

FACTFILE: GCE NUTRITION & FOOD SCIENCE A2 LEVEL



A Guide to Reading and Understanding Examination Questions

Examination questions provide students with opportunities to demonstrate the knowledge, understanding and skills they have developed during the study of **GCE A2 Nutrition and Food Science**.

Understanding the examination question is an important skill as without fully understanding the question the student cannot respond to it clearly and coherently or with sufficient detail and depth required at A2 level.

All questions have key words that indicate **what** should be written and **how** to write it. The student will be better placed to write a focused response if they can identify these key words in the question.

There are two types of key words to be aware of:

1. Content words
2. Command words

1. Content words

These identify which topic the question is focusing on. For example:

Explain the **benefits** of having a **Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)** system in place for a **food business**. (*A2 Nutrition and Food Science: Option B Food Safety and Quality 2022*)

The content words in the question above are in bold. The key word 'benefits' indicates that the response must focus only on benefits of a HACCP system and not just provide a description of the system. The key phrase 'food business' is asking the student to choose only those benefits that are relevant for a food business.

Describe the **economic and social benefits of Fairtrade** for **farmers in producer countries**. (*A2 Nutrition and Food Science: Option A Food Security and Sustainability 2022*)

The content words in the question above are in bold. The key phrase 'economic and social benefits' indicates that the response must focus on these benefits of Fairtrade and not just provide a description of everything Fairtrade does. The key words 'