 6 credits. The examination is marked out of 100, and consists of two components: an oral examination (35 marks), and a written examination (65 marks). The written examination consists of a listening comprehension section, (35 marks), and a Reading Comprehension and Written Exercise section, (30 marks).

The oral examination is normally held at the end of May. It is conducted by an external examiner. The test lasts about five minutes and consists of a brief conversation focusing on three distinct areas:

- Greeting, establishing contact and getting started (5 marks)
- Personal details (15 marks)
- Recounting, describing and expressing opinions (15 marks)

4.7.1 Statistics on Performance

Written Examination

Year	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	11.6	29.2	31.0	21.4	5.6	1.0	0.1	869	4.2
2010	10.0	30.5	34.3	19.8	4.6	0.7	0.1	833	4.2
2011	13.1	28.2	30.9	20.1	6.8	0.8	0.0	876	4.2
2012	14.8	27.2	31.3	19.7	6.3	0.6	0.1	827	4.2
2013	11.6	27.8	30.9	21.3	6.8	1.4	0.3	799	4.1
2014	**11.1**	**26.2**	**32.7**	**22.1**	**6.3**	**1.1**	**0.5**	**795**	**4.1**

Table 4.13   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Spanish, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	16.5	33.6	29.9	12.4	5.2	2.5	0.0	834	4.4
2010	22.0	30.3	27.0	13.3	5.6	1.9	0.0	882	4.4
2011	17.5	34.1	22.9	16.0	7.5	1.9	0.0	838	4.3
2012	18.4	31.0	26.8	14.9	6.9	1.8	0.2	936	4.3
2013	19.3	30.1	28.9	14.1	5.7	1.8	0.0	757	4.4
2014	**20.8**	**30.7**	**24.5**	**14.0**	**6.8**	**3.3**	**0.0**	**795**	**4.4**

Table 4.14   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Spanish, 2009 to 2014.

4.7.2 Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the oral examination

In general, examiners reported that the oral examination appeared to have been a very positive experience for the candidates. Some were able to display their extensive vocabulary and had prepared topics thoroughly. It is clear that, for many, Spanish is a language that they appreciate. A number of examiners commented that many candidates seemed pleased at having been able to sit an oral examination in a foreign language.

The majority of candidates performed well in the first section of the oral examination, reasonably well in the second, but with a noted deterioration in terms of comprehension and production in the third section. Within the third section, they tended to score higher marks where the questions were closed rather than open-ended.

Section 1: Greeting, establishing contact and getting started

Most candidates scored full marks here as they were able to give their examination number and name without difficulty. Some did not understand the difference between *apellido* (surname) *and nombre* (their first name).

Section 2: Personal Details

The vast majority of candidates were able to give basic information such as their age, birthday and some details about their family, which indicates achievement of learning outcomes 1, 3, and 8 from Unit 1 of Module 1. There were a number of excellent candidates who were able to answer questions effortlessly, demonstrating their confidence and ability to communicate in the language.

Section 3: Recounting, describing and expressing opinions

Many candidates lost marks in this section because they were unable to give a justification for liking or disliking something, as they lacked adjectives to sufficiently express themselves. Some candidates seemed to have little to say when asked for their opinion, such as when, for example, they are asked why they like a TV programme or why they like a subject, while others had just one word which was repeated a number of times.

A significant number of candidates did not readily understand key question words such as *¿qué?*, *¿cómo?*, *¿dónde?*, *¿cuándo?*, *¿cuántos?/¿cuántas?* or *¿cuál?*, causing difficulties.

The word *trabajo* was rarely understood without further elaboration.

There was some evidence of inappropriate rote learning. For example, examiners noted that in some cases when candidates were asked about their family, they simply gave a list of names, but when then asked to give the age of a sibling they had just mentioned, they were unable to do so. This suggests that they were not used to engaging in a natural dialogue on this basic topic, but had simply learned a response to an expected question.

Observations related to the written examination

Section One – Listening Comprehension

Some candidates lost marks by answering in Spanish rather than in English, as required.

In Question 1, some candidates who seemed to have a reasonable understanding of what they heard nevertheless lost marks as a result of not attending carefully to what was being asked, as they answered on 'where they work' as opposed to 'what they do'. For example, instead of answering 'student', many candidates answered 'university'; instead of 'teacher', they gave 'institute' and, likewise, they gave 'hospital' instead of 'doctor'. This clearly indicates a need to concentrate on learning outcome 6 from Unit 1, Module 1 (know some basic occupations).

Many candidates had difficulty with the names of cities. For example, 'Madrid' was answered well but 'Pamplona' and especially 'Toledo' posed problems for a large number of students.

Candidates' failure to recognise these cities indicates a difficulty with learning outcome 7 from Unit 1, Module 1 (plan routes from Ireland to [Spain]).

In Questions 2, 3 and 4 candidates did well with phone numbers (Question 2). A lot of classroom work was done on learning outcome 1 from Unit 2 (Numbers).

Candidates did very well with Likes and Dislikes (Question 3), showing familiarity with learning outcome 1, Unit 3 (Likes and Dislikes).

Candidates did even better with the question based on the interaction in the restaurant on food (Question 4). learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8 from Unit 4 (Food and Drink).

Surprisingly, some basic areas, such as a day of the week (Sunday, in Question 5), supermarket (also in Question 5) and a month of the year (Question 8, where many gave June instead of July) caused problems for several candidates.

Section Two – Reading Comprehension & Written Exercise

Generally, good marks were achieved in Question 1 and examiners noted that all parts of this multiple choice question were attempted.

However, in Question 2, *Restaurante Torre La Mina, Castellón*, some candidates scored poorly here (learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 from Unit 4, Food and Drink), despite doing well on food items in the aural examination.

Question 3, *Visita Sevilla, Capital de Andulucía En El Sur De España,* was answered well by many, although most evidently did not know the word *sur*.

In Question 4, *Cursos de Español Don* Quijote, many candidates appeared not to have paid sufficient attention to what question 1 was asking, as they stated *where* instead of *when* the courses were held. The other parts of this question were answered well.

Question 5 (subscribing for satellite TV) proved challenging for a number of candidates who didn't differentiate correctly between the full name and the surname of the person mentioned. While they answered well *¿Qué es tu fecha de nacimiento?* in the oral examination, some candidates did not recognise *Fecha de nacimiento* in written format.

The cloze test (Question 6 on the Spanish golfer Sergio García) was well answered by most.

4.7.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the oral examination

- Teachers should use as much Spanish as possible in the classroom from as early as possible. This is known to be an effective strategy for students at all levels of ability. It gets students accustomed to interacting naturally in Spanish and familiarises them to the kinds of questions they will encounter in the examination.

- Teachers should inform their students about the structure and marking of the examination.

- In some schools, it was noted that candidates relaxed more as the oral examination progressed and therefore performed better in the second half of the test. This indicates that more practice in examination conditions would be helpful to students in preparation for the oral examination..

- It is clear that students need more preparation for the third section of the oral examination.

- Students should know their examination number and be able to say it confidently. Apart from giving a good first impression to the examiner, this gives the students confidence at the start of the examination.

- The words most frequently confused were *apellido*, *nombre* and *número*, so this distinction warrants attention.

- Solid preparation with interrogatives is essential. It is obviously a key to success in any oral examination that candidates have a confident and accurate understanding of commonly used question words, so that they can immediately focus their attention on the substance of a question.

- In particular, there was little understanding of the word *¿cuántos/as*, with students frequently replying without expressing *how many*, as asked in the question. Accordingly, this word warrants further attention from teachers and students.

- Time needs to be spent on topics such as school uniform, colour, food, work, expressing the time, and school subjects.

- Teachers could usefully spend time providing opportunities and encouragement to students in listening for key words or trigger words related to the topics of conversation that arise in the oral examination – for example, *cumpleaños*, *pasatiempos*, *asignaturas*.

- Students should be given the opportunity in class to discuss and answer questions on such topics as their hobbies and what they do at the weekend etc.

Recommendations related to the written examination

- As the examination approaches, teachers and candidates should engage in plenty of examination practice for the written section. Students should familiarise themselves with the layout of the examination paper and practice answering the questions in **English** or **Spanish**, as required by the question.

- More attention should be given to answering questions relating to numbers and months of the year, as these are often not well answered. The syllabus is quite clear on this topic: learning outcome 2 from Unit 2 of Module 1 states that the student should be able to use the following numbers: 1-50, 50-100, 1000 and multiples of 1000. The student should also know both the 12-hour clock (learning outcomes 3 from the same unit) and the 24-hour clock (learning outcome 7 from Module 2, Unit 1).

- Attention should be given to other basics areas, such as days of the week and months of the year (Module 1, Unit 2, learning outcome 4). These items come up frequently in all parts of the examination.

- Many candidates are unfamiliar with place names of some major Spanish cities. Practising names of cities both orally and in written format will prove beneficial.

- Students need classroom practise on the Listening Comprehension – it is very worthwhile to practise with the aural examinations from previous years.

- Use the target language more in the classroom, so that students become more familiar with it on a daily basis.

4.8   Italian

Italian is assessed out of 6 credits. The examination is marked out of 100, and consists of two components: an oral examination (35 marks), and a written examination (65 marks). The written examination consists of a listening comprehension section, (35 marks), and a Reading Comprehension and Written Exercise section, (30 marks).

The oral examination is normally held at the end of May. It is conducted by an external examiner. The test lasts about five minutes and has three sections as follows:
- Greeting, welcoming and getting started (5 marks)
- Personal details (15 marks)
- Recounting, describing and expressing opinions (15 marks)

4.8.1   Statistics on Performance

Written examination

Year	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	10.2	37.0	36.2	14.5	1.7	0.4	0.0	235	4.4
2010	10.5	40.9	32.1	13.5	2.5	0.4	0.0	237	4.4
2011	13.8	40.9	25.9	16.8	1.3	0.9	0.4	232	4.4
2012	11.3	35.6	36.9	14.0	2.3	0.0	0.0	222	4.4
2013	8.9	32.8	39.1	15.1	3.1	1.0	0.0	192	4.3
2014	**7.6**	**34.5**	**36.6**	**15.9**	**4.1**	**1.4**	**0.0**	**145**	**4.2**

Table 4.15   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Italian, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	23.6	43.5	20.3	10.5	1.7	0.4	0.0	237	4.8
2010	21.3	40.2	22.5	8.8	6.0	1.2	0.0	249	4.6
2011	24.2	38.6	24.2	7.2	4.9	0.9	0.0	223	4.7
2012	21.2	44.6	23.4	6.3	2.3	2.3	0.0	222	4.7
2013	17.7	43.5	23.4	9.6	4.8	1.0	0.0	209	4.6
2014	16.7	50.0	24.6	4.0	4.0	0.8	0.0	126	4.7

Table 4.16   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Italian, 2009 to 2014.

4.8.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the oral examination

Section 1: Greeting, welcoming and getting started
In general, candidates were extremely well prepared for this section of the examination, and the majority gained full marks. Some candidates confused *nome* (name) with *cognome* (surname).

Many examiners noted that numbers continue to cause difficulty for the less able candidates; thus, some candidates struggled when asked about *il numero di esame* (exam number).

Section 2: Personal details

This section of the oral examination, much of the content of which is covered in Module 1 of the syllabus – Social Relationships – continues to prove challenging. Most candidates responded well to *quanti anni hai?* (how old are you?) but found questions on *compleanno* (birthday) and *data di nascita* (date of birth) difficult. The questions on family and age were generally well attempted. However, *venire a scuola* (travelling to school) continues to cause difficulty in comprehension for students. *Materie* (school subjects) are generally answered well. However, candidates often incorrectly use the word *mata* for *matematica* (mathematics) Questions on *l'ora* (time) were often badly answered, due again to a difficulty with numbers. Most candidates also did not offer any verb with their answer.

Section 3: Recounting, describing and expressing opinions

Generally, candidates appeared familiar with the content that is covered by this section and the kinds of questions that typically arise, and many performed well. Examiners noticed that not all topics were answered with the same ease. The topics varied from school to school. Candidates did well on the topic of *cibo* (food). However, the range of verbs used continues to be quite narrow, and most candidates showed little ability to offer an opinion. The topic on *vacanze* (holidays) also caused problems. Questions on the topic of *un lavoretto* (a part-time job) did not elicit good responses. In general, reformulation, repetition and prompting on the part of the examiners were frequently needed, in order to encourage candidates to converse and thus allow them to gain marks.

Observations related to the written examination

Many students were clearly very competent. However, some had greater difficulty completing the tasks. Whilst many students did well, a small proportion of candidates did not engage in any meaningful way with the paper, leaving it largely unanswered, even to the extent of not answering multiple choice questions.

The capacity to deal confidently with numbers in Italian is fundamental to many other topics and accordingly this skill was relevant to a number of different question parts in the examination. There was evidence of deficiencies in this area in the case of a significant number of candidates. Addressing such deficiencies would greatly assist students to fulfil their potential for basic communication in written and spoken Italian and in reflecting this in their level of achievement in the examination.

Section 1: Listening Comprehension

In Question 1, many candidates correctly identified the nationalities of the two speakers, which suggests that they had achieved learning outcome 4 in Module 1 , Unit 1 (Introductions and Greetings). However, identifying their pastimes, which relates to learning outcomes 1 and 2 of Unit 3 (Likes and Dislikes), caused more difficulties.

In Question 3, many candidates struggled with part (c), showing a lack of awareness of vocabulary related to booking a room. Such vocabulary is necessary for the achievement of learning Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 in Module 2, Unit 3 (Accommodation).

In Question 4, many candidates failed to get the correct colour from a choice of three. Knowledge of colours is a basic part of communication in many contexts, and is necessary to achieve the learning outcomes in Module 1, Unit 3 (Likes and Dislikes), Module 1, Unit 4 (Food and Drink) and Module 2, Unit 2 (Shopping and Services).

In Question 5, the correct answer to part (a) was 10.30, and some students struggled with the "half past" element of this. Nevertheless, this question and the next were comparatively well handled overall, which indicates a good level of achievement of the learning outcomes from Module 2, Unit 1 (Travel and Transport).

Question 6 tested the achievement of learning Outcomes 4 and 5 from Module 2, Unit 1 (Travel and Transport). Less than a fifth of candidates correctly identified that the first speaker wished to go to the hospital, despite the fact that the Italian word "ospedale" sounds similar to the English word. On the other hand, almost all students were able to recognize that the next speaker was looking for the bus-stop, although the Italian term "fermata dell'autobus" seems less close to its English equivalent.

Section 2: Reading Comprehension and Written Exercise

Question 1: Candidates did not have a good knowledge of signs in question 1. The signs are taken from a variety of different areas including learning outcome 8 in Module 1, Unit 4 (Food and Drink) and learning outcome 8 in Module 2, Unit 4 (Travel and Transport). The words *biglietteria* (ticket office), *ferie* (holidays) and *Pasqua* (Easter) caused difficulties. *Londra* (London), on the other hand, was known by many students.

Question 2: Candidates did well in question 2, which was about a snowboard school, and most knew the month examined. This question covered a broad range of learning outcomes: learning outcome 1 and 4 in Module 1, Unit 2 (Numbers); learning outcome 3 in Module 1, Unit 3 (Likes and Dislikes). The word *marzo* (March) was generally given correctly. The days of the week caused problems.

Question 3: This question related to learning outcomes 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 in Module 1, Unit 4 (Food and Drink) and was answered well, which shows that the learning outcomes were achieved in this area. Words that most students demonstrated knowledge of included *Agnello* (lamb), *arrosto* (roast) *alla griglia (grilled)*.

Question 4: The question on free time caused few problems. It tested learning outcomes 2 and 3 of Module 1, Unit 3 (Likes and Dislikes).

Question 5: Form filling in the written section was done well. This question deals mainly with learning outcomes 4 and 8 in Module 1 Unit 1 (Introductions and Greetings) and learning outcome 1 in Module 2 (Numbers)

Question 6: Many candidates did not attempt question 6 in the written section. Students generally find this question – the cloze test – difficult.

4.8.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the oral examination

- Teachers should familiarise themselves with the format of the examination and the examples of questions that may be asked, as set out in the *Oral Guidelines*.

- Teachers should encourage students to answer with a complete sentence and with a correct verb, as this will gain full marks. Even if they can't answer with a full sentence, students should give a shorter phrase, or else at least use "*sì / non*" to show that they have understood the question.

- Teachers should remind students that they will normally be asked a follow-up question on a topic, particularly in Sections 2 and 3.

- Students should ensure that they know their examination number and/or have it with them. They should be made aware that, when asked to give this number, it is acceptable to do so using single figures.

- Students should give an answer such as grazie (thank you) when asked to sit down, as such a response attracts one mark as an expected part of normal social discourse in this context.

- Students should make sure that they know how to give their date of birth in Italian.

- Students should spend time learning numbers and how to state the time in Italian.

- Students should be made familiar with all key words in order to be comfortable answering on the full range of topics in the syllabus.

- Teachers should ensure that students are given ample time to practice all oral topics in the classroom, thus ensuring that the students will feel more comfortable when speaking in Italian on the day of the exam. Oral production in the classroom benefits the development of both speaking and listening skills.

- Teachers should ensure that students are familiar with the names of at least four school subjects and are able to pronounce them accurately.

Recommendations related to the written examination

- The learning outcomes expected at LCA are fully explained in the syllabus and should be considered invaluable when planning and organising class activities.

- Teachers should ensure that all students have regular practice in all areas of skills, including both reading and writing.

- Basic language work involving fundamental everyday vocabulary should be attended to throughout the year, as many students are not fully confident in the area of numbers, days of the week, months of the year, times, colours, food and pastimes. Handling these basics is clearly identified in a range of the syllabus learning outcomes.

- In the period running up to the final examination, students should be given plenty of opportunities to become familiar with the requirements of the examination by practising on past examination papers.

- Students should be strongly encouraged to attempt all parts of all questions. An incorrect answer can never get less credit than no answer at all.

- Students should research their own areas of interest through Italian, whether using the internet or other resources. (For example, if interested in football, look up Italian football magazines and websites, etc.) Students exploring their own areas of interest helps improvement at all levels of the target language. Learning new vocabulary in this way helps both oral and written production of language.

- Try to connect with the language outside of the classroom. (For example, look at Italian foods in supermarket, etc.)

- Most importantly, students should try to embrace the experience of learning a new language. Classroom practice is extremely important as it allows the students to gain confidence when speaking Italian. Students should not allow fear of making mistakes in the target language hold them back.

4.9   Sign Language

The final examination in Sign Language is assessed out of a total of 12 credits. The examination takes the form of a signed interview conducted by an examiner with each candidate. The examiners involved are fluent in Irish Sign Language (ISL), which is the language of the course and the examination. Each interview lasts for 20 to 30 minutes. All of the interviews are recorded.

The format of the final examination is as follows:
▪ Part 1: Short Questions (40 marks)
▪ Part 2: Presentation (60 marks)

4.9.1   Statistics on Performance

As the annual number of candidates is too small to make percentages useful for interpretation, the entries in table below are the *numbers* of candidates.

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	8.8
2010	0	2	2	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9.2
2011	0	1	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	8.9
2012	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	8.5
2013	0	0	0	2	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	7.8
2014	0	0	1	1	1	4	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	12	6.8

Table 4.17   Number of candidates awarded each number of credits, Sign Language, 2009 to 2014.

4.9.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations on Part 1of the examination – Signed responses to signed questions

The aim of this component is to assess candidates' proficiency in comprehending the questions on the examination paper and to respond accordingly. The examiner also assesses their fluency in Irish Sign Language. The level of difficulty in the questions increases gradually from simple (Section A) to more difficult (Sections B and C). Similarly, the content of answers is expected to move from simple and factual to more complex and detailed responses as the examination progresses.

The questions in Section A of the examination ranged over different units in Module 1 (Making Contact) and Module 2 (Social Interaction), including the units on *Greetings*, *Sports*, *Eating & Drinking*, and *Days & Months*. This year, examiners noted that some candidates' responses lacked fluency when answering the straight-forward questions in Section A of the examination, although most scored reasonably well in this section.

Questions in Section B drew on units from Modules 2 (Social Interaction) and 3 (Deaf People in the World of Work), specifically the units on *Travelling*; *Leisure*; *Banks, Post Offices, Building Societies*; and *People and their Occupations*. Candidates varied in their ability to respond to the more difficult questions encountered in this section. Some of the responses from less successful candidates were hesitant and unsure, often lacking fluency.

Section C contained questions related to the unit *The Deaf Community* in Module 2, and on two of the units in Module 4 (Deaf People in the Wider World): *Reflections* and *Deaf Culture*. Candidates generally fared less well in Section C of the examination than in the other sections. Examiners reported a lack of clarity regarding the concept of Deaf culture. Candidates appeared to be less knowledgeable in relation to this aspect of the course than in previous years. In some instances, candidates did not appear to fully understand what Deaf culture actually is.

Examiners reported that some candidates used strong English mouth patterns when signing. This influences Irish Sign Language (ISL) structure, thereby making the signing less Deaf-friendly and more difficult to understand. It also leads to less usage of facial expression, which is an integral part of ISL.

Observations related to Part 2 of the examination – Presentation
For this part of the examination, four topics are issued by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) to schools in the year prior to the examination. Candidates, having selected one topic for study and research, are asked to make a three-to five-minute presentation on that topic. After the candidate's presentation, the Examiner asks questions about the topic, about the research methods used, and about the candidates' personal reflections on the topic. The criteria for the assessment of this part of the examination were revised in advance of the examination in 2012. The new criteria were circulated by the SEC to schools at that time and are circulated again annually with the presentation topics. They also appear in the marking scheme for the examination, which is available in the Examination Material Archive on the SEC website at www.examinations.ie.

The topics issued by the SEC for the 2014 examination were:

1. More and more species of plants and animals around the world are becoming endangered. Briefly explain why this is the case and outline the measures being taken by at least one organisation to remedy the situation.

2. Former South African leader, Nelson Mandela, is known and respected throughout the world. Provide a brief overview of his life and achievements and explain why he is so widely admired.

3. The Catholic Institute for Deaf People is planning to amalgamate St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys and St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls in 2014. Provide a brief history of both schools and outline your views on the merger.

4. Imagine that you have been given the job of promoting awareness of Irish Sign Language (ISL) in Ireland. Briefly explain why you think more Irish people should be made aware of Irish Sign Language and outline the steps you would take to help the campaign gain momentum.

Option 2, about Nelson Mandela, proved the most popular choice, followed by option 1 about endangered species. A small number of candidates chose to do option 3, which dealt with the amalgamation of the Deaf Schools. No candidate chose the fourth option.

The quality of the presentations made by the candidates varied and was directly linked to their overall performance in the examination. Candidates who were well prepared with developed, structured material and were capable of demonstrating proficiency in ISL scored highly under the various criteria for assessment, i.e., grammatical control, vocabulary, phonology, and fluency. Some candidates appeared less than fully prepared and as a result lacked fluency of thought and

sign. Some of the presentations were very short and lacking in information. In these instances, the examiner had to question the candidates for an extended period of time in order to see what research and preparation was carried out. More successful candidates were better able to demonstrate evidence of appropriate preparation, research and personal reflection and were more capable of responding fluently to questions put by the examiners on the presentations made.

Examiners expressed the view that the time allocated to the presentation in the examination – three to five minutes – may be seen as slightly short, given the amount of time and effort many students dedicate to the preparation of their presentation. This issue had already been noted by the SEC, as a result of which schools were notified that, with effect from the examinations of 2015, candidates may take up to eight minutes to make their presentations.

As the examination is conducted as a live event, it is necessary that each candidate's interview be recorded. The SEC is grateful to schools for their cooperation with this arrangement. This year it was noted that all schools with candidates for the Sign Language examination cooperated with the request to use digital equipment in recording the examination. This development is very welcome, as older forms of recording now verge on the obsolete and will prove increasingly difficult to access in the future.

4.9.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

- Some of the areas covered by the syllabus need more attention from teachers and students. This is most particularly the case in relation to those aspects of the course related to Deaf Culture. It is recommended that schools organise day trips to different Deaf organisations or invite representatives from these organisations into the schools. In this way, the students would receive first-hand knowledge of Deaf organisations and of their own culture.

- Candidates need to be in a position to demonstrate skills and knowledge in relation to Deaf Awareness, particularly with regard to Irish Sign Language. This should include learning the differences between English and ISL.

- Candidates should be prepared to make an effective presentation on their chosen topic in Part 2 of the examination. Candidates and teachers should note that, as already notified to schools, and with effect from the examinations of 2015, candidates will be permitted to take up to eight minutes for this presentation.

4.9.4   Recommendations to schools and centres

- Schools should continue to record the examination using digital equipment.

4.10 Hotel Catering and Tourism

The course consists of four modules, all of which must be completed. The modules are:

- Module 1: Eating Out – The Fast Food Way
- Module 2: Eating Out – Hotels, Restaurants and Institutions
- Module 3: Irish Hospitality
- Module 4: Catering for Diversity

The final examination is assessed out of 12 credits and comprises two components:

- written examination
- practical examination.

The written examination is allocated 200 marks (50% of the total) and the practical examination is allocated 200 marks (50%).

For the practical examination, a set of ten assignment briefs is notified to schools in advance. Three weeks before the examination, each of the candidates draws one of the ten assignments. The candidate carries out research and planning, recorded in a folder. On the day of the examination, they carry out the practical assignments in the presence of an external examiner. The examination lasts two hours, including approximately ten minutes to complete a written evaluation.

The written examination is of one and a half hours' duration. Candidates are required to answer four questions – one from each of four sections in the examination paper. Each section corresponds to one of the four modules. Within each section, candidates may select one of two questions.

4.10.1   Statistics on Performance

Practical examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	21.4	23.6	23.3	15.7	8.4	4.1	2.1	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	1448	10.1
2010	21.9	25.2	22.8	15.9	7.9	3.8	1.5	0.6	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1463	10.1
2011	18.3	25.6	26.8	15.5	8.3	3.6	1.5	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1424	10.1
2012	19.9	26.6	24.2	17.5	7.3	2.8	1.4	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1447	10.2
2013	17.8	24.7	25.2	16.4	9.4	3.4	1.6	1.1	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1248	10.0
2014	**19.7**	**21.1**	**26.0**	**15.7**	**9.8**	**4.1**	**2.3**	**0.9**	**0.2**	**0.1**	**0.1**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**1329**	**10.0**

Table 4.18   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Hotel Catering & Tourism, practical, 2009 to 2014.

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	4.8	11.1	18.3	19.5	18.5	13.2	8.1	3.2	2.1	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.0	1473	8.5
2010	6.7	11.8	16.1	17.9	15.6	10.9	8.8	5.6	3.3	1.7	0.9	0.5	0.1	1504	8.4
2011	5.4	9.8	14.9	17.7	15.8	13.5	8.9	5.5	4.1	2.2	1.4	0.5	0.3	1464	8.1
2012	6.2	10.1	15.9	17.8	15.5	13.2	9.1	5.6	3.4	1.9	0.7	0.7	0.0	1486	8.2
2013	6.1	10.9	16.5	17.8	15.5	13.1	8.9	5.7	2.7	1.9	0.6	0.3	0.1	1272	8.3
2014	**4.8**	**8.4**	**14.5**	**19.0**	**18.4**	**14.6**	**9.9**	**4.5**	**2.9**	**2.2**	**0.6**	**0.2**	**0.0**	**1381**	**8.2**

Table 4.19   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Hotel Catering & Tourism, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	4.1	15.9	25.9	24.9	15.6	7.0	3.0	0.9	1.6	0.7	0.3	0.0	0.0	1,487	9.1
2010	6.1	14.3	25.0	22.6	15.5	8.9	2.9	2.1	1.4	0.5	0.6	0.1	0.0	1,519	9.1
2011	2.6	12.0	23.3	23.6	18.9	9.3	4.0	2.0	1.9	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.2	1,489	8.7
2012	4.1	15.1	24.5	23.1	15.8	9.7	3.3	1.4	1.3	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.1	1,503	9.0
2013	3.7	14.3	20.7	27.0	16.6	8.4	4.3	2.1	1.6	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.0	1,293	8.9
2014	**1.7**	**12.7**	**21.9**	**24.5**	**19.8**	**10.3**	**3.5**	**2.1**	**1.1**	**1.1**	**1.2**	**0.3**	**0.0**	**1,391**	**8.7**

Table 4.20   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Hotel Catering & Tourism, 2009 to 2014.

4.10.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the practical examination

Three of the four modules in the course involve learning outcomes related to the practical skills involved in planning, preparing and serving food, along with subsequent review and evaluation. It is these learning outcomes that are primarily tested in the practical examination.

In analysing candidates' performance in the practical performance test, some generic points common to all assignments emerged. These are set out below, followed by an analysis of each assignment.

Most examination centres were well prepared for this examination. In the majority of cases work stations were clearly labelled, as were the candidates themselves and their written work. In a small number of cases the examination centres and candidates were not well organised.

The standard of skills demonstrated by candidates varied. Some candidates demonstrated a high level of skill and judgement in relation to the preparation, cooking and presentation of food, while other candidates demonstrated poor manipulative skills in assembling dishes.

Candidates demonstrated creativity and confidence in the wide range of dishes presented in many examination centres.

In some instances the dishes selected by candidates limited them in relation to the skills they could demonstrate in the examination.

Some candidates did not prepare the required number of dishes to meet the assignment brief.

In some instances, candidates paid more attention to decorating the menu card than the actual menu content or layout.

In some instances, candidates showed poor practice in relation to personal and food hygiene.

The standard of written evaluations varied between candidates and centres. Many candidates failed to evaluate all elements of the assignment brief. In general, the standard of evaluation is an area of common weakness in candidate performance.

Assignment 1

Cake Sales are popular ways of raising funds.
List a selection of baked items suitable for a Cake Sale.
Using three methods of cake making, prepare, bake and display three items from the selection you have listed.
Make an icing and pipe it or apply it creatively to one of the baked items.
Calculate the cost of making any one of the baked items and display the selling price of each item.

This assignment was well researched. Solutions were adequate in the vast majority of cases, although the second icing was not always included. Candidates demonstrated an excellent understanding of the different types of cake making. Some candidates iced the cakes while they were still warm, with less than satisfactory results. This task was generally well evaluated.

Assignment 2

Ethnic Cuisine has become popular in recent years in Ireland.
Plan and set out a Table d'Hôte menu based on the cuisine of a country of your choice.
Prepare, cook and serve the main course from the menu.
Prepare, cook (where appropriate) and serve two other food items from the menu.
Lay a table to reflect the cuisine you have chosen.

This assignment was well done but some candidates omitted to cost the Table D'Hôte menu. Resource lists and time plans frequently omitted reference to place setting. A wide range of ethnic cooking was chosen.

India, China, Mexico and Italy were the countries chosen. Italian cookery was the most popular choice. This assignment allowed the candidates to demonstrate a wide variety of skills. This assignment also allowed for attention to the serving, place setting and portioning of food, though the candidates did not always carry out this aspect of the assignment with the same efficiency as the cooking skills. Presentation was attractive and imaginative and reflected the chosen country. Some evaluations were carried out in advance on prepared evaluation sheets, and this was unsatisfactory.

Assignment 3

You have been asked to cater for a Graduation Party for a group of friends.
Plan and set out a buffet menu suitable for the party.
Prepare, cook and serve three food items from the menu you have planned.
Include at least one main course dish.
Lay a buffet table for the occasion.

Dishes selected were appropriate to the age group and the occasion and showed skill and imagination. Reference to table setting and food service was often omitted from the resource list and from the evaluation. Candidates demonstrated a wide range of skills of varying standards.

Candidates presented a good variety of dishes. Many candidates paid more attention to table decoration and menu cards than to cooking skills and some presented uncooked dishes. Evaluations were brief and vague.

Assignment 4

Take-away outlets provide a variety of foods suitable for all age groups.
List a selection of healthy dishes that can be bought in these outlets.
Prepare, cook and serve three dishes from the selection you have listed.
Include one savoury dish, one sweet dish and one other.
Package and present one portion of each dish you have cooked for take-away.

The choice of food items was good and included both sweet and savoury dishes available in take-away outlets. Packaging materials were not always included and many work plans were incomplete. Grilling and baking were the most popular methods of cooking, however some candidates did not cook the third food item as required. Portioning and packaging were generally well done and appropriate take-away packaging was used. The quality of evaluations varied greatly and there was no reference to healthy options suitable for take-away outlets.

Assignment 5

Catering establishments are required to cater for customers with special dietary needs.
Plan and set out a three course dinner menu, suitable for coeliacs.
Prepare and cook a main course from the menu.
Prepare, cook (where appropriate) and serve two other items from the menu you have planned.
Lay a one place setting and using plate service, serve one portion of the main course.

Research and planning was generally good and met the assignment brief requirements. The list of resources did not include place setting equipment and the time plan did not include reference to place setting and portioning. In some instances, candidates lacked the culinary skills required for the dishes chosen, e.g., candidates were not sure of the correct size of vegetables for a stir fry. Dishes were attractively presented and garnished. Some candidates were unsure as to how to set a table or portion food. Some candidates appeared to lack the necessary literacy skills when it came to evaluating this assignment.

Assignment 6

World class athletes have long recognised the benefits of a diet which is high in protein and Omega 3 fatty acids.
Plan and set out a suitable À la Carte menu.
Prepare, cook and serve a main course dish, to include a portion of fresh fish.
Make a salad dressing and a simple tossed salad to complement the fish dish.

The list of possible solutions did not always meet the requirement of the assignment brief. Most candidates omitted reference to Omega-3 and pricing on the a la carte menu. Resources for salad making, dressings and milkshakes were not included in many instances. Fish was generally well handled, cooked and presented. Salads were varied and attractive. Dressings were not always served. Evaluations were not complete in many cases.

Assignment 7

You have been asked to cater for a Children's Birthday Party.
Plan and set out a suitable menu.
Prepare, cook and serve one savoury food item from the menu.
Prepare, bake and serve an iced celebration cake or small iced cakes for the party.

Prepare and present a nourishing drink.
Set and decorate the table for the celebration.

Candidates adequately researched the food items but frequently omitted the drinks. Some necessary equipment was also omitted from the resource list. Menus were well laid out and attractive in appearance. Candidates demonstrated excellent culinary skills generally. Table setting was inadequate even though tables were festooned with balloons and fancy menu cards. Candidates' evaluations of this assignment were poorly carried out and incomplete due to poor time management.

Assignment 8
Suggest a healthy packed lunch for a group of teenagers participating in a sports event.
List some savoury and sweet food items, suitable for the packed lunch.
Prepare and cook one savoury dish and one sweet dish that could be included in the lunch.
Prepare and cook (where appropriate) one other food item from the list.
Pack and present the lunch for one teenager.
Cost the packed lunch presented.

Research and planning was well carried out by the majority of candidates. Candidates demonstrated a wide variety of skills and presented food appropriately. However, in many instances soup was not suitably packed. Evaluations were vague, brief and did not refer to healthy lunch alternatives for teenagers.

Assignment 9
Fresh fruit and vegetables are an essential part of the daily diet.
List a selection of dishes and drinks that can be made using a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables.
Prepare, cook and serve one fruit dish and one vegetable dish from the list.
Prepare and present two nourishing drinks from the list.
Compare the nutritive value, taste and flavour and the cost of one of the drinks you choose.

Research generally lacked depth. Time plans and lists of resources were given but costing was not carried out. Very few skills were demonstrated by candidates when preparing and chopping or cutting fruit and vegetables. In some instances, soup was left to boil, frequently uncovered which lead to incorrect consistency. Crumbles and smoothies were well made. Evaluations were generally good..

Assignment 10
Various types of pastry can be used to make sweet and savoury dishes suitable for coffee shop menus.
List some sweet pastry dishes and savoury pastry dishes that could be served in such an outlet.
Using two types of homemade pastry, prepare, cook and serve one sweet dish and one savoury dish from the list.
Prepare and serve a fresh pot of tea, on a tray, to one person.

In many instances, research did not address all aspects of the assignment brief. Recipes were provided. However, lists of equipment for setting trays were generally omitted from the resource list. Some candidates lacked the basic skills of pastry making. When choux pastry was chosen, piping proved difficult for some candidates. Many candidates had trays set before the examination, and this meant that they were not in a position to demonstrate to the examiner that they had the competence to complete this part of the task properly.

Observations related to the written examination

Across all sections of the paper, loss of marks was often attributable to candidates giving factually incorrect information, appearing to misread or misunderstand the questions and failing to develop fully or elaborate on answers where the command word clearly required this, such as *describe* or *explain*.

Candidates who performed badly often only attempted some parts of every question, leaving many parts of questions blank. Examiners noted that candidates who attempted every question performed less well that those who limited the number of questions they answered to the number required.

Section 1 – Module 1: Eating Out – The Fast Food Way

The questions in this section addressed learning outcomes 2, 5, 7 and 8 from Unit 2 of the module.

Question 1 was the more popular question in this section and the standard of answering was reasonably good. Few candidates scored full marks for the description of the types of coffees required in part (b) and the answering in part (d) was poor, suggesting in both cases that learning outcome 2, in the context of the operation of a coffee shop, had not been achieved as well as might be expected. Part (c), which tested learning outcome 8 from Unit 2, was reasonably well answered – the majority of candidates correctly and fully described the packaging for take-away coffee, but fewer candidates were able to fully describe the packaging for a take-away cookie.

In Question 2, the vast majority of candidates scored full marks in part (a) and most did well in part (b). The majority of candidates were able to give two reasons why food is coated before being fried, but a small number of candidates gave insufficient detail to be awarded full marks. Most candidates were able to suggest some coatings used to fry food, frequently stating "batter". In some instances candidates stated breadcrumbs without referring to egg and so lost marks. Understanding of relevant terminology is necessary in order to achieve learning outcome 2 of Unit 2, and the extent to which this was demonstrated in part (c) was mixed. *Thermostat*, in particular caused some difficulty, although the majority scored at least some marks by connecting the term with temperature. Instructions for cleaning a deep fat fryer (part (e)) were, for the most part, detailed and well developed. However, some candidates were not awarded full marks, as some points were incomplete or they did not mention unplugging, or switching off the appliance.

Section 2 – Module 2: Eating Out – Hotels, Restaurants and Institutions

The questions in this section tested a range of learning outcomes across units 2, 3 and 4 of the module.

Question 3 was the more popular question in the section and the standard of answering was reasonably good. Parts (a), (b) and (d) were generally well answered. Part (c) was more varied, and it seemed that the quality of answering was determined by whether or not the candidates understood the terms *accompaniment* and *garnish*. Regarding the sequencing of working steps required in part (d), 'sauté', 'blend', and 'garnish' caused most difficulty. In a small number of cases, candidates wrote their own version of the work plan and appeared not to understand that they were asked to use the terms provided in the question. Part (e) proved challenging for candidates, with very few of them appearing to be familiar with examples of convenience foods, which suggests that learning outcome 5 from unit 2 and learning outcome 8 from unit 3 had not been achieved.

In parts (a) to (d) of Question 4, the quality of answering varied considerably. In some instances candidates misinterpreted part (a) and wrote a general party invitation, or omitted reference to key information, such as the venue, time, or date of the lunch. However, in some cases, candidates did present invitations of a very high standard using colour and illustrations. Some candidates clearly did not understand the meaning of "factors to be considered" in part (b) or "sources of information" in part (c). The standard of menus compiled by candidates in part (d) varied greatly. Some laid out the menu well, separating courses and naming dishes suitable for the lunch. Candidates who scored less well did so either because they failed to give a reasonable choice for each course (at least two options) or suggested incomplete or unbalanced dishes. This suggests that achievement of learning outcome 2 from Unit 3 is patchy. Candidates generally performed well in part (e), demonstrating a good understanding of strategies for engaging the public.

Section 3 – Module 3: Hospitality in Tourism

Question 5 was the less popular question in this section, but was reasonably well answered. Part (a) related to learning outcome 1 from Unit 3 and was generally well answered. In a small number of cases marks were lost as candidates repeated the same type of accommodation more than once or stated the name of holiday destinations or particular hotels or resorts instead of a type of accommodation. Part (b) related to a range of learning outcomes from Unit 3 and was reasonably well answered. In parts (b) and (d), both of which required a reasonably extended description, the reasons for loss of marks were usually lack of elaboration or failure to offer a sufficient number of significant points. Part (e) proved challenging for the majority of candidates and was frequently misunderstood or not attempted.

Question 6 was the more popular question in this section and the standard of answering for most parts of the question was high, suggesting good levels of achievement of the learning outcomes across the various units of the module. Part (a), which related to learning outcome 1 from Units 2 and 3, was generally very well answered. In a small number of cases, "Friary" was suggested as a method of transport, perhaps having been mistaken for "ferry". Part (d), related to learning outcomes 3 and 7 from Unit 1, proved more challenging for candidates. In some cases, candidates merely stated why visiting Wexford and the South-East was appealing, and failed to explain how tourists could be encouraged to "revisit."

Section 4 – Module 4: Catering for Diversity

Question 7, which was based on learning outcomes 2, 3 and 4 from Unit 2 of the module, was the more popular question in this section, and was reasonably well attempted. In part (a), based on learning outcome 2, most candidates suggested accurate relevant reasons why people may choose to be vegetarian. However, as with other questions on the paper that required more extended descriptive responses, marks were lost due to lack of elaboration or a failure to give a sufficient number of relevant points. The majority of candidates scored reasonably well in part (b), although some referred only to meat and fish in the definitions, omitting any reference to dairy products, etc. Some candidates confused the two given types of vegetarian diets. The definition of a vegan diet often lacked sufficient detail to be awarded full marks. The standard of answering in part (c) of the question varied – some candidates suggested complete balanced dishes suitable for a lacto-vegetarian, often using a meat substitute such as quorn. However, mistakes were common, and the courses suggested were sometimes incomplete, unbalanced or contained meat or fish. The standard of answering varied considerably in part (d), suggesting corresponding variation in the level of achievement of learning outcome 3 in Unit 2.

Question 8 was based on learning outcomes 1, 2 and 3 in Unit 1. Candidates generally performed reasonably in part (a), with the majority being able to suggest different countries associated with each of the staple foods named, with the exception of "Maize", which proved more challenging. Some candidates scored less well when naming relevant dishes. The quality of answering in part (b) varied, with some candidates failing to give sufficient detail to score well. On some occasions, candidates described how a dish they had named earlier, rather than a staple food, was cooked and served. Part (c) proved challenging for very many candidates, suggesting either that they had not achieved the outcomes relating to nutrition in other units, or that they had difficulty applying such knowledge in this context. Part (d) also proved challenging. The majority did attempt it but often the points made were repeated, vague or unelaborated, suggesting that learning outcome 3 from Unit 1 had not been widely and fully achieved.

4.10.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the practical examination

- Students should practise different cooking methods and learn to differentiate between methods such as boiling, simmering, sauté and stir frying.

- Students should practise using modern electrical appliances in class prior to using those appliances in the examination.

- Candidates should read their assignment briefs carefully and select dishes appropriate to the requirements of the assignments and to his/her ability.

- Candidates should select dishes which will allow them to demonstrate a range of skills and be gainfully occupied for the duration of the examination.

- Candidates should be encouraged to be more creative and adapt a modern approach to menu choice and presentation, decoration and garnish.

- Teachers should ensure that students have a wide variety of dishes in their repertoire, and that they take full advantage of this variety when planning how to address the particular focus of their assigned brief.

- Candidates should set out detailed time plans that allow for serving and evaluation, and they should be encouraged to follow these plans.

- Where table-setting is a requirement of the assignment, the necessary equipment should be included in the list of resources as appropriate, and the table setting should be addressed in the evaluation of the assignment.

- Particular attention should be paid to food hygiene and personal hygiene. The use of disposable gloves in appropriate situations is recommended.

- Candidates should avoid being wasteful with resources, particularly ingredients, e.g., when preparing fruit and vegetables.

- Food should be tested for seasoning and seasoned as required before serving. Teachers should stress the importance of tasting the food before completing the evaluation.

- Candidates should be encouraged to check temperatures of, for example, cooking oil, ovens, etc.

- Candidates should be instructed to use the correct cooking implements and cloths, oven gloves, etc.

- Evaluations must be carried out at the end of the examination and all elements of the assignment should be evaluated. It is recommended that candidates be guided in the use of the appropriate terminology to assist in the evaluation.

Recommendations related to the written examination

- At the end of each module, or as the examination approaches, teachers and students should use previous exam paper questions to practice and develop good examination technique.

- Students need to familiarise themselves with the different terminology found on exam papers, such as "describe", "explain", "factors to be considered", and so on.

- Teachers and students should keep in mind that the focus of the course is towards commercial catering rather than that carried out at home.

- When teaching and learning *menu planning*, particular attention should be given to guidelines for planning menus, the layout and sequence of courses on menus and selecting balanced dishes. Students need to understand the importance of giving detailed information and presenting "complete" courses on menus.

- Time should be spent on nutrition and encouraging students to evaluate the nutritional value of menus they have planned.

- Students need to be informed about and understand cooking processes and catering terminology, such as, *á la carte*, *garnish*, *accompaniment*, and so on.

- Candidates should read both questions in each section and then decide which one allows them to best demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Time in the exam should be devoted to fully completing this question before attempting to answer any additional questions. It does not benefit students to attempt every question at the expense of doing the required number properly.

- Candidates need to become aware of the importance of developing their answers and avoiding one-word or unclear responses to questions that require them to "describe" or "explain".

- Candidates should read each question carefully and focus on the key words in the question (perhaps underlining them), so as to avoid misunderstanding the question.

- Candidates should note that the space made available for the answer to each question can be used as a guide to determine the level of detail required in the answer.

- Candidates should use all of the time allocated in the exam and make sure that they attempt the required number of questions in each section and overall.

4.10.4   Recommendations to schools and centres

- In the practical examination, it would be greatly appreciated if schools were to facilitate the examination process by affixing a printed sheet with the candidate's number, assignment number and list of chosen dishes to each workstation. In addition, a floor plan of the examination centre indicating the position of each candidate and the assignments being carried out at each workstation would be of great assistance to the examiner.

4.11 Information and Communications Technology

The course in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) builds on the skills developed in the mandatory module – *Introduction to Information and Communications Technology*. The course consists of six modules. Module 1 – *Word Processing* is a compulsory module, and candidates may choose to study any three of the remaining five modules. The modules are:

- Module 1: Word Processing (compulsory)

- Module 2: Spreadsheets

- Module 3: Databases

- Module 4: Desktop Publishing

- Module 5: The Internet

- Module 6: Text Entry

The examination tests candidates' knowledge of theory through a written "general theory" section, along with a short theory question within each module, and tests their ICT skills through a practical computer-based performance test that involves an assignment in each module. The files required for these assignments are uploaded by the State Examinations Commission to a dedicated password-protected site, and the teacher downloads them in advance of the examination. On the day of the examination, the teacher provides each candidate with a copy of the files on an external storage device, usually a memory stick. Each candidate is required to store the completed work on this external device and also to print a copy of the completed work for return with the answer book provided. No difficulties were reported in downloading and saving the given files, and teachers of ICT are commended for their diligence in this respect.

The examination is assessed out of 12 credits and consists of three sections: Section 1 (*General Theory*), Section 2 (*Word Processing*), and Section 3 (Optional Modules – candidates complete any three of five assignments on the remaining five modules)

4.11.1 Statistics on Performance

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	7.2	12.7	15.6	16.3	12.4	11.8	8.1	6.8	4.1	2.5	1.4	0.7	0.3	1,286	8.2
2010	6.3	13.8	15.4	14.7	12.2	13.3	10.3	5.0	4.2	2.8	1.2	0.6	0.2	1,295	8.2
2011	4.3	14.5	17.8	15.8	14.7	11.2	8.0	5.2	3.8	2.2	1.1	1.1	0.2	1,219	8.3
2012	5.5	11.2	16.9	13.3	16.3	11.6	8.6	8.2	4.5	2.6	0.8	0.4	0.2	1,210	8.1
2013	6.8	11.0	16.3	14.6	13.1	11.3	8.9	8.0	5.1	2.3	1.2	1.0	0.4	955	8.1
2014	**4.4**	**13.6**	**16.6**	**14.7**	**14.7**	**12.4**	**9.2**	**5.3**	**4.7**	**2.3**	**1.0**	**0.7**	**0.5**	**1,064**	**8.2**

Table 4.19   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Information and Communications Technology, 2009 to 2014.

4.11.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Many candidates did well in this examination, with 76.2% of candidate achieving 7 credits or higher. Where the standard was fair to poor, this was mainly due to: poor inputting skills; inaccuracy in spelling and punctuation; and failure to follow the given instructions. Some candidates did not complete all of the required questions or did not enclose printouts of their work.

Among the optional modules, *Spreadsheets* and *Internet* were the most popular, followed by *Desktop Publishing* and Text *Entry*. *Databases* was therefore the least popular option.

The ten *General Theory* questions in Section 1 were generally well answered, with most candidates displaying a competent knowledge of general computer theory.

Module 1 – Word Processing – compulsory

Almost all candidates were proficient in using the text editing commands such as *Bold*, *Centre*, *All Caps* and *18 pt* and thus earned high marks. The editing section was well done overall and most candidates understood the text editing commands. Joining and splitting paragraphs caused the most difficulty among the editing changes. Many candidates, when attempting to join the paragraphs, only deleted the blank line between them. Some candidates created the new paragraph correctly but did not delete the two spaces before the new paragraph (thereby leaving an inappropriate two-space indent at the start of the new paragraph). A number of candidates inserted extra lines when not required and some candidates omitted to implement correct single-line spacing, as was required. The page header was almost always attempted but sometimes incorrectly justified. The date was often simply typed in at the top of the page, without using the *header* function as was required. Many candidates changed the line spacing for some of the lines of text but not for all. Text justification was also frequently not completed where required. Page numbering was often omitted or incorrectly justified. Spelling and proofreading errors were corrected by the majority of candidates.

Many candidates did not appear to understand the importance of accuracy in the entry of additional text, and indeed some candidates were inaccurate throughout the paper in all areas of text and data entry. Teachers are advised to encourage candidates to review the document after they have completed their work on it and to develop proficiency in correcting any errors. This is an essential element of learning outcome 1 of Unit 2 of this module (*the student will be able to key in text accurately*). This is a fundamental skill in word processing.

Module 2 – Spreadsheets

Of the optional modules, this was the second most frequently attempted module. Spreadsheet theory was generally well understood. However, when asked to "Write a suitable formula for cell **C4** that would calculate the **Tax Paid**." some candidates calculated the answer rather than providing the required formula.

In the Practical Spreadsheet assignment, many input errors related to capital letters, spacing and spelling. It was common for many candidates to achieve full marks for the formula, chart, formatting, etc., but lose marks for data entry. This suggests that learning Outcome 2 from Unit 2 (*the student will be able to enter numeric and character data in a spreadsheet*) is not being adequately achieved. This is regrettable, since, as with word processing, accurate data entry is fundamental to using spreadsheets effectively. Candidates are advised to pay attention to the development of accuracy in the inputting of data.

Formulas were generally well attempted, but the formula was often not written into the examination paper as required, resulting in candidates losing marks. A number of candidates used an incorrect operator (+, or *) to calculate the *Units Used*. Currency formatting was frequently applied to all figures, even in the *Units* column. Most candidates were able to delete rows in the spreadsheet. As this was a task that had not been assessed in previous examinations, it is encouraging that candidates performed well in this question. Most candidates successfully created the required pie chart, but many candidates omitted to add the required labels.

Module 3 – Databases

Though not a popular module, many who attempted it achieved high marks. The theory section was generally not well answered, with both of the terms *Query* and *Data Type* clearly proving challenging for many candidates. Some candidates did not attempt the theory section and thus lost marks. Many candidates scored well in the practical database assignment and showed competence in amending and sorting the given database. Common mistakes related to candidates sorting the wrong column or sorting in the wrong order. Again, many candidates lost marks for input errors when adding records to the database or when editing the records.

Module 4 – Desktop Publishing

The theory questions were generally well answered, although some candidates listed two pieces of software when asked to name two documents. In the practical desktop publishing assignment, the standard of answering was generally good. The formatting and manipulation of text were generally well done, as was the application of borders and shading. A minority of candidates had difficulty with the sizing, spacing and positioning of objects. The use of tabs and other appropriate means of positioning and aligning text proved challenging for some candidates, with many of them trying to achieve such alignment by using the space bar to insert multiple adjacent spaces, which is an inappropriate method in a desktop publishing environment (as indeed it is when word-processing). The overall visual layout of graphics and text and the use of white space also proved challenging. Teachers are advised to draw students' attention to the visual impact of the final document, noting the requirements of learning outcome 10 from Unit 3 of this module (*students will be able to layout documents in a visually appealing way following commonly accepted design principles*).

Module 4 – The Internet

This was the most frequently attempted module and was also the best answered.

The theory questions were generally well answered. The practical internet assignment was generally very well completed; almost all candidates logged on to the specified sites and saved the web pages as required.

Email was generally well done but text entry posed a problem for many of the candidates. It is once again noted that candidates should be made aware that text and data entry is important for every module of ICT. Some candidates omitted to include the *subject*. Some also failed to attach the requisite file to the email message, although the majority did so correctly.

Module 5 – Text Entry

Text Entry was the least well answered module. Candidates generally did not have the accuracy needed to achieve high marks. Lack of attention to detail was common and text input errors were frequent. Thus, one of the key aims of this module – *to operate the keyboard using the correct technique with confidence* – is not being fulfilled.

Input errors resulted in most candidates losing a significant portion of the 12 marks that were allocated to accurate entry of the text. Some candidates omitted text formatting. However, underlining and applying boldface were generally well done. Superscripting and applying the correct line spacing were often omitted, as was the insertion of the euro symbol. Hyphenated text was often inputted incorrectly or inconsistently. Teachers are advised to provide time for the focussed development of competent keyboard skills. Such skills require practice, patience and perseverance to develop. Students are advised to commit the necessary time to develop accurate and competent keyboard skills, which are highly valued lifelong skills.

4.11.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

- Teachers should provide the necessary time for the students to develop competent and accurate keyboard skills. Students should regularly practice keyboard skills so as to develop speed and accuracy in inputting text and data.

- Teachers should emphasise the need for accuracy in the inputting of data to documents of all types.

- Students should read all finished documents carefully, use the spell-check, and ensure that all documents are accurate and error free. Teachers should stress the importance of reading and checking all documents carefully when complete.

- Greater attention should be given to considering the visual impact of all documents through the careful placement of text and graphics and through the considered use of white space.

4.12 Graphics and Construction Studies

The syllabus for Graphics and Construction Studies comprises six modules. Students study Module 1 and any three of the remaining five modules.

- Module 1 – Graphic Communication (Mandatory)
- Module 2 – Construction
- Module 3 – Building Services
- Module 4 – Woodcraft
- Module 5 – Design and Manufacture of Educational Toys.
- Module 6 – Computer Aided Design

The final examination is assessed out of 12 credits and comprises two components:

- written examination
- practical coursework.

The written examination is allocated 240 marks (60% of the total) and the practical coursework is allocated 160 marks (40%).

The written examination is of one and a half hours' duration and comprises two sections. Section 1 consists of two compulsory questions. The first of these comprises fifteen short-answer parts on material from across the syllabus and candidates are required to answer any twelve and the second deals with the compulsory *Graphic Communication* module. Section 2 comprises five questions, one pertaining to each of the other five modules, and candidates are required to answer three.

The practical coursework component requires each candidate to present a completed assignment, which complies with one of the four design briefs issued by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). Each candidate is also required to attend an interview to discuss the assignment. Practical coursework is examined in June in the candidate's school by an examiner appointed by the SEC.

4.12.1   Statistics on Performance

Practical coursework

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	27.0	26.5	17.4	11.7	6.9	3.5	2.0	1.5	1.3	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.6	1050	10.0
2010	23.4	20.7	20.1	13.8	8.2	4.2	2.5	2.5	1.9	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.4	1042	9.7
2011	27.5	20.0	19.8	12.6	8.3	3.1	1.8	3.6	0.9	1.1	0.6	0.5	0.1	926	9.9
2012	23.9	24.1	18.9	13.3	8.9	2.3	3.1	0.9	1.9	0.9	0.3	0.9	0.4	982	9.8
2013	22.4	19.7	22.2	17.0	7.7	2.7	1.8	1.4	1.7	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.7	998	9.7
2014	**24.5**	**25.9**	**20.1**	**11.9**	**7.4**	**3.2**	**2.0**	**0.2**	**0.8**	**1.6**	**1.6**	**0.4**	**0.3**	**985**	**9.9**

Table 4.20   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Graphics and Construction Studies, practical coursework, 2009 to 2014.

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	2.0	6.5	11.0	15.0	16.8	15.1	12.9	10.3	5.7	3.6	0.7	0.3	0.1	1074	7.4
2010	5.5	7.0	10.1	13.6	13.6	16.4	11.3	9.7	6.2	3.2	2.2	0.9	0.2	1080	7.5
2011	4.3	6.1	10.7	15.7	16.4	13.7	13.8	9.4	6.0	2.2	0.8	0.8	0.1	1060	7.6
2012	1.8	5.1	8.8	16.1	16.4	16.8	12.7	9.6	6.5	2.7	2.1	1.0	0.3	991	7.2
2013	3.4	6.9	10.8	15.5	12.8	15.0	13.1	9.3	6.4	3.6	2.0	1.0	0.4	1002	7.4
2014	**1.4**	**5.4**	**7.5**	**11.5**	**14.2**	**15.6**	**13.5**	**14.8**	**8.7**	**3.7**	**2.4**	**1.1**	**0.1**	**992**	**6.8**

Table 4.21   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Graphics and Construction Studies, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	2.8	9.6	15.1	20.7	21.0	13.4	7.6	3.3	2.2	2.2	1.5	0.6	0.0	1,085	8.2
2010	4.8	9.4	15.1	18.2	17.3	13.2	9.2	5.3	2.7	2.1	1.4	1.0	0.4	1,094	8.1
2011	4.6	10.3	16.8	18.7	16.5	13.1	7.8	4.6	3.0	2.1	1.1	1.0	0.3	1,084	8.2
2012	2.5	8.1	16.6	20.3	19.7	12.6	8.9	4.0	3.4	1.3	1.3	0.9	0.6	1,012	8.1
2013	3.8	9.1	16.0	16.4	19.5	14.6	8.5	3.9	3.3	1.9	1.0	0.9	1.1	1,024	8.0
2014	**2.1**	**7.7**	**13.3**	**18.2**	**21.6**	**15.5**	**8.2**	**4.9**	**3.1**	**2.3**	**1.1**	**1.0**	**1.1**	**1,019**	**7.8**

Table 4.22   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Graphics and Construction Studies, 2009 to 2014.

4.12.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the practical coursework

Schools are issued with design briefs annually in January. The four design briefs relate to the first four optional modules, namely, *Construction, Building Services, Woodcraft* and *The Design and Manufacture of Educational Toys.*

Candidates were required to complete a coursework assignment on any one of the design briefs. The assessment of this component was carried out in June. Each candidate was required to present for an interview (approximately 15 minutes) together with their practical coursework and their design folio. Candidates who do not present coursework are not interviewed. The primary focus of this examination component is on the performance of the candidate in the practical coursework and interview. The design folio is, nonetheless, important if the candidate is to attain a high credit.

As has generally been the case in the past, *Woodcraft* was by far the most popular option with candidates (64%). This was followed by *Building Services* (26%), the *Educational Toy* (7%), and *Construction* (3%). It is of note that while the percentage of males and females opting for both *Woodcraft* and *Construction* was largely similar (64% of males and 65% of females for *Woodcraft*; 3% of males and 2% of females for *Construction*), there was a marked difference in the other two

options. Just 17% of females chose the *Building Services* option compared to 26% of males, while only 4% of males opted to make an *Educational Toy*, contrasting with 16% of females.

In all, 94% of candidates were present for the interview and submitted an artefact and design folio that complied with the design briefs, as is required. 2.5% of candidates did not submit coursework and were therefore not interviewed and a further 2% of candidates were absent from the interview for other reasons. Only a very small minority (0.3%) of candidates presented a project that did not comply with the issued design briefs.

The candidates who evidently devoted time to research and to the formulation of various design ideas were better equipped to answer questions in the interview. The use of ICT was very evident and used to good effect in candidates' design folios. In particular, the use of 3D modellers such as SolidWorks and SketchUp in the production of working drawings was noteworthy. Some candidates lost marks for failing to adequately articulate the criteria they had used in selecting the solution, as they as they did not show how their solution related to their analysis of the chosen brief.

As in previous years, a number of common weaknesses were identified by examiners. The design folio was, invariably, where candidates underperformed. Some candidates had only a rudimentary knowledge of the brief which they had undertaken and encountered difficulties in discussing it with the examiner. The lack of a working drawing or having a drawing bereft of dimensions was also a common weakness. The quality of sketching and lack of research into multiple design ideas also resulted in a loss of marks for some candidates.

The standard of project finish resulted in a loss of marks for a considerable percentage of candidates. A significant number of candidates applied no finish at all.

Observations related to the written examination

Some candidates did not answer the required number of questions in each section of the examination paper, despite answering excess answers in some sections.

Module 1 (*Graphic Communication*) is compulsory and was tested through the compulsory Question 2 in Section 1 as well as through the short questions (b), (e), (h), (l) and (m) in Question 1. These short questions were amongst the best answered questions on the examination paper. Question 2, however, saw mixed responses. Most candidates demonstrated a good command of orthographic projection, a key requirement outlined in learning outcome 3 of Unit 3 of this module of the syllabus. Candidates struggled, however, in relation to part (b), which tested their ability to create patterns based on straight lines and curves as indicated in the learning outcomes within Unit 2 of the syllabus. The main issue appeared to relate to accuracy of construction and examiners reported a lack of compass work, with many candidates opting for a sketched solution. Examiners also referred to a general lack of understanding in relation to part (c) of the question, which tested candidates' understanding of surface developments, such understanding being necessary for the achievement of learning outcome 4 in Unit 4. Examiners also indicated that a significant percentage of candidates attempted this question without using the appropriate drawing equipment. In particular, the number of candidates who attempted the "lines and curves" part without using a compass was notable.

Module 2 (*Construction*) was examined through Question 1 in Section 2 as well as through the short questions (c), (d), (f), (i) and (j) in Question 1 in Section 1. These short questions were

among the lowest-scoring questions, possibly because they required quite specific answers. Of these questions, candidates achieved best in part (c) of Question 1 in Section 2. In part (a) of that question, most candidates were unable to identify the roofing truss or to refer to its advantages in relation to roof construction. The most frequent answer in relation to part (b) was "Feb", which was transcribed from the image on the examination paper. However, part (c) was answered very successfully, with candidates demonstrating a good understanding of fire prevention in the home.

Module 3 (*Building Services*) was tested through Question 2 in Section 2 as well as through the short questions (c), (g), (j), (k) and (n) in Question 1 of Section 1. The answering of the short questions was mixed in standard, with questions (g), (k) and (n) eliciting the best responses. In relation to Question 2, candidates generally answered very well in subsections of part (a) pertaining to piping types, but performed less well in relation to the sketching of the parts of the indirect hot water cylinder. The questions relating to zoned heating systems and the generation of electricity in parts (b) and (c) were well answered.

As in previous years, Module 4 (*Woodcraft*) was one of the most popular choices for candidates. It was assessed through the short questions (a), (b) and (l) in Question 1 of Section 1 and through Question 3 in Section 2. The standard of answering was generally quite good, with the exception of the part about the use of the router.

Another popular choice with candidates was Module 5 (*The Design and Manufacture of Educational Toys*). This module was assessed through short question (o) in Question 1 of Section 1 and through Question 4 in Section 2. While the answering to this question was generally quite good as regards the written descriptions, the sketched answers were often not of the same standard.

Module 6 (*Computer Aided Design*) remains a perennially unpopular option amongst candidates. Of the small number of candidates who did attempt Question 5, which tested the learning outcomes from this module, the majority identified SolidWorks as the CAD software package that they had used. Most candidates scored poorly on the CAD "Commands" section but displayed a good knowledge of the advantages of using parametric CAD modelling over traditional CAD systems and also in relation to data backup.

4.12.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the practical coursework
- Some design folios were poorly presented and contained only two to three A4 pages. This is identified as an area where candidate performance could be considerably improved. In addition, some of the design folios were written on a "photocopied" template, requiring little or no use of IT skills by the candidate. Given that graphics is a compulsory module, where both orthographic projection and freehand sketching are to be learned, this is an area where there is scope for improved performance.

- Students should prepare in a more comprehensive manner for the interview. In particular, they should be more aware of the exact requirements of the design brief and how they responded to it.

- Students need to give greater attention to the project finish (sanding, varnishing, etc).

- Students should produce a neat deign folio to accompany their project, detailing their working through each stage of the design process.

- Students should have neat sketches in pencil and where necessary may make use of grid paper to improve on the accuracy and neatness of their sketches.

- Students should produce a neat working drawing of their project to a specific scale and with relevant dimensions.

Recommendations related to the written examination

- Candidates should be more aware of the examination rubrics, particularly in relation to number of required answers in Sections A and B.

- Some candidates appeared to have started at the beginning of the examination paper and proceeded to attempt all questions. This may lead them to spend time on surplus questions in one section before attempting the requisite number in another. Candidates should instead ensure that they answer the required number of questions in each section as fully as they can before attempting any surplus questions.

- In order to achieve high marks in the *Graphic Communication* questions, candidates must use drawing equipment. Sketched answers will not be rewarded with high marks.

- Teachers and students who elect to cover the *Construction* and *Building Services* modules need to devote more time to these, as they were the least well answered questions in the examination..

4.12.4　Recommendations to schools and centres

Schools were informed of the proposed day and date for candidate interviews by an initial phone call which was subsequently confirmed in writing. In general, the vast majority of examiners reported that candidate assessment arrangements were excellent. Schools were found to be most helpful in ensuring appropriate arrangements were made for the assessment of candidate work. Examiners did, however, make a small number of recommendations as follows:

- LCA projects should not be presented for assessment in the same room as other project work (MTW, Construction Studies etc.). This can lead to confusion during assessment.

- Schools should provide a suitable, interruption-free, interview room for the assessment.

4.13 Craft and Design

The course consists of fifteen modules grouped into four areas of study. Candidates may choose to study any four modules, subject to not taking more than two from any one area. The five units within each module, and the statements of learning outcomes that they contain, are common across all modules. The modules and their groupings are:

Fashion & Textiles
- Module 1: Creative Decoration
- Module 2: Surface-pattern design
- Module 3: Textiles – structuring/weaving
- Module 4: Fashion – construction

Graphic Communication and Print Media
- Module 5: Signage
- Module 6: Design communication through illustration
- Module 7: Layout in graphic communication
- Module 8: Block-printing

Three-Dimensional Studies
- Module 9: Jewellery
- Module 10: Interior design
- Module 11: Modelling
- Module 12: Ceramics

Lens-Based Studies
- Module 13: Video production
- Module 14: The camera – photography
- Module 15: Manipulating photographic imagery

The final examination is assessed out of 12 credits and comprises two components:
- practical coursework
- written examination.

The practical coursework is allocated 240 marks (60% of the total) and the written examination is allocated 160 marks (40%).

For the practical coursework, candidates are required to design and make a craft work based on an assignment brief issued annually by the SEC and to complete the associated workbook. The brief offers a choice from among several themes.

The written examination is of one and a half hours' duration and candidates are required to answer four questions. Eight questions are presented – two from each of the four areas of study.

4.13.1   Statistics on Performance

Practical coursework

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	5.1	8.2	18.9	20.5	18.5	12.1	7.8	3.5	1.2	2.1	1.2	0.6	0.2	487	8.4
2010	3.1	9.6	20.6	22.5	19.3	9.2	6.6	3.5	2.4	1.3	0.9	0.7	0.4	457	8.4
2011	6.2	13.9	20.9	15.5	13.0	7.7	8.5	4.1	2.5	2.3	1.7	2.1	1.7	483	8.3
2012	5.1	13.4	19.1	18.8	16.7	10.7	5.4	4.1	3.5	1.0	1.4	0.6	0.2	628	8.5
2013	3.1	10.6	18.8	17.3	17.3	14.3	7.2	4.7	2.0	1.1	1.4	1.6	0.5	554	8.2
2014	**5.2**	**10.9**	**15.9**	**19.0**	**17.4**	**10.5**	**5.5**	**4.8**	**3.7**	**1.8**	**3.0**	**1.5**	**0.7**	**541**	**8.1**

Table 4.23   *Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Craft and Design, practical coursework, 2009 to 2014.*

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	3.8	5.2	7.9	12.5	19.6	20.4	14.3	9.5	4.2	1.6	0.8	0.2	0.0	496	7.5
2010	2.5	2.7	7.0	12.7	16.5	16.2	13.7	12.0	9.7	3.6	1.3	1.7	0.4	474	6.9
2011	0.8	2.6	11.8	14.7	19.8	17.5	15.1	11.2	3.9	1.6	1.0	0.0	0.0	491	7.4
2012	1.6	5.5	12.6	20.1	22.2	18.3	10.6	5.9	1.8	1.0	0.0	0.3	0.2	613	8.0
2013	1.9	6.4	8.3	14.3	19.3	17.0	11.0	10.6	5.7	3.4	1.1	0.5	0.7	566	7.3
2014	**0.6**	**4.4**	**11.0**	**15.6**	**21.3**	**19.3**	**13.4**	**7.9**	**4.0**	**0.7**	**1.5**	**0.0**	**0.2**	**544**	**7.5**

Table 4.24   *Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Craft and Design, written examination, 2009 to 2014.*

Overall

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	2.2	6.2	11.3	21.6	24.2	15.5	8.7	2.8	3.2	1.6	2.2	0.4	0.2	504	7.9
2010	0.8	3.9	11.1	20.0	22.6	17.9	9.1	5.3	3.3	2.1	1.6	1.4	0.8	486	7.5
2011	1.8	7.3	12.0	23.7	19.9	12.6	7.1	5.5	3.6	3.6	2.2	0.6	0.2	507	7.8
2012	2.0	7.4	16.8	27.0	19.9	11.3	6.0	2.8	1.9	2.2	2.2	0.5	0.0	647	8.2
2013	0.7	7.4	14.2	19.9	19.4	13.8	11.1	4.0	3.8	2.2	1.4	1.4	0.7	578	7.8
2014	**0.9**	**5.3**	**14.4**	**24.2**	**19.4**	**11.6**	**8.4**	**4.3**	**4.8**	**3.0**	**2.1**	**1.2**	**0.2**	**561**	**7.7**

Table 4.25   *Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Craft and Design, 2009 to 2014.*

4.13.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the practical examination

The most popular themes were *Transport* and *Fashion*. *Ancient Rome* also gave rise to some very good projects.

Many candidates did not complete their workbooks, thus preventing them from being awarded the marks available for the aspects of the assessment that are based on the evidence in the workbook.

Research and Designing

There was limited use of primary source material. Where primary sources were used, this tended to result in work that demonstrated the achievement of all of the learning outcomes across the five units. Secondary images were abundant in all centres and across all themes. The print quality of the secondary image in many cases was poor. There is a need for students to balance the use of secondary images with primary source material. The use of secondary images is valid to some extent; however, care should be taken to ensure that these images are developed appropriately. Direct copies and tracing from secondary sources provide very little evidence of development. In many cases the development of ideas was poor. Teachers and students should be aware that marks are awarded for development in terms of both primary and secondary images and evidence of such development should therefore be provided. Those candidates who showed how their design developed and changed over time were better able to show how they achieved the learning outcomes in Unit 1 and Unit 2, as well as producing a better piece of work in line with the learning outcomes in Unit 3.

Much of the work in the workbooks was presented in written format, which is not always appropriate for a visual subject. The result of this is that some candidates did not display their achievement of those learning outcomes in Unit 1 and Unit 2 that are associated with visual exploration, technical ability and the use of a variety of media and materials. Written research also made it difficult for some candidates to translate their ideas from written format to visual conclusions. However, there was a marked improvement in comparison to previous years in the quality of the written responses. Where the written responses were creative and the candidates were able to use language to communicate their points, then achievement of the learning outcomes in Unit 1 and Unit 2 was demonstrated effectively.

Making and Support Studies

The most common crafts submitted were: block printing using lino, ceramics, batik, and modelling. In some centres a formulaic approach was in evidence – for example, where all candidates design and make the same type of craftwork even though they have studied four different types of craft as part of their course work. Such a formulaic approach does not facilitate achievement of the learning outcomes in a personal way, nor does it facilitate the development of 'student autonomy' as described in the module descriptor.

The quality of the finished work was often better than the work submitted in the workbook. Good attempts to record the steps taken to make the work were associated with well-executed, highly finished and personalised work and showed that the candidates had achieved the learning outcomes in Unit 3. The most successful crafts showed evidence of working through the design process, which included positive exploration of materials and construction techniques.

Where candidates showed evidence of having undertaken a study as described in Unit 4, and in particular option 2, *contemporary practices and trends*, this clearly influenced their craftwork positively. A small number of candidates presented their work using digital media. This work showed evidence of very good investigation and exploration as well as techniques which were influenced by contemporary practitioners.

Evaluation

Evaluations by candidates often showed evidence of having been overly influenced by teachers, and in some cases a whole centre presented the same or very similar evaluations. In other cases, candidates did not attempt this section at all. Where candidates personalised their answers, the quality of writing was significantly improved on previous years. Candidates who presented an informed, and thought-provoking analysis of their work, showed a high level of engagement with and achievement of learning outcomes 2 and 3 from Unit 5.

Observations related to the written examination

The questions in the examination paper require candidates to write as well as present information using visual means. Where candidates labelled their sketches and used a variety of media to communicate their ideas, they were able to communicate their achievement of a wide range of the common learning outcomes. This is a marked improvement on recent years. Candidates who focus on answering four questions fully score better than those who attempt all eight questions. 31% of candidates did not attempt the required number of questions.

Question 1 based on Area 1: Fashion and Textiles

In answering part (a), candidates were generally able identify a repeat pattern, but a majority of candidates did not know the design steps to be taken to develop a repeat pattern. This indicates a weak understanding of learning outcomes 1 to 4 in Unit 2 as they relate to Module 2 Surface-Pattern Design. Candidates wrote about research and colour, or wrote about the printing process involved in block printing, as opposed to the design process. Part (b) offered candidates the opportunity to design a repeat pattern from the images provided. Again, the results were weak, as there was little connection between the design solutions presented and the images given on the examination paper, further indicating limited achievement of the learning outcomes in Unit 2 as they relate to Module 2. Candidates generally scored well in part (c), demonstrating an understanding of the possible uses of a repeat pattern and thereby showing the kind of understanding that arises from experience of carrying out one of the studies described as a learning outcome in Unit 4, *Support Studies*, as applied across a range of modules.

Question 2 based on Area 1: Fashion and Textiles

Part (a) was well answered as candidates were able to identify the various materials used in the given images, thus showing achievement of the learning outcome 5 of Unit 1, as it relates to Module 4 (Fashion Construction). Part (b) was generally answered poorly as candidates could not give a significant answer as to why they preferred one piece over another, giving reasons such as *'I like the colour'* or *'I only wear necklaces'*, thus demonstrating limited achievement of learning outcome 1 to 3 of Unit 5, *Reflection/Evaluation*. Part (c) gave rise to some wonderful designs, showing achievement of learning outcomes 1 to 4 in Unit 2, *Designing*, in relation to this module. It also provided evidence of fulfilling the aims of the module in terms of materials and knowledge of the design process specific to fashion construction. Most candidates could list the materials to be used in their design and gave extensive accounts of the processes involved.

Question 3 based on Area 2: Graphic Communication and Print Media

Even the very weakest candidates were able to give a valid reason as to why they preferred one image over another in part (a), showing that these candidates had fulfilled the aims of developing a critical awareness of design communication. Terms like 'bold', black' or 'block' were used to describe the lettering by candidates. Better-scoring candidates used appropriate terminology such

as 'italics' and 'capitals', showing achievement of learning outcome 8 in Unit 1. The quality of sketching in part (b) was good overall, and this year there was a marked increase in the appropriate use of various media and colour, which demonstrated achievement of learning outcomes 1 to 4 in Unit 2. It is worth noting however, that a number of candidates designed a poster as opposed to a sale sign. Part (c) was well answered, with candidates displaying thoughtful reasoning for their answers, thereby displaying achievement of learning outcomes 2 and 3 of Unit 5.

Question 4 based on Area 2: Graphic Communication and Print Media

The candidates who scored highly on part (a) showed that they had fulfilled the aim of developing a critical awareness of the subtlety and power of illustration as it is used in the mass media. Candidates scored highly in part (b), where they provided accurate comparisons between the posters in terms of colour and lettering, showing achievement of learning outcome 8 in Unit 1 and learning outcome 1 in Unit 4. Discussion of the layout of the posters was poor, showing limited achievement of learning outcomes 1 to 4 in Unit 4. Part (c) was not answered well by the many candidates who did not appear to understand the concept of redesigning the poster.

Question 6 based on Area 3: Three Dimensional Studies

The majority of candidates who answered this question had limited knowledge of the topic. Responses to part (a) were weak overall, with limited understanding of the aims of Module 11. The use of the relevant terminology was also limited. There was very little discussion of image and texture. Part (b) offered candidates an opportunity to create a coin design. The imagery used included harps and shamrocks and did not go beyond the obvious. Most candidates did not include measurements and some did not include the value of the coin, showing limited achievement of learning outcomes 1 to 4 in Unit 2. Part (c) was also poorly answered, with candidates showing a very limited achievement of learning outcomes 1 to 3 in Unit 3.

Question 7 based on Area 4: Lens Based Studies

Those candidates who fulfilled the module aims scored highly in part (a). Those candidates who displayed an achievement of the learning outcomes 1 to 4 in Unit 4 were well versed in the technology and terminology required. The answers to Part (b) were varied. Some excellent examples of room layout were given but there were also some very weak answers presented. The quality of sketches in this section was generally weak. Part (c) was answered well by most candidates, showing achievement of the learning outcomes in Unit 2, Unit 3 and Unit 4 as they relate to the photographic process.

Question 8 based on Area 4: Lens Based Studies

This was the least well answered question. The majority of candidates who answered this question did not fully understand the terminology and some candidates confused video editing with photographic editing. However, those who had clearly studied the craft were able to display evidence that they had fulfilled the aims of the module.

4.13.3　Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the practical examination

- Formulaic approaches to both the workbook and the practical coursework should be avoided.

- Students should ensure that they complete their workbooks.

- Students should ensure that the information in the workbook is related to the craftwork produced.

- Students should balance the use of secondary images with the use of primary source material. Source material should be carefully chosen to facilitate high quality exploration and development. Where secondary source material is used, care should be taken to ensure that the print quality of the image is sufficient to work from.

- Teachers and students should focus on the steps involved in the design process and explore each step in detail as the students develop their coursework during the year.

- Students should ensure that they take advantage of the opportunities available to communicate visual concepts using visual means.

Recommendations related to the written examination

- Prior to the examination, teachers should help students plan how much time to spend reading the examination paper and how much time to spend on each section.

- Students should practise using sketches to answer questions using a variety of materials.

- Students should take time at the beginning of the examination to select the four questions that best allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Students should then focus on answering these questions well, in preference to attempting any surplus questions. Students should be encouraged to focus on fully completing all parts of the four questions selected.

- Students should avoid repeating information in their answers.

- Students should avoid questions about which they have little or no knowledge of the craft concerned.

- Students should be encouraged to use their own lived experience of craft and design wherever possible to answer questions.

4.13.4　Recommendations to schools and centres

- Schools should ensure that there is a room available with adequate space to carry out the marking on the arranged date.

- The P2 form should be completed and available when the work is being marked.

- Members of staff at the school should not ask examiners to comment on the work being marked, as examiners are not permitted to do so.

4.14 Engineering

The course provides a foundation study in Engineering; its rationale includes the preparation students for further study in this area and also prepares students for adult and working life. The syllabus comprises five modules. Students study Module 1 and any three of the remaining four modules.

- Module 1 - Engineering Core (Mandatory)
- Module 2 - General Engineering
- Module 3 - Motor Engineering
- Module 4 - Decorative Metalwork
- Module 5 - Engineering Systems.

The mandatory *Engineering Core* module provides a foundation for the other three modules that students will study and aims to provide students with the practical engineering skills to convert raw materials into engineering artefacts.

The final examination is assessed out of 12 credits and comprises two components:
- written examination
- practical coursework.

The written examination is allocated 240 marks (60% of the total) and the practical coursework is allocated 160 marks (40%).

The written examination is of two hours' duration and comprises two sections. Candidates are required to answer all three questions in Section 1 any three of the four questions in Section 2, each of which corresponds to one of the optional modules. Question 7 in Section 2 (on the *Engineering Systems* module) has five parts from which candidates must answer any two, which reflects a corresponding choice of two from five topics in the module descriptor.

The practical coursework component requires each candidate to present a completed assignment, which complies with one of the three design briefs issued by the State Examinations Commission. Each candidate is also required to attend an interview to discuss the assignment. Practical coursework is examined in June in the candidate's school by an examiner appointed by the SEC.

4.14.1   Statistics on Performance

Practical coursework

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	18.9	15.4	19.9	16.8	11.9	7.1	3.5	2.8	1.6	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.2	578	9.4
2010	19.3	17.1	19.6	13.9	10.6	7.7	3.3	2.6	2.2	1.5	1.1	0.7	0.4	545	9.3
2011	19.1	13.2	15.7	16.5	10.0	11.0	3.9	4.1	2.0	1.8	1.4	1.0	0.2	491	9.0
2012	21.4	14.3	16.5	15.5	10.0	8.3	5.5	2.2	1.2	1.8	1.8	1.0	0.6	509	9.2
2013	21.3	18.2	14.5	12.7	8.3	6.8	4.4	5.2	1.6	3.6	2.6	0.5	0.3	385	9.0
2014	**19.2**	**13.7**	**14.1**	**14.3**	**13.2**	**10.0**	**3.6**	**3.0**	**1.9**	**2.4**	**2.1**	**1.3**	**1.1**	**468**	**8.8**

Table 4.26   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Engineering, practical coursework, 2009 to 2014.

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	9.9	11.7	15.5	16.7	15.7	10.6	7.6	5.3	3.0	2.0	1.3	0.3	0.3	605	8.5
2010	9.9	10.8	14.0	15.5	15.0	12.0	9.0	6.0	4.4	2.1	1.1	0.2	0.0	566	8.3
2011	11.0	12.2	14.9	16.3	15.5	12.2	8.4	6.1	1.8	1.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	509	8.6
2012	10.2	11.5	14.0	15.3	13.8	10.6	8.9	5.4	4.5	2.6	2.0	0.6	0.6	537	8.2
2013	9.8	12.3	15.4	15.9	15.1	11.1	8.1	5.3	3.3	2.0	0.8	0.3	0.8	397	8.4
2014	**9.3**	**11.2**	**14.8**	**15.9**	**15.7**	**12.2**	**8.7**	**5.3**	**3.0**	**1.6**	**1.2**	**0.6**	**0.4**	**492**	**8.4**

Table 4.27   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Engineering, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	5.7	14.1	20.1	18.0	16.0	11.1	5.7	3.4	3.1	1.5	1.1	0.0	0.2	612	8.6
2010	5.1	10.7	18.2	17.0	17.7	11.7	8.0	4.2	3.8	1.9	1.0	0.3	0.3	572	8.3
2011	5.0	10.9	16.1	20.7	16.5	14.1	7.2	4.1	2.3	1.7	0.8	0.6	0.0	516	8.4
2012	6.9	13.5	15.5	18.4	13.3	8.4	7.1	6.4	2.7	2.9	2.4	1.1	1.5	549	8.2
2013	5.9	12.9	19.1	15.8	17.6	8.2	7.9	5.4	2.7	3.2	1.0	0.0	0.2	404	8.4
2014	**4.4**	**10.0**	**18.4**	**17.8**	**17.2**	**11.8**	**7.0**	**3.8**	**3.6**	**2.4**	**2.0**	**1.2**	**0.4**	**500**	**8.2**

Table 4.28   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Engineering, 2009 to 2014.

4.14.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the practical coursework

Examiners noted that, in most centres, teachers and candidates had put considerable effort into the layout and presentation of the manufactured projects and folios. Such an approach values the effort of the candidates and has the added benefit of offering a showcase within the school for the creativity and skills of the candidates. The SEC acknowledges the assistance of the Engineering teachers and the school authorities in the preparation of candidates for interview and layout of centres for marking the projects.

A total of 468 candidates submitted work to be examined. As can be seen from the table below, an almost identical number of candidates chose the wind vane and log burner, with somewhat fewer choosing the desk tidy. Generally candidates gave a definite reason for choosing the particular design brief. A total of 32 candidates (7% of those who presented practical work) did not present for interview.

Design Brief	No. of Candidates	Percentage
Wind Vane	166	36%
Desk Tidy	131	28%
Log Burner	167	36%

Table 4.29   Number and percentage of candidates presenting each brief, Engineering, 2014.

The artefact

The appropriate use of materials and processes from across the modules of the Engineering course was clearly demonstrated by many candidates in the production of a solution to the chosen design brief.

The wind vane and log burner in general suited the candidates who had completed the *engineering core*, *general engineering processes* and *decorative metalwork* modules of the course, while candidates who selected the desk tidy had an opportunity to demonstrate skills acquired in the *systems* module.

The decorative features associated with the wind vane and log burner were usually either scroll work or twisting – either on the frame or incorporated into the nature theme. A number of students did not incorporate the required nature theme or decorative feature in their artefacts, which resulted in lower grades being achieved.

The most common method of joining the steel was welding, with many candidates now using MIG welding. Candidates explained how they used clamps or vice grips to assemble their projects for tacking in place before completing the welds. The standard of the welding in some cases was excellent but in a small number of cases it was only fair, with rough welds and splatter not filed down.

In the case of the wind vane, the vast majority students were aware of the need to protect the wind vane from the elements and used appropriate material or applied a protective finish – usually paint. Where brass was used, it often was not polished or lacquered and some projects were presented without any surface finish applied. Many artefacts were very well finished with sharp corners rounded off, excess weld removed and a suitable finish applied. Most of them were painted, spray painted or polished, and candidates were aware of the reason for this. Painted finishes were neat, with candidates explaining at interview the need for surface preparation and the use of a number coats. While most of the work was well presented and finished, a number of artefacts were poorly assembled with excessive glue or inappropriate fixings.

The desk tidy was the least popular of the design briefs but was still attempted by 28% of candidates. The desk tidy was most popular with female candidates. Most of the designs used a base made from metal or acrylic with round or square tube glued on to the base as storage compartments. The better examples folded the sides of the base to raise the holders off the desk surface in order to try to make it more appealing to the eye. The light feature consisted of LEDs or 9V bulbs and most were wired correctly and operational. Some also included a light shade to direct the light beam. A number of projects had the wires concealed in brass or aluminium tube which improved the appearance. In some cases, however, the wiring was exposed and took from the appearance of the artefact. A small number of candidates ignored the requirement for a lighting

feature and lost marks accordingly. Some candidates enhanced the finished appearance of the desk tidy with the addition of beading and images of birds and butterflies.

There was a clear understanding of the safety precautions necessary in the manufacture of the project, as confirmed at interview. Examples of this included the safe use of tools and equipment and the need for adequate ventilation when welding or spray painting.

The folio

The folio records the work of the candidate and should contain all the details of the project work. Candidates were given the marking criteria for the folio along with the design briefs on the examination paper. In some cases, candidates had evidently managed their time poorly and thus spent an excessive amount of time on manufacturing the model, leaving insufficient time for the folio. This mismanagement of time can further impinge on the time available for studying the theory component of the examination. Project management needs to be addressed prior to and during the design process. Examiners reported that 90% of candidates who presented an artefact submitted a folio, down 1% on 2013.

Some candidates did not include an analysis of the chosen brief or sketches leading to the final solution in the research section of the folio.

Examiners stated that some candidates included superfluous material, often printed directly from the internet. Material downloaded from the internet can be useful if it is correctly referenced and if it relates to the final design solution. Candidates must, however, show evidence of analysis or reflective thought when engaging with this material.

The use of freehand sketches, building on research done in order to design a solution, was poor and limited. Some candidates did produce sketches leading to their final solution and discussed the good points and bad points of each sketch as they devised their chosen solution. Cardboard models were also used by candidates as an effective part of their design process.

Some folios had very good working drawings (i.e. using orthographic projection, pictorial drawings or executed in Solid Works) together with details of the dimensions and parts lists. However, many folios had no working drawing of the product made, or had working drawings lacking detail and dimensions The inclusion of just a description of manufacture, which examiners often encountered, is no substitute for a working drawing.

A considerable number of candidates had difficulty evaluating their work, often being overly critical of it and suggesting improvements at interview. This was also a problem for more able candidates who were unable to critically identify the successful attributes of their finished project.

The presentation of folios was generally of a high standard with almost all were typed and either bound or in display folios. In the better folios the information was presented in a clear, logical fashion with borders, clip art and photographs used to aid communication.

The interview

At interview candidates were pleasant and courteous to examiners and discussed their work as well as they could. The interview prove beneficial to many, as candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding which supported what they had recorded or described in their folios. Where candidates achieved full marks it was clear that the candidates took ownership of their work and

were proud of it. Examiners regularly noted the positive attitude of candidates towards their work and the LCA course.

Observations related to the written examination
Percentages mentioned below regarding attempt rates at the various questions are based on a sample.

Section 1, Question 1 (compulsory)
100% of candidates attempted this question and 46% of them achieved full marks. It consisted of twenty short questions of which the candidate had to answer any fifteen. A small number of candidates did not attempt the required fifteen parts and most attempted more than fifteen. The general standard of answering varied greatly across the range of candidates. A key requirement of the learning outcomes in many of the units in Module 1 is the ability to identify a range of workshop practices and tools and to understand their functions and applications. This aspect of these outcomes was tested in this question.

Many candidates demonstrated their knowledge to good effect. However some candidates experienced difficulties in identifying precise engineering terms for tools and processes.

A small number of common errors were repeated, while some had difficulty in correctly identifying and answering parts (o), (q), (r) and (t) in Question 1..

Section 1, Question 2 (compulsory) – Orthographic Projection
Unit 7 in Module 1 pertains to Graphics and this question tested learning outcome 2 of that unit, ("Students will be able to execute and present drawings in orthographic projection and insert key dimensions related to the completion of drawings in orthographic projection"). The question was attempted by 85% of candidates. The standard of answering varied across the range of candidates. It is important that candidates produce a drawing that is in proportion to the pictorial view given. Candidates who were successful used the given grid to construct the required elevation and plan. Examiners also indicated that a significant percentage of candidates attempted this section without using the appropriate drawing equipment. Some candidates demonstrated a poor understanding of the basic principles of orthographic projection.

Very few candidates included hidden detail in their final solution. A good understanding of this and other drawing conventions is essential for students of engineering.

Section 1, Question 3 (compulsory) – Safety
Learning outcomes relating to workshop safety procedures, behaviour, identification of safety precautions and symbols feature in Unit 1 of each module, with the exception of module 3. This question required candidates to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of these safety-related learning outcomes. This continues to be a very popular and generally well answered question. Given the importance of safety in the engineering room, it is appropriate that candidates have a detailed knowledge of the safety regulations required when using such items as engineering machinery, tools and equipment in the engineering room. Thus, it is commendable that candidates continue to show strength in demonstrating their achievement of these outcomes.

Section 2, Question 4 – General Engineering Processes

A total of 89% of candidates attempted this question. This question centred on Unit 6 of Module 2, relating to design and problem solving. Learning outcomes 1 and 2 were specifically examined. Candidates were asked to solve a basic design problem involving *"a suitable bracket for attaching a shower head"* and use sketches in the given grids to show their ideas and solutions. Many candidates produced some good design ideas. However, although there was a significant improvement on corresponding questions from previous years, some candidates still showed little or no difference between the ideas considered and the final solution. It is important that candidates draw sketches of ideas that contributed to the selection of a final solution.

Section 2, Question 5 – Motor Engineering

A total of 81% of candidates attempted this question on Module 3, motor engineering. Most candidates who answered part (a) successfully demonstrated clear achievement of learning outcomes 1, 2 and 3 from Unit 2 in this module, which are concerned with the operating principles of engines, the identification of various parts of engines, and knowledge of the purposes of these parts. However, candidates struggled with part (b), indicating a lack of achievement of the learning outcomes from Unit 6 with regard to the identification and operation of a cooling system.

Section 2, Question 6 – Decorative Metalwork

A total of 74% of candidates attempted this question, making it the least popular question on the paper. Part (a) examined candidates' knowledge of learning outcomes 1 and 3 from Unit 4 (Forge work – hot & cold). Many candidates had the required knowledge but some failed to complete describing the three required stages and may have been more successful if they had used sketches to enhance their answers. Very few candidates made reference to surface finish, which is a full unit in this module and an integral part of decorative metalwork.

Section 2, Question7 – Systems Module

Question 7 comprises five topics from which candidates are required to attempt two. 86% of candidates attempted this question.

Question 7(a) - Computer Aided Design.

A total of 25% of candidates attempted this topic. Candidates who were familiar with Computer Aided Design (CAD) and the CAD commands, scored well. However, many candidates attempting this question showed a lack of any knowledge of the CAD commands required to answer the question. Candidates attempting this section need to be well acquainted with learning outcomes in Unit 2 pertaining to CAD commands and terminology and to have produced various 2D CAD drawings in order to gain familiarity with the various commands. Examiners reported that some candidates attempting this question were clearly just guessing the answers.

Question 7(b) - Electricity

The topic proved popular with an attempt rate of 80% of candidates. There were two parts to this question and it was generally well answered.

Question 7(c) - Electronics

A total of 66% of candidates attempted this topic. Some candidates had obviously studied this module in detail, as they understood the electronic principles involved and had little difficulty in describing how the electronic circuit worked. However, many candidates failed to adequately

demonstrate their knowledge of electronic components and electronic circuits, which are key learning outcomes in Unit 3 of this topic.

Question 7(d) - Mechanisms

A total of 52% of candidates attempted this topic. Many candidates were successful and demonstrated their knowledge of mechanisms to good effect. Some candidates gave a very poor general description of the operation of the pop riveter.

Question 7(e) - Pneumatics

This topic remains unpopular with an attempt rate of only 14%. Few candidates demonstrated a detailed knowledge of pneumatics. Examiners reported that candidates who attempted this part appeared to be largely guessing the answers.

4.14.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the written examination

- Students need to improve on their command of engineering vocabulary, with an emphasis being placed on the correct names of tools and processes.

- Formal drawing techniques should be demonstrated to students and, in particular, emphasis should be placed on the development of freehand sketching techniques. Such development needs considerable practice and teachers are advised to encourage students to use both measured and freehand drawing and sketching wherever possible.

- When answering examination questions on orthographic projection, candidates should use the given grid to construct the required elevation and plan and use the appropriate drawing equipment.

- As is evidenced by candidates' performance in the *Engineering Systems* module, students need not only practical hand-on experience but also a theoretical understanding of the operating principles of the various control technologies.

- Students should be encouraged to attempt all parts of the compulsory questions in the written examination.

- Candidates attempting the question on Computer Aided Design (CAD) need to be familiar with the CAD packages and have used CAD to produce working drawings. Such familiarity is necessary to enable candidates to name and describe the various commands.

- Students must have a detailed knowledge of the safety regulations required when using such items as engineering machinery, tools and equipment in the engineering room.

- Students should be encouraged to use the full time allocation available for this examination.

Recommendations related to the practical coursework

- Prior to commencing work, students should read the entirety of the *Terminal Practical Examination* document issued to them, which incorporates *General Instructions to Candidates*, the *Design Briefs* themselves, and information on how the marks are allocated. They should follow these instructions and bear in mind these marking criteria in the execution of their project work.

- Students should be fully aware of all the requirements of their chosen design brief.

- Students should be aware of the requirement to present an analysis of the brief and evidence of research and investigation in the folios.

- Students should be encouraged to develop neat freehand drawings and dimensioned drawings as part of the folio.

- Students should be encouraged to develop a critical awareness of their own learning, so that their final evaluation demonstrates an appraisal of what and how they learned during the practical coursework.

- Students should manage their time carefully so that they do not spend a disproportionate amount of time on project work at the expense of the written component.

- Students should avoid the inclusion of superfluous material in the folio. For example, internet descriptions of the project being investigated should not be included without showing evidence of engaging with such material e.g. through analysis or reflective thought.

- Students should place greater emphasis on research skills and on the development of a range of design ideas.

- Students should be aware of the importance of achieving a good finish on each component manufactured and on the completed model, and be aware that this is reflected in the significant mark allocation for same.

4.14.4   Recommendations to schools and centres

Schools were informed of the proposed day and date for candidate interviews through an initial phone call which was subsequently confirmed by letter. In general, the vast majority of examiners reported that candidate assessment arrangements were excellent. Schools were found to be most helpful in ensuring appropriate arrangements are made for the assessment of candidate work. Examiners did, however, make a small number of recommendations.

- LCA projects should not be presented for assessment in the same room as other project work. This can lead to confusion during assessment.

- It is essential that schools provide a suitable, interruption-free, interview room for the assessment.

- New teachers of LCA Engineering should familiarise themselves with the marking scheme, project guidelines and other resources which are available on the NCCA and PDST websites.

4.15 Childcare & Community Care

The course consists of five modules, of which the students complete any four. The final examination is assessed out of 12 credits and comprises two components:

▪ written examination
▪ coursework.

The written examination is allocated 240 marks (60% of the total) and the coursework is allocated 160 marks (40%).

For the coursework component, each candidate presents an assignment, in portfolio format, based on one of two coursework assignments issued by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). Each candidate is also required to attend an interview to discuss the assignment with the Examiner.

There are five sections in the written examination, each corresponding to one of the five modules. Each section contains two questions. Candidates are required to answer one question on each of the four modules they have studied.

4.15.1   Statistics on Performance

Coursework

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	27.2	20.7	19.2	15.0	7.8	4.2	2.4	1.2	0.6	1.2	0.3	0.3	0.0	332	10.0
2010	30.2	21.2	15.3	13.0	8.8	5.1	2.8	2.0	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	354	10.0
2011	34.6	17.6	12.1	11.5	10.8	6.6	1.8	1.6	1.3	0.8	1.0	0.3	0.0	381	9.9
2012	27.3	24.2	20.6	14.1	7.6	2.3	1.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.0	355	10.2
2013	28.6	11.9	12.2	16.1	10.1	8.9	5.1	3.3	2.4	0.6	0.9	0.0	0.0	336	9.4
2014	**33.3**	**18.3**	**16.7**	**11.0**	**6.7**	**6.7**	**2.3**	**1.7**	**0.7**	**1.0**	**1.7**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**300**	**10.0**

Table 4.30   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Childcare & Community Care, coursework, 2009 to 2014.

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	4.1	13.1	18.3	20.7	18.5	8.7	7.9	3.8	2.7	1.9	0.0	0.3	0.0	367	8.5
2010	4.2	11.6	18.2	20.8	16.4	13.7	7.4	3.7	1.8	0.3	0.8	1.1	0.0	379	8.5
2011	4.5	9.3	18.7	24.0	17.9	11.4	6.6	4.0	1.3	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.8	396	8.5
2012	2.7	8.2	16.7	24.0	21.0	13.4	6.0	3.6	2.2	1.1	0.8	0.3	0.0	366	8.4
2013	2.4	12.4	19.4	21.2	19.4	12.4	6.2	3.8	1.5	0.6	0.9	0.0	0.0	340	8.6
2014	**3.3**	**8.6**	**17.9**	**21.2**	**17.5**	**12.3**	**8.9**	**6.0**	**2.6**	**1.7**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**302**	**8.3**

Table 4.31   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Childcare & Community Care, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	5.1	14.2	22.3	22.3	15.5	5.9	4.6	3.8	1.9	1.9	2.1	0.3	0.3	373	8.7
2010	5.2	14.4	23.6	20.7	15.7	7.9	1.8	3.9	3.1	2.4	0.5	0.3	0.5	382	8.8
2011	5.3	15.1	21.6	24.6	14.8	7.0	4.3	2.0	2.5	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.3	398	8.9
2012	4.3	13.7	25.5	23.1	16.1	7.2	3.5	2.7	1.9	1.1	0.5	0.5	0.0	373	8.9
2013	5.5	12.2	19.8	19.8	20.1	12.2	4.7	2.6	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.3	0.0	344	8.7
2014	**4.6**	**15.4**	**20.6**	**20.3**	**19.9**	**7.5**	**4.6**	**2.0**	**2.6**	**2.0**	**0.3**	**0.0**	**0.3**	**306**	**8.8**

Table 4.32   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Childcare & Community Care, 2009 to 2014.

4.15.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the examination of coursework

Candidates had a choice of two coursework assignments: *Working in Childcare* and *Young Children and Pets*. The assignment *Working in Childcare* was chosen nine times more frequently than *Young Children and Pets*. It appears that the deciding factor in many cases was easier access for candidates to childcare workers than to people working with animals for the interview part of the assignment.

The majority of candidates used the internet for research and most candidates gave evidence for their research in the form of a 'bibliography' referring to websites they had consulted. However, many candidates simply downloaded and printed information from websites and or included 'research' in the form of notes provided by a teacher, without making the information their own in any way by annotation, underlining, highlighting, etc. Some had clearly not read the material included as research at all, as they were unable to discuss it or show any knowledge of its content at interview.

Candidates who conducted a one-to-one interview with a relation, friend or neighbour were generally awarded more marks than those who conducted a group interview with a person invited to the school by a teacher. This was because they tended to be more fully engaged in the interview and gave more thoughtful analysis. In contrast, for example, many candidates in group cases could not remember at interview which question they had contributed to a questionnaire or what response they had received.

Evidence for planning the production of leaflets was often omitted from candidate portfolios but some of the marks lost in this way were recouped at interview where the candidate was able to describe the planning and costing they had undertaken. Most leaflets were colourful and informative and many candidates reported that they had enjoyed using Microsoft Publisher to produce the leaflets. A small number of leaflets were hand-written and illustrated by hand. A small number of candidates produced a booklet or a single sheet in poster format, rather than the leaflet that was required. In one centre, no leaflet was produced by any candidate.

The logs or diaries of coursework preparation were good. A common omission was evaluation. Another common cause of loss of marks was the submission of logs or diaries that were common to all candidates in a school or centre.

Evaluations by candidates of their own coursework, personal strengths and weaknesses, and of suggested modifications required, varied from well-developed analyses to no analyses. Some findings were too vague, e.g. 'I would do more research' instead of explaining where the additional research should be focussed.

The presentation and communication skills of most of the candidates were very good. At interview most were confident and were knowledgeable about the content of their portfolios and eager to talk about their work. Many were unable to recall some of the material included in their assignment and appeared to be unaware that during the interview they are permitted to look through their portfolio.

Observations related to the written examination
Sections 1, 2 and 3 were more popular and candidates performed better on average in these than in Sections 4 and 5. The majority of candidates answered more than the required four questions. A small number attempted all ten questions on the paper.

Section 1 based on Module 1 – The Care of Babies and Young Children
Question 1 was based on learning outcomes 1 to 3 in Unit 6 (Clothing & Equipment) and was more popular and generally better answered than Question 2. The context of the question was the purchase of a school uniform for a child starting primary school. Most candidates answering it demonstrated very well in part (e) their achievement of learning outcome 3 (*recognising and explaining care labels on clothing*). In their answering of the other parts, candidates also demonstrated good levels of achievement of learning outcomes 1 (*list the points to look for when buying children's clothing and footwear*) and 2 (*select items and styles of clothing and footwear, suitable for babies and children, at different stages of development, and for different weather conditions*). Many candidates therefore showed in their answers to parts (b), (c) and (d) that they had fulfilled one of the aims of the module: *to identify and make choices about materials and equipment used in the care of young children*. They were able to apply their knowledge and understanding to discuss the purchase and care for a child's school uniform and provide an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of school uniforms.

Candidates answering **Question 2**, based on learning outcomes 3 to 7 in Unit 3 (Health), demonstrated achievement of learning outcomes 4 and 5 very well by listing a broad range of *common childhood illnesses* and *symptoms of an unwell child* (parts (a) and (c)). Some candidate answers to other parts were too brief and thus showed only partial achievement of learning outcome 7 (*care for a sick child at home*). Candidate answering suggested that they had struggled to achieve learning outcome 3 (*take a temperature*) and learning outcome 6 concerning *immunisation programmes*. Few candidates knew what normal body temperature is in part (d) and only some were able to give reasons for selecting one particular type of thermometer from three shown in part (f). Immunisation programmes were confused with other ways of preventing a child from becoming ill, and answers about immunisation often repeated the same point twice where two separate points were required.

Section 2 based on Module 2 – Child Development and Play

Question 3 was based on learning outcomes in Unit 1 (Child Development), Unit 3 (Play) and Unit 4 (Toys). Most candidates answering this question demonstrated very well the achievement of learning outcome 3 in Unit 3 (*discussing the importance of play*). In answering part (b), many candidates failed to show achievement of learning outcome 4 in Unit 3 (*list the different types and stages of play*) in that they listed different activities (e.g. playing football, hide and seek, etc) instead of *different types of play* (intellectual, social, energetic, etc) as required. Most candidates achieved learning outcomes 1 to 3 in Unit 4 very well, although some candidates repeated essentially the same point twice in part (c), which asked them to outline four reasons why it is important to consider a child's age when selecting toys and games for him or her. For example, candidates gave 'not too easy for the child' and 'not too difficult for the child' as separate points; however, both phrases refer to a toy needing to be developmentally appropriate for a child. Similarly, 'child may swallow parts if too small' and 'child may put small part up nose' and 'child may put small piece in ear' all make the same safety point and not three separate points. Candidates were less well able to judge the educational/developmental value of the two toys shown in part (e), thus failing to display achievement of learning outcome 4 in Unit 4, an outcome that is dependent on the learning outcomes in Unit 1 (about child development).

Question 4, which focussed on learning outcomes in Unit 1 (Child Development), Unit 3 (Play) and Unit 5 (Organising Play Activities for Children), was less popular and less well answered than Question 3. In their answers to Question 4 part (a), candidates listed a broad range of reasons why children enjoy water play, thus demonstrating achievement of learning outcome 3 of Unit 3, as it showed understanding of *the importance of play*. Answers revealed student appreciation of the *uniqueness of each child* and *gender equity issues*. However, some candidates only *named* different types of indoor and outdoor water play activities when *descriptions* of these activities were required in part (b), and many used too much repetition in their answering, thus not fully showing achievement of learning outcomes 1 to 4 of Unit 5. Many candidates experienced difficulty explaining how water play can support physical development, cognitive/intellectual development and emotional development (part (c)), which suggests that such candidates had not achieved outcome 2 of Unit 3 (about the *interrelationship between play and development*).

Section 3 based on Module 3 – Parenting and Care Provision

In this section, Question 5 was more popular but Question 6 was slightly better answered and 22% of candidates attempted both.

Question 5 was based on learning outcomes 3, 5, 6 and 11 in Unit 4 (The Babysitter) and learning outcomes 1 to 5 in Unit 5 (The Babysitting Session). Many candidates answering Question 5 part (a) did not display achievement of learning outcome 3 of Unit 4, (*identify the skills needed to be an effective babysitter*), in that they mistook personal qualities such as 'kindness' and 'calmness' for skills like 'being able to prepare a bottle for a baby' or 'being able to change a nappy'. Only some candidates were able to outline in part (b) three ways of developing babysitting skills, (e.g. practise on siblings, read a childcare book, observe a parent in action). Candidates showed a good level of achievement of learning outcome 5 (which includes *discussing different methods used to find babysitting jobs*) and most had no difficulty with this, but some answers, (e.g. 'newspaper') were too brief to be clear and were not awarded full marks. When asked about factors a babysitter should consider to ensure their own personal safety in part (d), many candidates discussed general safety

(fire prevention, etc) instead of *personal safety* and therefore did not demonstrate having achieved learning outcomes 2 to 5 in Unit 5, as their answers were not all relevant.

Question 6 was based on learning outcomes 5 to 7 in Unit 1 (Preparation for Parenthood) and learning outcomes 3 to 8 in Unit 2 (Pregnancy and Birth). Some candidates listed a broad range of *topics covered at antenatal classes* thus fully achieving learning outcome 4 in Unit 2 (*describe a quality antenatal programme*). However, some candidates lost marks for repeating similar points (e.g. learning to change a nappy', learning to feed a baby' and 'learning to bath a baby') instead of giving a range of separate points (e.g. learning to care for a baby, preparing for labour and birth, learning about breast-feeding, etc). In part (c) candidates did not focus on the word 'reassuring' in the question and consequently lost marks as their answers were not fully relevant. Answering this question requires an appreciation of the concerns of first-time parents, so these candidates did not show full achievement of learning outcomes 5 to 7 in Unit 1.

Section 4 based on Module 4 – People with Special Needs
Section 4 was the least popular section of the examination paper.

Question 7 was based on learning outcomes 1 to 3 in Unit 1 (Introduction to Special Needs), learning outcomes 3 and 4 in Unit 2 (Attitudes), and learning outcomes 2 to 4 in Unit 3 (Inclusiveness and Independence). Most candidates answering Question 7 demonstrated the learning outcomes in Unit 1 very well in giving four common causes of disability, but displayed those in Unit 3 less well and even poorly. When asked for examples of disabilities where mobility might be affected, some candidates instead gave challenges for those with special needs (e.g. difficulty climbing stairs). Furthermore, when asked for specific challenges associated with preparing and eating meals and washing and dressing, some candidates repeated the same points across the two very distinct sub-sections in part (c). Most candidates were unable to describe clearly how any of the *equipment* shown in part (d) *could support a person with impaired mobility* and thus failed to show achievement of learning outcome 4 in Unit 3.

Question 8 was based on the learning outcomes in Unit 3 (Inclusiveness and Independence) and learning outcomes 3 to 7 in Unit 6 (Local Education, Training, Employment & Care). Candidates answering this question had difficulty in suggesting four benefits of children with special needs attending school in their local community, thus not showing that they had fully achieved learning outcome 5 from Unit 3 (*explaining the term 'equality of opportunity' in relation to people with special needs)* and learning outcome 6 from Unit 3 (*describe how people with special needs might be discriminated against throughout their education and working life*). Many candidates did show achievement of learning outcome 3 of Unit 6 in their discussions of reasonable accommodations for people with special needs in examinations. However, many had clearly only partially achieved learning outcomes 2 and 4 from this unit, as they confused the role of the classroom teacher and the role of the special needs assistant (SNA) in part (c), and some did not understand the term 'assistive technology' in part (b).

Section 5 based on Module 5 – Older People
Question 9 was based on learning outcomes 7 in Unit 1 (Introduction to Older People), learning outcome 3 of Unit 2 (Attitudes and Perceptions), learning outcomes 4 and 5 in Unit 3 (Well Being). Most candidates answering this question showed achievement of learning outcome 7 of Unit 1 (about *the ageing process*) and learning outcome 3 of Unit 2 (about *feelings about growing older*) in their answering of parts (a) and (b). Some candidates only showed partial achievement of

learning outcome 4 of Unit 3, as they did not distinguish sufficiently between problems of 'balance', 'co-ordination' and 'dizziness'. In part (d) candidates focussed on expensive equipment (wheelchairs and lifts) instead of more practical ways of reducing the risk of falling for an older person (e.g. good lighting, removing rugs, etc). In part (e) they placed emphasis on physical injuries, but neglected the feelings that an older person might experience after a fall.

Question 10 was less popular than Question 9 and was relatively poorly answered by those who attempted it. It was based on learning outcome 8 in Unit 1 (Introduction to Older People), learning outcomes 6 and 7 in Unit 2 (Attitudes and Perceptions), learning outcome 1 Unit 3 (Well Being) and learning outcomes in Unit 5 (Local Voluntary Organisations/Support Groups). In Question 10, most candidates did not demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes 6 and 7 in Unit 2, as they were unable to *identify practical ways that young people and older people might get to know each other better* or *how older people and younger people can learn from each other* (parts (a) and (b)). However, candidates show achievement of learning outcome 1 Unit 3 in part (c), where they were able *to describe the active role played by older people in society*. Answers to parts (d) and (e) were poor – candidates did not appear to understand the phrase '*awareness raising campaign*' and were unable to list organisations that promote or support the needs of older people. Therefore, the learning outcomes of Unit 5 were not demonstrated.

4.15.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the written examination
- Prior to the examination teachers should help candidates to plan how much time to spend reading the examination paper and how much time to spend on each section. During the examination candidates should adhere to the time plan.

- Candidates should take time at the beginning of the examination to select the four questions that best allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Candidates should then focus on answering these questions well, in preference to working their way through all or most of the questions on the examination paper.

- Misreading or misinterpreting examination questions will result in answers that are incorrectly focussed and the loss of marks. Candidates should read the questions carefully and be aware that key words are in bold or in italics.

- Candidates should avoid repetition of the same point in different words within a question part or across different parts of the same question.

- Teachers should help candidates understand that different question cues indicate answers of different length and detail. One-word answers may sometimes be adequate for 'list' and 'name' questions, but are not sufficient for 'explain', 'describe' or 'discuss', etc.

Recommendations related to the examination of coursework
- Students should be encouraged to work sufficiently independently that their own contribution and work is evident. They should "make their own" of any materials included in their portfolios that were supplied by the teacher or downloaded from the internet, (while also ensuring that sources are properly acknowledged).

- Where possible, each student should select an interviewee and conduct a one-to-one interview with that person. Where students in a school or centre conduct a group interview with the same individual, each student's portfolio must have interview questions and responses that are unique to that student, so that their individual contribution can be credited.

- Students should be encouraged to select their own assignment and, in keeping with the fundamental principles of the programme, teachers should facilitate students working on whichever brief they opt for (rather than arranging for all students to work on the same brief). Personal reflection, critical evaluation of personal strengths and weaknesses that help or hinder the coursework, engagement with the coursework, and affirmation are all enhanced when students are allowed to select their own coursework topic.

- Students should be made aware that they may consult their portfolio during the interview.

4.15.4   Recommendations to schools and centres

- Examiners of coursework reported that delays were caused on the day of coursework examination in a small number of schools or centres where one of the following occurred: form P2 was not available, some candidates had not signed form P2, or no coursework was available for candidates who had signed form P2. To avoid delays on the day of the coursework examination, schools should ensure that all the coursework is presented and that the P2 form is completed as required and available for the examiner.

- Schools should facilitate access to computers and colour printers for candidates to produce their coursework portfolios.

4.16 Office Administration and Customer Care

The course consists of four modules, all of which must be completed. The modules are:
- Module 1: Retailing and Selling
- Module 2: Office Assistant
- Module 3: Office Practice
- Module 4: Retailing and the Consumer

The final examination is assessed out of 12 credits and comprises two components:
- written examination
- practical examination.

The written examination is allocated 240 marks (60% of the total) and the practical examination is allocated 160 marks (40%).

For the practical examination, a set of eight assignments is issued by the SEC to schools in advance. In the case of each candidate, the examiner selects three of these, which the candidate must carry out in the presence the examiner. The examination lasts about twenty minutes.

The written examination is of one and a half hours' duration. Candidates are required to answer four questions – one from each of four sections in the examination paper. Each section corresponds to one of the four modules. Within each section, candidates may select one of two questions.

4.16.1 Statistics on Performance

Practical examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	40.5	22.4	18.1	9.2	4.9	2.8	1.5	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	326	10.7
2010	46.6	21.3	14.5	10.3	2.9	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	380	10.6
2011	42.8	21.1	14.0	9.4	8.0	3.0	1.0	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	299	10.6
2012	28.7	20.0	19.4	12.3	9.4	7.4	1.6	1.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	310	10.1
2013	40.1	21.2	15.1	15.1	4.7	2.8	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	212	10.6
2014	**29.7**	**30.6**	**19.6**	**12.4**	**5.3**	**1.4**	**1.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**209**	**10.6**

Table 4.33   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Office Administration and Customer Care, practical examination, 2009 to 2014.

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	5.7	14.0	22.4	19.4	17.0	9.9	6.6	2.1	1.2	0.9	0.6	0.3	0.0	335	8.8
2010	6.5	6.3	18.2	25.8	22.1	11.2	6.0	2.9	0.8	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	384	8.7
2011	5.8	12.7	19.8	17.5	20.5	8.8	8.8	3.9	1.3	0.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	308	8.7
2012	8.0	11.2	15.1	18.9	17.0	14.1	8.0	3.8	2.6	1.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	312	8.6
2013	5.5	12.9	15.7	22.1	16.6	12.4	9.2	4.1	0.9	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	217	8.6
2014	**6.0**	**16.6**	**14.7**	**18.9**	**16.1**	**6.9**	**6.9**	**4.6**	**4.6**	**2.3**	**1.8**	**0.5**	**0.0**	**217**	**8.4**

Table 4.34   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Office Administration and Customer Care, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	7.4	21.4	28.0	19.3	13.4	5.1	1.5	1.2	1.8	0.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	336	9.5
2010	6.2	18.4	30.8	20.7	13.5	5.7	1.6	1.6	1.3	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	386	9.4
2011	9.7	22.3	24.6	18.1	10.0	8.1	3.2	1.9	1.0	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.0	309	9.4
2012	9.2	14.9	20.3	22.2	15.6	9.5	4.1	2.2	0.6	0.3	1.0	0.0	0.0	315	9.1
2013	9.5	16.8	22.7	20.9	16.4	6.4	2.7	3.2	0.5	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	220	9.3
2014	**4.6**	**22.0**	**25.2**	**17.9**	**11.9**	**5.5**	**5.0**	**3.7**	**1.8**	**0.9**	**0.9**	**0.5**	**0.0**	**218**	**9.0**

Table 4.35   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Office Administration and Customer Care, 2009 to 2014.

4.16.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the practical examination

The general standard of performance was commendable. A large number of candidates demonstrated a high level of competency in the use of office equipment. This varied from individual to individual and was clearly dependent on the level of preparation and practice beforehand. Skills using the fax, photocopier, phone and computer were generally very good. Candidates showed a high level of computer literacy. They also performed well in the assignment that involved completing an order form. Performance was not generally as strong on the written and oral assignments as on those of a more practical nature.

Examiners identified the following good practice on the part of many candidates:

- Many candidates removed the photocopies and the originals when finished photocopying.

- Candidates waited to check the fax slip for confirmation that the fax was sent.

- Candidates were very confident on the email assignment and the majority closed their account when finished. Many asked if they should close down the internet also.

The following were the most common errors made by candidates:

- Letter:
    - Some candidates did not sign with their own name and omitted "PP".
    - The letter was folded incorrectly.
    - Postage rates were not calculated correctly by a small number of candidates. Others used the incorrect region on the postal booklet.

- Fax:
    - A number of candidates omitted *Re:* on the Fax Sheet.

- Phone:
    - Many candidates failed to identify the caller.
    - They failed to ask for "Pat Doherty" the Insurance Broker, as required.
    - Candidates answered from an individual perspective and not as a representative of a business.

- Role Play:
    - Some candidates demonstrated poor communication skills.
    - A small number of candidates did not greet the customer or provide assurance of an improved service in the future.

- Filing:
    - Some candidates used the incorrect name for the tab.
    - A small number of candidates were unable to attach the tab to the file.
    - In some cases the file was placed in the incorrect position in the filing cabinet.

- Order Form:
    - A lack of numeracy skills was evident in the work of a small number of candidates who struggled with the VAT calculation

Most schools arranged that most of the necessary equipment was in the examination centre where possible and that the rest of the equipment was within easy access, and this was commendable.

Observations related to the written examination

Candidates performed well in completing blank documents and calculations. Command words were ignored in many cases and the answers provided were lacking the detail required by the question. A large number of candidates answered all eight questions, rather than the four required. However, not all parts of the questions were answered and marks were lost as a result.

Section 1 – Retailing and Selling

Candidates performed reasonably well in this section. Approximately 20% more candidates opted for question 1 than question 2. In question 1(a), while most candidates were able to provide examples of fast food franchises, they demonstrated poor levels of achievement regarding learning outcome 8, modern developments in retailing, providing unsatisfactory explanations of the term 'franchising'. Many candidates did not provide any disadvantage of franchising, as required.

The achievement of learning outcome 3 in unit 1 (the retail organisation) was not fully demonstrated, as many candidates gave answers from the perspective of the manufacturer rather than the wholesaler, as required. They did, however, display excellent knowledge of bar codes. Candidates failed to show achievement of learning outcome 3 from unit 2 (selling techniques), as they were unable to distinguish between self-service and personal service (question 1(c)).

Question 2(b) required candidates to apply their knowledge of customer relations (unit 3) to specific situations. Learning outcome 7, which deals with customer returns, had evidently not been fully achieved, as many answers were too general and were based on personal experience rather than referring to consumer rights and legislation, as required in the question.

The graph in part (c)(ii) was, in general, well drawn but a significant number of candidates omitted the title and/or failed to label the axes. Marks were lost as a result.

Section 2 – Office Assistant

Candidate answers to question 3 were of a high standard generally. However, many students could not demonstrate having achieved learning outcome 2 by identifying the different departments in an office. Examiners expressed surprise at the low standard of answering in this case, as a similar question has been asked on the examination paper in previous years. Candidate answers relating to

learning outcome 3, unit 3 (communications and the office) were of a very high standard when listing the features on a smartphone in part (c).

In question 4, the majority of candidates displayed poor levels of achievement regarding learning outcomes 1 and 3 in unit 1 (understanding the role and function of the office). They were unable to list three different types of office layout, and they could not identify the type of office layout shown in the image.

Learning outcomes 1 to 4 relate to filing systems. The first three of these outcomes were clearly achieved well, as evidenced by the high quality of answering to question 4(b). Candidates appeared to have applied the skill tested in the practical examination extremely well to the written examination. Similarly in part (c) there was an excellent standard of answering in relation to a photocopier and its functions. In part (d)(ii), most candidates were unable to identify a database programme or give one use for such a programme, as required by learning outcome 9, unit 1.

Section 3 – Office Practice

Question 5(a) required candidates to record receipts and payments (with four analysis columns), as specified in learning outcome 3, unit 1, (recording information). The standard of answering was very good, but, as in previous years, candidates struggled to calculate the balancing figure and in many cases it was omitted.

A large number of candidates achieved maximum marks in question 6(a) and thereby demonstrated high levels of achievement in learning outcome 4, unit 1 (recording outgoing mail).

Explanations of the term 'teamwork' given in part (b)(i) generally omitted any reference to a common goal or objective. However, candidates demonstrated very good knowledge of the skills required for successful teams (learning outcome 1, unit 3 personal and interpersonal skills).

Question 6(c) and (d) assessed unit 4, Health and Safety. Learning outcome 1, relating to the safe use of office equipment had evidently not been achieved by most candidates, as they were unable to identify the steps that should be followed to ensure that VDUs are used safely in the workplace. The majority of candidates demonstrated poor levels of achievement regarding learning outcome 3 (understand the main provisions of the Health and Safety Act at work).

Section 4 – Retailing and the Consumer

The five learning outcomes in unit 2 relate to calculations and payments. Examiners reported that candidates performed well on calculations in both questions 7 and 8. They were well prepared for these questions. However, achievement of learning outcome 8 was not demonstrated by the majority of candidates, as they confused a credit note and debit note.

As in previous years, a small number of candidates described advertising instead of sales promotions methods and consequently lost marks. Examiners noted that the completion of the job application form in question 7(c) was not answered as well as anticipated and that the answers lacked attention to detail.

In question 8(c)(ii), candidates demonstrated poor knowledge of consumer legislation and, as a result, it is clear that learning outcome 8, unit 1 was not achieved by the majority of candidates. This is similar to previous years.

4.16.3 Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the practical examination
- Students should take every opportunity to use office equipment during their work experience placement and perhaps in their part-time work as well.

- Students should familiarise themselves with all eight assignments and practise them well in advance of the examination.

- Students need to take their time reading each assigned brief and to plan its execution carefully.

- Students should make regular use of office equipment in the school during the two years of the programme so as to improve their skills.

- Students should ensure they have their own calculator if the assignment requires one.

- Communication and calculation skills are a big part of some of the assignments and students need to be well prepared for these. They should practise the role play and simulate the phone call many times before the practical exam.

- Teachers and students should familiarise themselves with past marking schemes from the website www.examinations.ie. Some assignments, such as role play and filing, have been examined every year, but the same errors still prevail.

Recommendations related to the written examination
- Students should know the layout of the paper and exactly how many questions need to be completed.

- In the period running up to the examination, students should practise on past papers.

- Students should practise putting names in alphabetical order (use surnames, not first names).

- Students should practise filling out forms.

- Students should be familiar with consumer laws.

- Students should learn the difference between bar charts and line graphs.

- Students should know how to balance the receipts and payments and petty cash books.

- Candidates should read each question carefully and make sure to answer what is being asked, providing full explanations where required.

- When asked to give a date, candidates should give the full date, including the year.

- Candidates should make sure to include a title on all charts and graphs and make sure that the axes are clearly labelled.

- Candidates should show all workings for calculation questions.

- Candidates should read back over the script if there is time, checking their work and correcting any errors made.

4.16.4   Recommendations to schools and centres

- Students should be provided with a copy of the assignment briefs as soon as possible.

- It is important that there is an opportunity for the examiner to meet the students before the practical examination. This puts students at ease and gives them a chance to ask questions if any clarification is needed.

- If a computer is not available for the practical examination in an examination centre, then a laptop should be organised so that the examination can be conducted under the proper conditions.

- A dedicated centre with all equipment required for the practical examination in the centre is recommended. This would benefit the candidates and the examiners. If this is not possible, the examination centre should be located close to all necessary office equipment.

- Schools should have all equipment needed for the practical examination available to candidates prior to the examination (for practice) and during the examination period.

4.17 Active Leisure Studies

The course consists of six modules. The first two are mandatory and there is a choice of any two from the remaining four. The modules are:
- Module 1: Active Leisure Studies (mandatory)
- Module 2: Health Related Fitness (mandatory)
- Module 3: Aquatics
- Module 4: Outdoor Education
- Module 5: Invasion Games
- Module 6: Net/Fielding Games

The final examination is assessed out of 12 credits and comprises two components:
- written examination
- practical examination.

The written examination is allocated 240 marks (60% of the total) and the practical coursework is allocated 160 marks (40%).

For the practical examination, there is a choice of one from three sets of tasks issued annually by the SEC. These tasks are designed so that all candidates, irrespective of their choice of modules, is in a position to engage in at least one set. Each candidate completes the practical test in the presence of an external examiner. A short discussion with the examiner is included in the test.

The written examination is of one and a half hours' duration. Candidates are required to answer questions on both of the mandatory modules and on both of their selected optional modules.

4.17.1   Statistics on Performance

Practical examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	34.2	23.7	19.3	12.3	3.5	3.5	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	114	10.4
2010	38.0	20.5	19.0	12.7	5.4	2.4	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	205	10.5
2011	26.5	20.6	25.2	16.1	7.7	2.6	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	155	10.3
2012	25.8	21.2	23.5	15.2	9.1	3.0	1.5	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	132	10.2
2013	26.3	25.5	19.7	17.5	5.8	3.6	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	137	10.3
2014	**26.0**	**17.1**	**13.0**	**13.8**	**13.0**	**8.1**	**5.7**	**2.4**	**0.8**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**123**	**9.7**

Table 4.36   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Active Leisure Studies, practical, 2009 to 2014.

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	5.2	17.4	18.3	23.5	13.9	11.3	1.7	1.7	0.9	2.6	0.9	0.9	1.7	115	8.7
2010	4.7	13.1	14.0	19.2	16.8	9.3	8.4	6.5	2.8	1.9	1.4	1.4	0.5	214	8.2
2011	4.9	11.0	11.6	22.0	17.7	12.8	8.5	4.9	1.8	2.4	1.2	1.2	0.0	164	8.2
2012	4.9	11.8	9.0	11.8	11.8	17.4	11.1	5.6	6.9	6.9	1.4	1.4	0.0	144	7.5
2013	5.8	12.2	20.1	18.0	15.8	11.5	8.6	5.8	0.7	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	139	8.6
2014	**1.6**	**11.8**	**19.7**	**15.7**	**22.0**	**7.9**	**10.2**	**6.3**	**1.6**	**2.4**	**0.8**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**127**	**8.3**

Table 4.37   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Active Leisure Studies, written, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	9.2	16.0	31.1	15.1	9.2	6.7	5.0	4.2	2.5	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	119	9.2
2010	7.4	17.1	22.6	18.4	12.4	9.7	3.7	3.2	1.8	1.4	0.9	1.4	0.0	217	8.9
2011	4.2	10.8	26.5	19.9	16.9	9.0	3.0	4.2	2.4	2.4	0.0	0.6	0.0	166	8.7
2012	4.7	7.3	15.3	18.0	19.3	10.0	10.0	2.7	6.7	3.3	2.0	0.7	0.0	150	7.9
2013	8.4	13.3	18.9	23.8	14.0	10.5	2.8	3.5	4.2	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	143	8.9
2014	**6.0**	**14.3**	**15.0**	**18.8**	**15.8**	**12.0**	**10.5**	**0.8**	**3.8**	**2.3**	**0.8**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**133**	**8.5**

Table 4.38   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits Active Leisure Studies, 2009 to 2014.

4.17.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the practical examination
Preparatory work by candidates was generally very satisfactory across Aquatics, Games and Outdoor Education. Examiners reported very satisfactory levels of performance of skills and interview skills among candidates.

Aquatics
The learning outcomes associated with the practical skills test in Aquatics, Module 3, include developing basic skills in aquatics, gaining confidence in the water and life saving techniques (learning outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 7 from Unit 1, learning outcome 9 from Unit 2, and learning outcome 4 from Unit 4). The standard of skills observed was generally high. Candidates were well prepared. Where there were weaknesses, the two most common areas were the ability to float for 12 seconds and the demonstration of a dry rescue technique.

Outdoor Education
The learning outcomes for Outdoor Education, Module 4, include demonstrating knowledge of the use of various pieces of equipment and the safety procedures associated with them, navigational skills, camping skills and preparing a log book as evidence of their level of involvement in a variety of adventure activities (learning outcomes 1, 2 and 3 from Unit 1, learning outcomes 2 and 6 from Unit 2). Candidates displayed very satisfactory levels of performance of skills in Outdoor Education. A minority of candidates presented for the examination without the required log book,

while a greater number presented log books with limited and vague information regarding relevant activities undertaken.

Games

This is the most popular practical component and it tends to have candidates of more mixed ability than either Aquatics or Outdoor Education. The learning outcomes in Modules 5 and 6 include demonstrating skills, organising and coaching a group of players and setting up a conditioned game (learning outcomes 1 and 2 from Unit 1, learning outcome 1 from Unit 2 and learning outcome 5 from Unit 4). Candidates displayed very high levels of attainment in the area of skills demonstration and setting up practice drills. However, lower levels of achievement by some candidates were reported regarding the coaching of a group of players and the organising and managing of a conditioned game. Poor levels of intervention and voice projection were evident in the setting up and management of the conditioned game. The availability of more than one group for the coaching session allowed the alternating of groups. This helped prevent fatigue and boredom within the group being coached becoming a factor in the performance of candidates scheduled later in the examination session. Some candidates appeared to have poor knowledge and understanding of the language and terminology associated with the activities. Evidence of good practice included candidates checking for safety hazards before beginning the task.

Observations related to the written examination

The knowledge, understanding and application demonstrated by candidates varied quite widely. Good levels of knowledge were generally displayed where questions required single-word answers. However, where detailed answers were required, or where analysis or application of knowledge was required, a significant number of candidates provided vague answers with unsatisfactory levels of detail. Candidates appeared in some instances to ignore the command words and provided one word answers where explanations and descriptions were necessary. Across all questions on the paper, there was evidence of candidates misreading the question or not following the rubric and instructions on the examination paper. This led them to answering too many questions from particular sections. A significant number of candidates did not attempt all parts of any given question.

Section 1 – Leisure Studies (compulsory)

This section tests the outcomes of the compulsory Module 1. Candidates demonstrated high levels of achievement in learning outcomes from Units 1 and 2 when answering Question 1. These relate to an overview of the Active Leisure industry and focus primarily on the concept of active leisure, its role, and the factors which affect active leisure programmes and facilities as well as management structures within the industry. Levels of achievement of learning outcomes were higher for candidates who answered Question 2 than for those answering Question 3. For example, in Question 2(d) candidates provided clear, accurate descriptions of how the Irish Wheelchair Association promotes and increases participation levels in sport for its members, demonstrating clear achievement of learning outcome 7 in Unit 3. Question 3(a) required candidates to match the title of club officers to their descriptions. This was well answered by the majority of candidates. However, in answering part 3(b), a significant number of candidates demonstrated poor levels of achievement of learning outcome 10 in Unit 3, which relates to the providers of leisure facilities and services within the community. While candidates were generally able to name a public and private leisure facility, they had difficulty stating how public and private leisure facilities differ.

Section 2 – Health Related Fitness (compulsory)

The Health-Related Fitness module requires candidates to relate theoretical knowledge to practical performance. A number of examples of very good practice were noted. Question 4 required brief answers and was well answered by the majority of candidates. Candidates displayed good knowledge in particular of Unit 1, *the Body in Action*. Question 5(a) was less well answered with candidates displaying poor levels of achievement of learning outcome 2 (a description of the main food groups) and were unable to complete the table of seven components of a balanced diet. Candidate responses to Question 5(a) and (d), which related to learning outcome 1 (component of fitness) and learning outcome 9 (identification of main muscle groups), were of a very high standard. Examiners noted that candidates who appeared to have completed a sit-and-reach test to achieve learning outcome 2 in Unit 1, (as this was the test they referred to) performed well in Question 6(a). For part 6(c), while candidates did provide a description of a warm-up or cool-down session as outlined in learning outcome 2 of Unit 4, the description given by a significant number of candidates was not of a sufficient standard to be awarded high marks.

Section 3 – Aquatics

Nearly all candidates correctly named a test used to measure a person's flexibility as required in Question 6(a). The standard of description of the test varied, with some candidates displaying a thorough understanding of the test while others provided vague descriptions. Some candidates availed of the opportunity to draw a sketch to support their description and these sketches clarified and enhanced their answer, resulting in higher marks being awarded. Similarly, candidates gained marks in Question 7(c) when they drew sketches to support their answer. Candidates level of attainment arising from completing learning outcome 10 in Unit 1, related to peer coaching, and assessed in Question 7(a) and Question 8(a), was not as satisfactory. Candidates had difficulty providing coaching points for the swimming strokes. Learning outcomes in Unit 3 relate to pool hygiene, prevention of infection, water hygiene and clean pool environment. In Question 8(b) candidates had little difficulty naming infections associated with swimming pools and how such infections can be prevented.

Section 4 – Outdoor Education

Question 9 assessed candidates' level of achievement of the learning outcomes in Unit 2 *The Expedition*. High levels of competency were displayed regarding the research and planning for the expedition, particularly in relation to describing the route and equipment required (learning outcome 2). As in previous years, the provision of correct grid references for locations was an issue for some candidates. Candidates tended to provide a named location rather than a specific location using a grid reference, and when grid references were provided they were generally incorrect. In Question 10(b) candidates had no difficulty naming items that should be in a first aid kit (learning outcome 4 in Unit 5). However, in Question 10(c), while the majority of candidates appeared to have good knowledge of the Country Code (learning outcome 5 in Unit 3), some were unable to apply this knowledge to explain how hill walkers could damage the environment.

Section 5 – Games 1 (Invasion)

As in previous years, this section was the most popular, with over half of the candidates attempting questions from this section. The standard of answers was generally very high. Question 11(a) and (b) related to learning outcomes 2 and 3 of Unit 2 and the standard of answers was high. Candidates were able to name various positions in their chosen invasion game and clearly explain the role of players in the named positions. Similarly, in Question 11(b), candidates explained the

rules of their chosen invasion game, demonstrating the achievement of learning outcome 1 of Unit 3 *Theory/Law*. However, as was evident for corresponding outcomes in Section 3 on Aquatics, levels of achievement were not as high regarding learning outcome 5 in Unit 4: organising and coaching a group of participants in an aspect of the game. Candidates were challenged when required to outline coaching points for a passing skill and the information presented in the majority of cases was vague and limited in detail.

Section 6 – Games 2 (Net/Fielding)
Generally candidates' answers in this section were of a high standard. For example, in Question 13(b), candidates presented detailed drawings of the line markings for their chosen game, demonstrating satisfactory levels of achievement of learning outcome 2 in Unit 3. In Question 14(d), candidates examined the range of career opportunities in games and sports and identified the skills required for these careers. As in Sections 3 and 5, candidates demonstrated poor levels of attainment when required to deal with coaching in Question 14(a) and (b), as set out in learning outcome 5 of Unit 4. As in previous years, and despite clear instructions on the examination paper, a number of candidates lost significant marks as they named an invasion game instead of a net/fielding game as required in this section.

4.17.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the practical examination
- In preparing for the assessment in the *Aquatics* module, students should practise more at carrying out dry rescue techniques and floating techniques.

- In preparing for assessment in the *Games* modules, students are advised to practise voice projection and timely intervention in the setting up and management of the conditioned game.

- In preparing for assessment in *Games* and *Aquatics* modules, students are advised to practise peer coaching so as to ensure a confident execution of this skill in the practical skills test.

- If the *Outdoor Education* module is selected for assessment, candidates should remember to present a log book detailing all relevant activity undertaken.

- Students should familiarise themselves with the language of the module they are taking for assessment to ensure that they are familiar with and understand the terminology.

Recommendations related to the written examination
- Candidates should choose and read questions carefully to ensure relevant answers.

- Candidates should ensure that they follow the instructions on the examination paper and that they answer the required number of questions from the correct sections.

- Candidates should only attempt extra questions once satisfied that they have adequately answered the required number of questions from the appropriate sections.

- Candidates should take note of the command words in the questions and provide appropriate and adequate level of detail in their answers, e.g. name, list, state, describe, explain, etc.

- Students should be encouraged to provide drawings or sketches to support their answers where relevant.

- Students should practise reading six-figure grid references and use the example on the examination paper as a guide.

- Students should be reminded of the difference between invasion games and net or fielding games and that the nomination of an incorrect game type in Sections 5 and 6 results in loss of marks.

- Candidates should ensure that they can satisfactorily describe various peer coaching activities that they have undertaken.

4.18 Agriculture, Horticulture

The *Agriculture, Horticulture* course consists of six modules, falling into two broad groups of Horticulture and Agriculture. Students take any four modules. The modules are:

Horticulture
- Module 1: Basic Horticulture
- Module 2: Garden Design
- Module 3: Floristry, Fruit and Vegetables

Agriculture
- Module 4: Forestry
- Module 5: Grass
- Module 6: Milk and Meat Production.

The final examination is assessed out of 12 credits and comprises two components:
- written examination
- practical performance test.

The written examination is allocated 240 marks (60% of the total) and the practical examination is allocated 160 marks (40%).

The practical performance test consists of a performance of any skill or procedure used in agriculture or horticulture. The performance test carried out by the candidate must not have been previously presented by that candidate as a student task. It must be such that it can be completed in a 10 – 15 minute period, allowing 5 – 10 minutes for a short discussion between the examiner and the candidate.

The written examination comprises two sections. Section One has one question composed of eighteen parts that range across the whole course and candidates are required to answer any twelve. Section Two has six questions – one corresponding to each of the six modules – and candidates are required to answer any four.

4.18.1   Statistics on Performance

Practical performance test

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	42.2	26.5	22.4	4.0	2.2	1.8	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	223	10.9
2010	49.0	23.3	12.9	7.4	3.5	1.5	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	202	10.9
2011	62.6	19.5	8.6	5.8	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	174	11.3
2012	41.8	32.8	15.3	7.3	1.1	1.1	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	177	11.0
2013	55.2	25.0	11.6	7.0	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	172	11.3
2014	**61.9**	**27.8**	**8.0**	**1.7**	**0.6**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**176**	**11.5**

Table 4.39   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Agriculture, Horticulture, practical performance test,2009 to 2014.

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	0.4	5.8	8.8	19.0	19.5	21.7	10.2	8.0	3.1	2.7	0.9	0.0	0.0	226	7.6
2010	2.6	5.7	13.5	19.2	18.1	13.5	9.8	10.9	4.7	0.5	1.6	0.0	0.0	193	7.8
2011	2.8	4.4	12.2	16.6	21.5	13.8	11.0	6.1	6.6	1.7	2.2	1.1	0.0	181	7.6
2012	1.1	7.3	12.4	19.8	11.9	10.2	12.4	11.3	4.5	3.4	4.0	1.1	0.6	177	7.3
2013	1.1	6.1	12.8	12.8	16.8	13.4	17.9	8.9	5.6	3.4	0.6	0.6	0.0	179	7.4
2014	**2.2**	**2.2**	**10.1**	**14.5**	**15.1**	**13.4**	**15.6**	**11.7**	**7.8**	**5.0**	**1.7**	**0.0**	**0.6**	**179**	**7.0**

Table 4.40   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Agriculture, Horticulture, written examination, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	1.3	10.4	19.0	31.2	20.3	11.7	3.0	1.3	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	231	8.8
2010	7.3	10.7	25.9	22.0	18.0	8.3	5.4	1.5	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	205	9.1
2011	5.5	14.2	20.8	26.2	14.8	7.1	3.8	2.7	2.7	1.6	0.5	0.0	0.0	183	8.9
2012	3.4	16.2	22.3	17.9	15.6	12.3	6.1	2.2	2.8	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	179	8.8
2013	2.7	14.8	17.0	20.9	21.4	12.1	2.7	2.7	3.3	0.5	1.1	0.5	0.0	182	8.6
2014	3.9	10.0	18.3	24.4	21.1	11.7	5.6	2.2	1.1	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.0	180	8.6

Table 4.41   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Agriculture, Horticulture, 2009 to 2014.

4.18.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the practical performance test

A wide range of tests was carried out by candidates and included the following:

- cleaning various garden tools, such as pickaxe, trowel
- cleaning and sharpening garden shears
- demonstrating conditions required for germination and calculating percentage germination rates
- making silage samples in jars and comparing ensiling methods
- various planting activities, such as onion sets, flower bulbs, trees in the school grounds
- various seed-sowing activities, such as bedding plants in window boxes, cabbage and broccoli in plastic trays, marigolds and sunflowers in pots made from recycled food containers
- taking cuttings
- various chemical tests, such as testing leaves for starch, testing milk for protein content, testing soil for nitrogen and phosphorus content, testing soil pH.

Standard of skills demonstrated

Most schools had prepared their candidates well in all aspects of the test and many candidates carried out their practical activities to a very high level. However, the standard of skills demonstrated varied. Many candidates did not make a clear statement of the aims of their practical activity but were able to demonstrate the required knowledge by answering relevant questions put

by the examiner. Candidates were generally strong on the principles and practice of handling and caring for plants, as well as on naming and manipulating apparatus and materials. Less strong was most candidates' understanding of contexts in which their practical skills could be applied in agriculture or horticulture, although most candidates were able to give one correct application. Communication skills varied considerably. All candidates completed their work within the time allowed and most had clearly practised their task many times in preparation for the test.

Some examples of good practice were:
- schools providing spacious, well-lit rooms for the tests
- schools providing adequate safety equipment, e.g. white coats, gloves, safety glasses
- teachers and schools ensuring that all materials and apparatus were in good condition, readily accessible and in ample supply
- schools providing facilities for candidates to wash their hands and for cleaning apparatus after the test
- teachers ensuring that candidates had a good awareness of health and safety procedures and the reasons for them
- schools providing a rota of candidates to ensure the examination proceeded smoothly
- teachers ensuring that candidates had a role in deciding which practical activity to carry out, this 'ownership' of the activity conferring a sense of responsibility and leading to better outcomes
- candidates handling chemicals and apparatus safely and responsibly
- candidates cleaning and tidying their work station properly after the test
- candidates being able to communicate clearly the purpose and applications of their task and the reasons behind the steps involved in their demonstrated skill.

The most common weakness encountered was with the candidates' understanding of the theoretical basis for the performance test carried out, which accounts for a small number of the marks allocated to the test. Other weaknesses included:
- poor communication skills
- limited knowledge of commercial applications of skills
- limited ability to extrapolate to a seemingly obvious next step in a procedure, as if the skill had been learned in isolation and only to a particular point, with no consideration given to its place in a wider context
- not using appropriate safety or hygiene equipment and/or not understanding why it should be used
- poor cleaning and tidying skills, implying unfamiliarity with such procedures
- lack of cleaning facilities when out of school buildings e.g. in poly tunnels.

Observations related to the written examination
The standard of answering in the written examination was lower than in recent years. Many candidates omitted to answer many of the parts of Question 1, leaving the answer space blank rather than making an attempt. Part (k), about the ways in which *Teagasc* assists the Agriculture and Horticulture industries, and part (r), concerning sexual and asexual reproduction, were the least often attempted and worst-scoring parts here. Question 1 was the most often attempted question, which is not surprising, as it is the only compulsory question.

In Section Two, candidates had least difficulty with Question 5, on forestry. However, many candidates answered part (d) without reference to the pie chart, suggesting a lack of understanding

of its meaning. Many candidates misunderstood the essence of Question 2(d), which related to the learning outcomes in Unit 3 of Module 1; such candidates attempted to explain the investigation by reference to adding the soil in layers from the beginning. Question 3(d), which was based on the second learning outcome in Unit 3 of Module 2, was poorly answered, with many candidates experiencing difficulty in establishing the correct order for the photographs of the steps in planting seeds. The part of Question 5(d) that related to safety and personal protective equipment, which concerned learning outcomes 5 to 9 in Unit 1 of Module 4, was well answered. Part (d) of Question 6, dealing with learning outcomes in Unit 3 of Module 5, and specifically with silage additives, was very poorly answered. Part (d) of Question 7, based on most of the learning outcomes in Unit 2 of Module 6, concerning birthing and post-birth care in farm animals, was well answered.

Across all areas of the course, candidates displayed great difficulty in recalling and applying correct terminology when attempting to describe items or procedures that form part of the learning outcomes of particular modules and units within those modules. Colloquialisms are often used, and sometimes inappropriate slang terms are encountered in place of the correct and acceptable terms.

4.18.3 Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the practical performance test
- Teachers should ensure that students are allowed ample opportunity to practise their chosen activity for the test.

- Teachers should ensure that students understand the reasons behind the steps in their practical activities.

- Teachers should ensure that students appreciate the wider societal and commercial contexts of their chosen practical activities.

- Students should establish good work habits and always clean and tidy their work stations after practical work.

- Students should practise talking about and explaining their practical activities as they carry them out or immediately afterwards.

Recommendations related to the written examination
- Teachers should encourage, and reinforce by practise, a fuller engagement by students with the written examination paper.

- Teachers should ensure that students learn the appropriate terminology associated with the modules they choose to study.

- Teachers should encourage students to refer to and use as fully as required any tables, graphs, diagrams and photographs in questions in which these appear.

- Teachers should ensure that students learn the roles of various state bodies relevant to their study of agriculture and horticulture.

- Students should practise recognising and writing difficult words and terms that occur in the modules they study.

- As the examination approaches, students should practise completing past examination papers, particularly from the point of view of attempting an answer for every required part of every question undertaken.

- Candidates should make sure to use relevant information given in tables, graphs or pictures in examination questions.

4.18.4   Recommendations to schools and centres

- Schools should be aware of the importance of providing suitable rooms for the assessment of the practical performance test. Science laboratories are the most suitable rooms for this purpose. Such accommodation should be free from outside interference and noise while the assessment is in progress.

- Schools should provide appropriate personal protective equipment and cleaning requisites for candidates carrying out the practical performance test.

4.19 Hair and Beauty

The course consists of four modules, all of which must be completed. The modules are:
- Module 1: Salon and Customer Care
- Module 2: Haircare
- Module 3: Beautycare
- Module 4: Bodycare

The final examination is assessed out of 12 credits and comprises two components:
- written examination
- practical examination.

The written examination is allocated 240 marks (60% of the total) and the practical examination is allocated 160 marks (40%).

For the practical examination, four assignment briefs are issued by the SEC to schools annually. Each candidate draws one of four practical assignments briefs two weeks in advance of the examination. Each candidate is required to carry out this assignment in the presence of an external examiner (including role play with their model client), to present evidence of preparatory research and planning, and to carry out an evaluation of their work during the examination.

The written examination is of one and a half hours' duration. Candidates are required to answer four questions – one from each of four sections in the examination paper. Each section corresponds to one of the four modules. Within each section, candidates may select one of two questions.

4.19.1   Statistics on Performance

Practical examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	24.7	17.5	18.0	12.9	11.9	8.2	6.2	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	194	9.8
2010	15.1	25.2	29.5	14.4	7.2	1.4	6.5	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	139	9.9
2011	11.4	17.1	14.9	23.4	12.6	12.0	4.6	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	175	9.2
2012	11.4	17.1	14.9	23.4	12.6	12.0	4.6	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	175	9.2
2013	15.9	13.6	23.5	18.9	15.2	3.0	3.8	4.5	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	132	9.4
2014	**10.2**	**13.2**	**15.6**	**24.6**	**10.8**	**12.6**	**9.6**	**3.0**	**0.6**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**167**	**8.9**

Table 4.42   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Hair & Beauty, practical, 2009 to 2014.

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	2.4	12.6	16.5	17.3	22.0	14.2	10.2	0.8	3.1	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	127	8.4
2010	12.1	12.1	14.0	15.9	15.9	10.6	7.2	2.9	3.9	2.9	0.5	1.9	0.0	207	8.5
2011	9.0	12.4	17.2	24.8	16.6	6.2	5.5	3.4	2.1	2.1	0.0	0.7	0.0	145	8.8
2012	5.1	12.4	18.6	23.2	13.0	9.0	10.2	4.5	1.7	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	177	8.6
2013	10.4	14.8	12.6	21.5	16.3	14.8	2.2	3.0	2.2	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.7	135	8.8
2014	**15.5**	**12.5**	**18.5**	**18.5**	**13.7**	**8.3**	**4.8**	**1.8**	**3.0**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**168**	**9.0**

Table 4.43   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Hair & Beauty, written, 2009 to 2014.

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	1.5	12.3	17.7	20.0	23.1	14.6	4.6	3.1	1.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	130	8.5
2010	7.7	10.5	24.4	20.6	16.3	7.7	6.7	1.9	2.4	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	209	8.9
2011	6.9	17.9	22.1	25.5	9.7	8.3	2.8	2.1	2.8	0.7	1.4	0.0	0.0	145	9.1
2012	1.1	7.3	25.1	26.8	17.3	11.2	6.1	3.9	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	179	8.6
2013	4.4	17.6	15.4	25.7	19.9	5.9	5.1	3.7	1.5	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	136	8.9
2014	5.4	16.1	23.2	17.3	20.2	8.9	4.2	3.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	168	9.0

Table 4.44   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Hair & Beauty, 2009 to 2014.

4.19.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the practical examination

The four practical assignments, from which each candidates drew one, were: (i) *wash and blow dry shoulder length hair with plenty of volume, (ii) up-style (with half hair pinned up) for a New Year's Eve ball* (iii) *mini facial and light make-up for an interview* and (iv) *file, shape and nail art service for a themed birthday party*.

Research & Planning

In their portfolios, some candidates did not refer sufficiently or at all to the actual attributes of their model client, (e.g. face shape, eye colour, scalp condition, hair texture, skin type, etc,) in their planning of their approach to the style selected and to their choice of products and accessories used. In some cases, there was no evidence of pre-consultation with the client. Most candidates did not *show* that they had explored a number of different approaches to their assignment and did not *explain* why they selected the approach demonstrated. In a minority of cases, an unsuitable client was chosen, e.g. with hair of incorrect length, nails too short for nail art, etc. In nearly all cases, there was clear evidence of preparation in the form of well laid out work stations in a salon setting. In all but one case, the required supply of refreshments for the clients had been prepared. Candidates in some cases were able to show in their responses to the examiner's questions during the examination that they had researched and planned their assignment thoroughly. Some candidates' research and planning relied too much on material downloaded from the Internet that had not been adapted, modified or personalised by the candidate in any way.

Implementation

A very high standard of practical skills was observed. High levels of dexterity were required for the up-styling and for the nail art. Mastery of massage technique was required for the blow dry and for the facial. Skilful use of hairdressing tools was reported by examiners. All assignments gave candidates an opportunity to display creativity and to work aesthetically. Most candidates used the full time allowed, but some candidates worked too quickly or omitted some part of the assignment and lost marks as a consequence. Candidates were aware of the importance of record-keeping at the consultation stage of the assignment. Candidates were able to show their knowledge and understanding of the business side of the Hair & Beauty industry when recommending products for purchase and accepting payment in the role play.

Safety and Hygiene

Such is the overriding importance of safety and hygiene in a hair or beauty salon that any single instance of failure to adhere to correct procedure could result in an accident or in cross infection. Safety and hygiene awareness and good practice were observed by examiners in every centre. Most candidates worked with a good or very good appreciation of safe and hygienic technique. However, examiners did record some unsafe or unhygienic practices that would be unacceptable in a professional salon. These unsafe or unhygienic practices included: candidates not sanitising their hands or the client's hands before commencing treatment, not protecting the client's clothing, holding grips in the mouth before placing them in the client's hair, using beauty products directly from tubs using fingers instead of a spatula, not washing or sterilising hair brushes and make-up brushes after use (between clients), not using disposable applicators for beauty products, holding the hair-dryer incorrectly, not having a workstation bin for disposal of waste material, etc.

Role Play

Most candidates displayed good communication skills and professionalism in their interaction with their client and were able to use the role play to show the examiner their knowledge of hair dressing and/or beauty care, along with their customer-care skills. A few candidates were themselves shy and awkward, and in some of these cases the client's personality made it difficult for the candidate to excel – some of the candidate's shyness could be mitigated by a client who asked questions, thereby allowing the candidate to demonstrate their knowledge. In general, presentation and communication skills of the candidates were very good. Most were confident and eager to talk about their assignment.

Evaluations

Evaluations by candidates of their own work, personal strengths and weaknesses, and of suggested modifications, varied from well-developed analyses to no analyses. Most evaluations were too short but contained a very strong level of enthusiasm for this subject. Candidates focussed on describing what they had done instead of giving reasons for certain actions. Evaluations can be enhanced by considering the client's level of satisfaction with the work done, but such consideration was generally not encountered.

Observations related to the written examination

The majority of candidates answered one question from each section. However, some candidates answered one, two, or three additional questions, and a small number attempted all eight questions on the examination paper.

Section 1, based on Module 1 – Salon & Customer Care

Both questions in this section were well answered and were equally popular with candidates.

Question 1 was based on learning outcomes 1 to 6 in Unit 2 (Reception Skills) and learning outcomes 1 to 6 in Unit 3 (Communication). All of these learning outcomes had clearly been well achieved by most candidates; candidates answering part (e) of Question 1 demonstrated achievement of learning outcome 4 in Unit 3 (dealing with complaints effectively) and learning outcome 5 in Unit 3 (conversing with a client appropriately) particularly well, as they provided excellent descriptions of how a receptionist should deal with an angry or upset customer.

Learning outcomes 1 and 2 of unit 4 (Health and Hygiene), learning outcomes 1, 4 and 5 of Unit 5 (Safety) and learning outcomes 1 and 2 of Unit 6 (Salon Design) were examined in **Question 2**. Candidates had evidently achieved learning outcome 2 of unit 6 (Salon Design) very well, as they correctly named essential items of hair salon furniture and discussed shampoo chairs with built-in electric massagers. Candidates had difficulty in part (c), indicating difficulty in fully achieving learning outcome 1 of Unit 6 (identify the features of good salon design); generally only one point was given in each case about designing or maintaining flooring, lighting and walls of a salon where two points were required. Many candidates gave a second response, but in doing so only reworded the same point given in their first response.

Section 2, based on Module 2 – Haircare

Question 3 was based on learning outcomes 2 and 3 of Unit 1 (Hair Analysis), learning outcome 1 of Unit 2 (Shampooing and Conditioning) and the learning outcomes 2 and 4 in Unit 3 (Specialist Treatments). Most candidates answering Question 3 demonstrated their achievement of learning outcome 2 in Unit 1 very well in giving reasons for carrying out a hair and scalp analysis as part of a client consultation. Many candidates had apparently not achieved learning outcome 1 in Unit 2 (select appropriate conditioner for different hair types), because they gave different *brands* of conditioner instead of different *types* of conditioner, as required in part (c). Similarly, achievement of learning outcome 2 of Unit 1 was not demonstrated by some candidates who omitted part (d) and was not fully demonstrated by those who named but did not give any detail about environmental and health factors that can affect the condition of hair. Most candidates gave very detailed descriptions of possible negative effects of chemical treatments on the hair and thereby showed very well that they had achieved learning outcomes 2 and 4 of Unit 3 (disadvantages of perming and colouring hair).

Question 4, which focussed on learning outcomes 1, 2 and 4 of Unit 4 (Hair Style and Fashions) and learning outcome 1 of Unit 5 (Special Occasions), was less popular and less well answered than Question 3. In their answers to part (c), most candidates were able to identify the six different face shapes shown, thus fully showing their achievement of learning outcome 1 of Unit 4; 'oblong' and 'triangle' were the face shapes most frequently incorrectly identified by some candidates. Candidates struggled to fully show achievement of learning outcome 2 of Unit 4, as they were unable to give four reasons in part (b) to explain why face shape is an important factor to consider before styling hair. Most candidates experienced difficulty in part (a) where they were required to discuss factors that influence choice of hairstyle under the headings forthcoming event, lifestyle and personality, in order to show achievement of learning outcome 4 of Unit 4 (describe current trends in hairstyling) and learning outcome 1 of Unit 5 (identify and cost a range of hair dressing aids). Similarly candidates did not answer well in part (d) on the 'influence of celebrity hairstyles' and discussed in general terms the 'influence of celebrities'. Thus, many candidates who answered Question 4 had not fully developed an awareness of current trends and influences in hair styles, which is one of the aims of Module 2.

Section 3, based on Module 3 – Beautycare

In this section, Question 5 was significantly more popular than Question 6 and those who attempted it generally answered well. **Question 5** was based on learning outcome 5 (discuss the pros and cons of body-piercing) in Unit 6 (Beauty Treatments). Most candidates were able to give four reasons why body piercing is fashionable amongst some groups in part (a), name four body parts that can be pierced in part (b) and identify four possible risks associated with body piercing in part (d).

However some candidates did not fully demonstrate achievement of learning outcome 5 of Unit 6, as, in part (c), they discussed factors to be considered when getting a piercing where factors to be considered when 'selecting a body part to be pierced' were required, and, in part (e), they were unable to discuss different attitudes to body piercings, repeating the responses already given in part (a).

Question 6 was based on learning outcomes 2 and 3 and 5 to 7 of Unit 1 (Skin Care) and learning outcomes 4 and 5 of Unit 5 (Beauty Products). Candidates showed that they had achieved learning outcome 2 and 3 of Unit 1 in part (a) where they gave benefits of homemade facemasks and in part (b) where they matched skin types and facemask properties or functions. It appeared that candidates had partially achieved learning outcome 4 of Unit 5, judging from their answering in part (c), where most could list the ingredients of a homemade oatmeal facemask but were unable to give the function of each ingredient given. Most candidates were able to identify four good practices in the application of a facemask in the photograph in part (e), thus fully demonstrating their achievement of learning outcome 5 of Unit 5 (demonstration of the use of some of the beauty recipes) and learning outcome 6 of Unit 1 (prepare a client for a facial treatment).

Section 4, based on Module 4 – Bodycare
Question 7 was more popular than Question 8 and both questions were generally well answered. Candidates were able to engage well with the two themes of the questions: sleep and skin exposure to sun. **Question 7** was based on learning outcomes 8 and 9 in Unit 6 (Leisure, Exercise and Rest). Most candidates answering Question 7 were able to give three reasons why sleep is important but many were unable to give a fourth reason, as required. Most candidates showed they had achieved learning outcome 8 by giving the number of hours sleep each night required by an average adult in part (b). Candidates were also able to identify four factors leading to a person getting insufficient sleep in part (c) and gave excellent suggestions for creating a bedroom that is a relaxing place to sleep in part (e), thus demonstrating at least partial achievement of learning outcome 9. However, part (d), the ways that diet and eating or drinking patterns can affect sleep was not well answered and many candidates repeated the same responses given earlier in part (c). Few candidates gave a second point of advice, as required, about establishing a sleep routine leading up to an examination.

Question 8 was based on the learning outcomes 1 to 7 and learning outcome 11 in Unit 5 (Sun Care). Candidates answering **Question 8** were able to give three risks associated with exposure to the sun but many were unable to give a fourth risk as required in part (a). Learning outcomes 1 and 5 had therefore not been fully achieved by all. Nearly all candidates gave at least four ways of avoiding the harmful effects of the sun and four ways of effectively using sunscreens, indicating that learning outcomes 2 to 4 and 11 had been achieved. A small number of candidates discussed the use of sun *tanning* creams and *after sun* lotions instead of sun*screens*. Again, learning outcomes 6 and 7 had clearly been well achieved by the majority of candidates, as shown by their answering in part (d) about signs and symptoms of sunburn and part (e) about sunburn treatment. A minority of candidates could only list three of the required four points about sunburn treatment.

4.19.3 Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the practical examination
- Teaching and learning should prioritise safe and hygienic technique.

- Candidates should select their client carefully, with their teacher's advice, to optimise their performance.

- Candidates should refer in their portfolio to the attributes of their client's hair, nails, skin that they have considered in arriving at the solution to their assignment.

- Candidates should not omit any part of the assignment.

- Candidates should take sufficient time to perform the scalp and face massages thoroughly and to perform cleansing, toning and moisturising procedures correctly.

- Teachers could help students to consider different headings under which they could evaluate their performance.

Recommendations related to the written examination
- Prior to the examination, teachers should help students to plan how much time to spend reading the examination paper and how much time to spend on each section. During the examination, candidates should adhere to the time plan and use all of the time allowed.

- Candidates should take time at the beginning of the examination to select the four questions that best allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Candidates should then focus on answering these questions well in preference to working their way through all or most of the questions on the examination paper.

- Key words are often in bold or in italics and it is critical that candidates attend carefully to such words. Misreading and misinterpreting examination questions will result in answers that are incorrectly focussed and loss of marks.

- Candidates should avoid repetition of the same point – albeit in different words – within a question part or across different parts of the same question.

- Teachers should help students understand that different question cues indicate answers of different length and detail. One-word answers are often adequate for 'list' and 'name', but cannot be sufficient for 'explain', 'describe' or 'discuss'.

4.19.4 Recommendations to schools and centres
- A suitable room must be provided as a 'salon' for the teaching, learning and examination of the coursework associated with this vocational specialism. Role play is part of the examination and will require 'a reception area' and 'a waiting area'. A space is also required for the examiner to observe and examine the candidates' folders.

- Salon furniture is desirable, but improvisation (such as the use of a sun lounger in place of a massage couch) is acceptable. One of the assignments usually involves washing the hair and therefore a sink with hot and cold running water, preferably fitted with a shampoo chair, would allow students to learn best practice and perform with ease and confidence at examination.

- It is essential that the floor and furniture are kept thoroughly clean to allow hair and beauty treatments to be performed **hygienically.**

- Equipment and products may be shared, but it is important that a culture of hygienic practice is in place to avoid any possibility of cross infection and to prepare students for working in the professional hair and beauty industry.

- In keeping with the aesthetic aspects of the subject and the importance of role play in the examination, the use of candles, music, fresh flowers, etc., is encouraged, to help create an ambiance that encourages excellence in candidate performance.

- At examination, up to eight candidates may be tested together and each will have a model. Sufficient space must be provided for the candidates to work comfortably.

- The school or centre should retain a record of the date on which the assignments were drawn and have this record available to the examiner if required.

- Facilitation of the examiner's schedule by each school or centre is essential to allow the examiner to commute between centres in city traffic or across distances. Examiners reported that delays were caused in a small number of schools and centres on the day of the practical examination where Form P2 was not available or where some candidates had not signed P2. There were also some cases where the candidates were not ready to commence at the scheduled time.

- Schools should apply in advance to the SEC if any Reasonable Accommodations are required by a candidate.

4.20 Technology

The course consists of four modules, all of which are to be studied. They are:
- Module 1: Introducing Technology
- Module 2: Design and Manufacture
- Module 3: Water Technology
- Module 4: Electrical understanding and Basic Electronics

The final examination is assessed out of 12 credits and comprises two components:
- written examination
- practical coursework.

The written examination is allocated 240 marks (60% of the total) and the practical coursework is allocated 160 marks (40%).

For the practical coursework, each candidate presents an assignment based on one of three design briefs issued by the SEC. The Examiner also interviews each candidate to discuss the assignment.

The written examination is of two hours' duration and comprises two sections. Candidates must answer all three questions in Section 1 and any three of the five questions in Section 2. The first four questions in Section 2 correspond to the four modules, while the fifth is on the cross-module topic of *Tools and Equipment*.

4.20.1 Statistics on Performance

Practical coursework

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	30.6	14.3	12.2	14.3	10.2	8.2	4.1	4.1	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	49	9.7
2010	25.0	25.0	18.8	17.5	8.8	2.5	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	80	10.2
2011	14.3	14.3	14.3	25.7	17.1	2.9	8.6	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	35	9.3
2012	9.4	15.6	31.3	18.8	15.6	3.1	0.0	0.0	3.1	0.0	0.0	3.1	0.0	32	9.3
2013	7.9	13.2	21.1	23.7	10.5	2.6	2.6	5.3	2.6	2.6	5.3	0.0	2.6	38	8.4
2014	**7.8**	**13.7**	**19.6**	**17.6**	**19.6**	**13.7**	**5.9**	**2.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**51**	**9.0**

Table 4.45   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Technology, coursework, 2009 to 2014.

Written examination

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	18.5	11.1	22.2	14.8	9.3	5.6	9.3	1.9	5.6	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.0	54	9.0
2010	14.1	17.6	11.8	11.8	14.1	11.8	9.4	4.7	1.2	2.4	1.2	0.0	0.0	85	8.8
2011	6.1	12.1	18.2	15.2	21.2	15.2	9.1	0.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	33	8.6
2012	2.8	11.1	13.9	13.9	16.7	8.3	11.1	5.6	11.1	2.8	0.0	0.0	2.8	36	7.6
2013	15.0	2.5	20.0	20.0	17.5	5.0	10.0	5.0	0.0	2.5	2.5	0.0	0.0	40	8.6
2014	**0.0**	**3.9**	**13.7**	**19.6**	**21.6**	**13.7**	**9.8**	**9.8**	**7.8**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**51**	**7.6**

Table 4.46   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Technology, written, 2009 to 2014.

Overall

Year	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Total	Mean credit
2009	18.5	13.0	16.7	16.7	7.4	11.1	3.7	3.7	3.7	1.9	3.7	0.0	0.0	54	8.9
2010	14.1	15.3	11.8	23.5	14.1	8.2	8.2	0.0	3.5	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.0	85	9.0
2011	8.6	5.7	17.1	25.7	20.0	14.3	0.0	2.9	2.9	0.0	2.9	0.0	0.0	35	8.6
2012	2.7	10.8	10.8	29.7	13.5	8.1	0.0	2.7	2.7	8.1	8.1	0.0	2.7	37	7.6
2013	10.0	10.0	15.0	22.5	10.0	7.5	10.0	5.0	7.5	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.0	40	8.3
2014	**0.0**	**2.0**	**11.8**	**29.4**	**25.5**	**13.7**	**13.7**	**2.0**	**2.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**51**	**8.0**

Table 4.47   Percentage of candidates awarded each number of credits, Technology, 2009 to 2014.

4.20.2   Observations of the Chief Examiner

Observations related to the practical coursework

There were three design briefs, which related to Modules 2, 3, and 4: *Design & Manufacture*, *Water Technology* and *Electrical Understanding and Electronics*. Candidates were required to complete a coursework assignment on any one of the briefs. The assessment of this coursework was carried out in June 2014. Each candidate was required to present for an interview (approx 15 minutes) together with their practical solution and a written folder. Candidates who do not present a practical solution may not be interviewed.

The arrangements for the assessment interviews in all schools this year were found to be of a high standard. All candidates were in attendance for the preliminary discussion given by the examiner and spacious rooms were provided with all practical pieces numbered and laid out in order.

This year the *Electrical Understanding and Electronics* design brief (a novelty bedside light for use by a child) proved to be the most popular, with 69% of candidates opting for this choice, and the *Design and Manufacture* brief (storage for small items in a bedroom) was the second most popular at 25%. The response rate to the *Water Technology* brief (a water harvesting device) was low with only 6% of candidates attempting it. It was noted that the briefs which proved most popular were the ones which the candidate could make use of the project at home after the assessment was completed, and this may have been a factor in the low uptake of the *Water Technology* brief.

The standard of IT use and the presentation of folios were improved on previous years. The research and investigation, where present, were found to be of a good standard, although it was noted that in some cases the candidates did not take full advantage of the work done in this area when drawing up their subsequent design ideas. The standard of working drawings was, in the majority of cases, found to be fair to poor. This was a common factor across all centres and resulted in candidates losing marks.

In relation to the production of the product, it was commonly observed that poor finishing spoiled the overall appearance of many well-made pieces which would have otherwise been of an excellent standard. This was particularly evident in cases where the material used was wood, but also in the edge finishing of acrylic and of metals. Due care should also be taken in relation to the use of electrical fittings – some candidates had used metal fittings for their lamps, but did not use an earthed cable for its wiring. While these pieces were very well produced, candidates lost marks in

the area of safety. In some instances, the work produced by the candidate was not reflective of the amount of time available from the receipt of the brief to the finish date. That is, the scope and scale of the work produced was minimal and gave little scope for displaying the skills developed over the two years of the course.

Observations related to the written examination
Section 1
Question 1 consists of fifteen short-answer questions of which the candidate must answer any ten, and it was the most successfully answered of the questions in Section 1. However, within this question, the parts relating to electronic and electrical knowledge and to calculations were generally poorly answered. While all three questions in Section 1 are compulsory, it was found that not all candidates attempted all of them. Question 2 in particular was attempted by only 80% of candidates. The drawing skills displayed here were often of a poor standard. However, the use of proportion showed an improvement over previous years. Part (b), which required candidates to estimate and include four dimensions on their drawings, was omitted by many candidates. This comparatively poor answering of Question 2 indicates that learning outcome 8 of Module 1, Unit 2, along with outcomes 2 and 4 from Unit 4, are not being well met.

Question 3, on Health and Safety, was attempted by all candidates and, as in previous years, the standard of answering on this topic was good. All parts were well answered and this continues to be a popular and successful question on the Technology paper. This suggests that the learning outcomes throughout the course related to Health and Safety are being achieved very well by candidates. In light of the critical importance of this aspect of technology education, it is commendable that candidates continue to show strength in demonstrating their achievement of these outcomes.

Section 2
The five optional questions in Section 2 continue to display a marked variation in their relative popularity with candidates. Question 5 (Tools & Equipment) was the most popular and was also very well answered with candidates displaying a solid knowledge of the tools and processes encountered throughout their course of study. Learning outcomes 1 to 5 from Unit 6 of Module 1 were tested in this question and were found to have been achieved by most candidates.

Question 1 (Introducing Technology) and Question 2 (Design and Manufacture) were also widely attempted and a good level of achievement was displayed in candidate answering. The parts of these questions relating to the selection, processing and joining of materials were answered very well by candidates while the quality of candidate responses to the graphic/isometric element (Question 2 (b)) was lower.

Question 3 (Water Technology) and Question 4 (Electrical understanding & Electronics) were the least popular options, with Question 4 being the least frequently attempted. Nevertheless, the level of attainment displayed by candidates in responses to both questions was satisfactory in relation to knowledge of components and their uses, the safety procedures relevant to each module, and the environmental implications of both water and electricity production. Question 4 (c) (ii), which required a calculation of electricity usage and cost, was notable in being particularly poorly attempted. This suggests that learning outcome 1 (bullets 3 and 5) of Module 1, Unit 4, along with outcomes 2 and 3 from Module 4, Unit 4, are not being well met.

4.20.3   Recommendations to teachers and students

Recommendations related to the practical coursework

- Sketching and dimensioning throughout the design process should be encouraged

- The completion of working drawings and materials lists should be seen as an essential part of the production of the artefact.

- The folio of each candidate should include a copy of the Technology Examination Brief as issued to schools by the SEC.

- Good quality finishing processes appropriate to the materials being used enhance the artefact and the ability to decide on and apply such finishes should be seen as a valuable and transferable skill set.

- All appropriate Health and Safety requirements should be observed at all times in the production and completion of project work.

Recommendations related to the written examination

- Greater care should be exercised by candidates when reading the question paper so that all parts of the question are attempted and the answers address the requirements of the question.

- Candidates should attempt all required parts of the compulsory questions in the written examination.

- The fundamentals of drawing and measurement (Module 1, Units 1 to 4) should be covered before other modules are attempted, as specified in the syllabus. Students should be aware of the importance of proportion, colour and scale in drawing and sketching, as drawing in its various forms is central to Technology.

- Essential calculations relating to technological processes and units should be studied and practiced in their applied form.

- Students should be familiar with past examination papers and marking schemes as published on www.examinations.ie

4.20.4   Recommendations to schools and centres

- Schools were found to be most helpful in ensuring appropriate arrangements were made for the assessment of candidate work. This is appreciated, and it is recommended that schools continue to provide this excellent level of support to the assessment process.

5.   Overall observations and recommendations

Many of the detailed observations and recommendations presented in chapters 3 and 4 will be of interest mainly to the teachers anchoring the particular tasks or teaching the particular courses concerned. This chapter, on the other hand, extracts the recommendations that are intended for the more general attention of schools and centres, and supplements these with other programme-level observations and recommendations. That is, this chapter includes the recommendations that will be of most interest to management personnel in schools and centres and to Leaving Certificate Applied co-ordinators.

Notwithstanding the recommendations below, it should first be noted that, in the vast majority of schools and centres, the programme and all of its assessment elements are clearly being implemented with care and diligence by teachers and school authorities.

Satisfactory completion of modules

As noted in chapter 2, the integrity of the procedures in place for the award of credit for satisfactory completion of modules is critical to the integrity of the qualification itself. The State Examinations Commission is grateful for the ongoing co-operation of students, teachers, co-ordinators, and the management of schools and centres in ensuring that credit is claimed ethically and in full adherence to the programme requirements.

As personnel of the State Examinations Commission are not involved in checking adherence to the requirements for satisfactory completion of modules, no observations are made here in relation to the adequacy of the procedures in place in schools to ensure this. However, the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills periodically carries out *programme evaluations* of the implementation of the programme in individual schools. These reports are available on the Department's website, and it is noted here that no such reports have expressed any concern in this regard. In all cases where this aspect of the programme was commented upon, satisfaction was expressed as to the adequacy of the procedures for monitoring and dealing with attendance and ensuring adherence to the requirements.

Nonetheless, attention is drawn to chapter 5 of the Inspectorate's *Report on the National Evaluation of the Leaving Certificate Applied* (2000). That report noted that inspectors encountered instances of insufficient monitoring of the requirements for 90% attendance and completion of key assignments. It pointed out, for example, that the general school attendance roll is not a sufficient mechanism for monitoring attendance at the classes and activities related to specific modules. It expressed concern that credits had been claimed and awarded on the basis of 90% daily attendance throughout the session rather than on module-specific attendance records. The following two recommendations were made in that report (Recommendations 5.4.1 and 5.4.2).

- The clear programme requirement to adhere to the 90% student attendance rule for SCMs should be strictly observed and monitored. Appropriate and reliable mechanisms should be established so that credits are awarded on the basis of attendance at individual course modules. The use of individual teacher rolls is recommended in this regard.

- Schools should ensure that the required Record of Evidence, together with signed checklists of Key Assignments in respect of each module completed in a session be retained securely in the school until the end of the appeal period.

Student tasks

The following recommendations are among those made in chapter 3 above.

- Accommodation provided by the school should be appropriate for the assessment process – a comfortable and quiet environment with sufficient space for the work being carried out, and ideally with lines of visibility into the room.

- All material for assessment, including products or other artefacts, should be clearly labelled, collated, and made available to examiners on arrival at a centre. A running order of candidates for assessment should also be provided.

- Schools should have all their paperwork in order. In particular, it is imperative that the P2 forms have been signed and are given to the examiner.

- In order to encourage good planning on the part of students and ensure the equitable treatment of all candidates, it is important that schools ensure that all notified deadlines for the completion of task work are adhered to and that students are not permitted to continue work on their reports after the specified dates.

- Examiners should be made aware in advance of the assessment of candidates with special needs, particularly if the special needs may have an impact on the interview component of the assessment, such as may be the case for certain speech and language difficulties.

- The Leaving Certificate Applied co-ordinator or a designated representative of the school or centre should be available to meet with the examiner to make arrangements for student task assessment and to provide the examiner with any information relevant to the assessment process.

- Communication between the Leaving Certificate Applied co-ordinator and the teacher anchoring the student task is vital. The completion of a task should not be the responsibility of only one teacher. Increased cross-curricular integration would support the anchoring teacher, improve learning, and help students gain credit under this criterion.

- While each task is primarily situated in one curricular area, the students draw on the learning from other areas. Some opportunity should be provided for teachers to work in pairs or groups when preparing students for the student task. For example, it may be beneficial for the Vocational Preparation teacher and a Business teacher or IT Teacher to work together in supporting students with the Enterprise Task, or for the English and Communications Teacher and the Guidance Teacher to do so for the Career Investigation Task.

- Communication between the Leaving Certificate Applied co-ordinator and the teacher anchoring the student task is vital. The completion of a task should not be the responsibility of only one teacher. Increased cross-curricular integration would help the anchoring teacher and also enable students gain the best possible credit.

- Schools should ensure that all candidates are present for the initial group meeting with the examiner.

- School management should allow and encourage at least one member of staff to work regularly with the SEC as an examiner in at least one of the six student tasks. Teachers will gain much from participating in marking conferences, where examiners are trained in the assessment of these tasks, and from the experience of examining. Teachers with such experience are better able to support students in taking a coherent and properly focussed approach to their tasks.

- Teachers new to the Leaving Certificate Applied programme should be facilitated and encouraged to participate in relevant in-career development, as there are many challenges for teachers in implementing the course effectively for the benefit of students.

- Work experience or other out-of-school activities should not be scheduled during the assessment week, as it makes it very difficult for examiners to schedule assessments.

- While the Practical Achievement Task is done outside of school, there is nonetheless a need to provide opportunities in school time for monitoring and guidance.

- The assessment of Vocational Specialism tasks is hampered in cases where schools enter candidates for the incorrect specialism. This is frequently not noticed and rectified when the State Examinations Commission collates the information entered and returns it to schools for checking. Examiners from the wrong specialism are then appointed to carry out the task assessments in the school, and the matter only comes to light when they are making appointments to visit schools. Rectifying the problem at this stage is very problematic, as it disrupts examiner appointments and scheduling, causing inconvenience to other schools, and often leading to late assessments for the candidates concerned. To avoid this, schools are requested to check the "turnaround" document carefully when they receive it earlier in the school year.

- In the case of the Personal Reflection Task, Year 1 statements are held in store in the SEC after submission until the Year 2 statements of the same candidates are submitted a year later. Where possible, both statements of the same candidate are marked by the same Examiner. Discrepancies arise between the two sets of statements due to candidates transferring to another school or leaving the Leaving Certificate Applied course without submitting any Year 2 statement. The ongoing cooperation of schools and centres in resolving the large number of discrepancies that arise is appreciated and it is hoped that this will continue.

  A large number of statements that are not labelled with the candidate's number and school or centre number are encountered every year. It is difficult and time-consuming to identify them and to pair Year 1 and Year 2 statements of the same candidate if one or both are not labelled correctly. Schools and centres are requested to ensure each statement carries the number of the candidate and the roll number of the school or centre.

Final Examinations

The following recommendations are among those made in chapter 4 above.

- Schools should refrain, if possible, from using the intercom during the course of the oral examinations as this can be distracting for candidates.

- Posting the running order of candidates for assessment in oral examinations both inside and near the examination centre would assist in the smooth conduct of the examination.

- Schools should continue to record the sign language examination using digital equipment.

- In the case of practical coursework assessments that incorporate an interview with the candidates, schools are informed of the proposed day and date for candidate interviews by an initial phone call which is subsequently confirmed in writing. The great majority of examiners reported that schools were most helpful in ensuring appropriate arrangements were made for the

assessment of candidate work. Examiners did, however, make a small number of recommendations as follows:

- o LCA projects should not be presented for assessment in the same room as other project work that is in progress in the school or awaiting assessment for other examinations. This can lead to confusion during the assessment.

- o It is essential that schools provide a suitable, interruption-free, interview room for the assessment.

- Members of staff at the school should not ask examiners to comment on the work being marked or to disclose the marks awarded, as examiners are not permitted to do so.

- As was recommended in the case of the student tasks, the P2 forms for the practical coursework components should be completed, signed, and available to the examiner when the work is being marked.

- Schools should note the particular room and equipment requirements for the practical assessments in the vocational specialisms that they offer, as noted in the relevant section of chapter 4 above, and should ensure that the room made available is suitable and has all necessary equipment.

- Examiners of practical work are not authorised to make decisions on reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. As for any written examination, schools should apply in advance to the State Examinations Commission if they consider that any such accommodation is appropriate for any candidate.

Other observations and recommendations

It is evident from both the observations of examiners and the direct interaction between co-ordinators and the State Examinations Commission that the co-ordinator is central to the successful implementation of the programme in schools. Co-ordinators, particularly those new to the role, sometimes do not appear to have all of the information that they should have at their disposal (such as the folder of information that the Commission issues each year) or to have the necessary understanding of the programme and its administrative and organisational requirements. It is recommended that schools ensure that this role is fulfilled by a person with the necessary experience and understanding to carry it out effectively, and that the co-ordinator receives all necessary support and information from school management and colleagues. In particular, new co-ordinators should be fully briefed and be encouraged and supported in availing of relevant in-career development.

The nature of the programme is such that it requires attention throughout the two years to administrative matters. In particular, it is important that schools notify the State Examinations Commission as soon as possible if candidates withdraw from the programme, join it late (whether from the Leaving Certificate established or elsewhere), or transfer to or from another school. This is necessary to ensure that candidates are properly credited for all work done and to ensure that the Commission is in a position to provide the appropriate assessment events to each candidate in an efficient manner with the least possible disruption to schools and students.

The Leaving Certificate Applied programme involves a large amount of external assessment of a type that is very resource-hungry. In particular, it requires the involvement of a large number of

examiners and examiner-hours in comparison to the size of the cohort. The ongoing feasibility of this assessment model relies on the co-operation of all teachers and schools for the availability of these examiners. Teachers with experience of the programme are encouraged to apply for examining work with the Commission, and school authorities are requested to release teachers for such work. This was mentioned above in relation to tasks in particular, but also applies to the practical examinations. Facilitating this work is of benefit to all concerned – the smooth running of all of these assessments is in the interest of schools and candidates as well as that of the Commission. Furthermore, the experience gained by teachers through this examining work helps develop their clarity and focus in relation to the aims of the various elements of the programme and the associated assessment criteria, which benefits their teaching.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Circular letter S42/01 on the arrangements for the assessment of the Practical Achievement Task

LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED 2001

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PRACTICAL ACHIEVEMENT TASK

This circular outlines the arrangements for the assessment of the Practical Achievement Task (PAT). It should be read in conjunction with the specifications for the task as outlined in the "*Programme Statement & Outline of Student Tasks*" pages 47 – 54.

INTRODUCTION

Students of the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme, entering year 2 in September 2001 and in subsequent years, are required to complete a Practical Achievement Task and to present it for examination at the end of Session III (February Task Assessment). The Department of Education and Science will supply a pro-forma assessment booklet. This booklet will enable candidates to follow the prescribed outline and procedure for this task. All students are obliged to incorporate this pro-forma booklet into their task. The pro-forma booklet outlines in detail the requirements of the different stage.

1.   SCOPE OF THE TASK

The task is an **individual** student task, chosen by the student with the help and guidance of the teacher. It should be specific/well-defined, within the ability range of the student, capable of being independently verified and oriented towards student achievement.

The task involves a process beginning with the planning phase and ending with the evaluation of the task and self-evaluation by the student. The time span for undertaking and completing the achievement is at least three months.

Due consideration should be given to health and safety issues when choosing the task. The task should represent a challenge to the student, allow opportunities to gain the proposed level of success and lead to the development/improvement of the student.

The task should be broadly related to the aims of the Leaving Certificate Applied. It must not be already submitted for assessment but it may build upon existing pursuits, skills or specific aspects of the Leaving Certificate Applied programme developed and/or undertaken by the student.

The Practical Achievement should:
- be action oriented
- be meaningful for the student
- have an education focus
- be adequately supervised

- be appropriate to the age and ability of the student
- be oriented towards achievement

2. PURPOSE OF THE PRACTICAL ACHIEVEMENT TASK

The task is aimed at developing in students a wide range of abilities and an understanding of the elements involved in successfully undertaking and completing a Practical Achievement Task.
It will provide the student with the opportunity to:
- Engage in decision making/goal setting
- Develop skills in planning and reflection
- Demonstrate perseverance/dedication/commitment
- Achieve a sense of mastery and achievement.

2.1 The Expected Outcomes include:
- Practical Achievement Task undertaken and completed
- Skills development in planning, reflection, goal setting and self-discipline
- Sense of mastery and achievement
- Completion of a report incorporated in a pro-forma booklet.

3. STAGES OF THE PRACTICAL ACHIEVEMENT TASK

The Practical Achievement Task has three stages.

3.1 Planning Stage
Good planning increases the likelihood of successfully accomplishing the task. The main Planning activities include:
- Setting a clear goal from alternatives considered
- Identifying specific, clearly defined aims to enable the candidate measure success
- Selecting and sequencing a series of steps/procedures to achieve the goal
- Identifying potential obstacles to the successful attainment of the goal.

The focus should be on implementing the steps in the plan. The student must be able to monitor the steps along the way in order to ensure s/he is making progress towards the specified goal. Adequate time should be given to this stage to ensure that the task chosen is capable of being achieved, of being independently verified, and of being completed within the time frame.

The planning stage involves consideration of the following:
- Needs/Interest Analysis/Audit
- Background Research
- Selection of task from alternatives considered
- Appropriate level of challenge (meaningful/achievable) determined by the ability level of the student and by the resources available.

The Plan should be **realistic** and **practical** and take account of:
- Resources required/available
- Activities required to achieve goal
- Setting of time scales

- Achievability/completion date
- Safety consideration.

The **Initial Statement** is the outcome of the planning stage.

3.2   Implementation Stage/Operational Stage

Records of progress and evidence of achievement have a central role in the assessment of the task. Through these, the examiner will assess the time and effort put into the task by the student and the level of achievement gained. The Log Book identifies the activities engaged in, the stages executed and the results throughout the duration of the task. The activities should clearly reflect the aims of the task.

The **Log Book** should indicate the regular engagement involved of the student in the task over the three-month period. It should contain a minimum of five clearly dated records, spread over the required period, should indicate the level of involvement with the process, and contain appropriate comments describing engagement and evaluation. The Log entries must be signed by the Student and the School Manager or his/her representative in order to verify their authenticity.

While the process is critical, it is also very important to make progress. Evidence needs to be provided in order to determine achievement. Two sources of evidence are required. Evidence could include awards, certificates, verifier evaluation report, photographs, etc.

The Log book provides a record of the process engaged in by the student while the evidence verifies the achievement(s).

3.3   Culminating Stage / Evaluating Stage

In the **Concluding Statement** the student reviews, evaluates and interprets the experience and demonstrates its application to future endeavours. The student evaluates all stages of the task he/she has undertaken and completed. The student also evaluates self as a result of the task – skills, attitudes developed, difficulties encountered and lessons learned about self for the future.

The student specifies if goals have been achieved, s/he draws meaningful conclusions and makes recommendations for the future. The statement will be assessed according to the personal goal(s) set by the student.

4.   TEACHER ROLE

While the main responsibility of the task rests with the individual student, teacher support at all stages of the process is required and is vital to the success of the task. Adequate time must be made available for supporting/mentoring students as they undertake this task. The teacher must:

- Initially inform the student of the **parameters** and requirement of the task, assist the student in choosing an **appropriate** task and advise him/her on verification.

- During the planned activity determine if progress is being made according to the plan and guide the student in reassessing and changing the plan if necessary

- At the final stage prepare the student for the assessment (completion of the pro-forma booklet/collection of evidence/verification of evidence, etc.).

Since the task in an individual task, unique to each student, it is not anchored in any specific area of the programme. It is essential that regular, scheduled time be made available in the school to facilitate the mentoring process.

5.   VERIFIERS OF EVIDENCE

All tasks chosen must be verifiable. A verifier must be an adult who is knowledgeable in the area of the achievement and who can verify participation and progress made. Students must not choose an activity that cannot be verified, as verification of the evidence is an essential part of the assessment process.

6.   ASSESSMENT

Assessment will be conducted on the basis of the following criteria:

- Ability to select and plan effectively a practical achievement
- Quality of engagement in the activity and evidence of progress and achievement provided.
- Ability to reflect/evaluate experiences of undertaking and completing the task.

The task must be presented in an orderly, coherent manner. There must be evidence of cross-curricular application and process of integration should be clearly evident. There should be evidence of development throughout the task.

Students will present for interview. The interview will involve discussion between the examiner and the students about the work involved in the task. The pro-forma booklet or the pro-forma booklet with audio or video (if these media are chosen to represent the initial and concluding statement) must be present also.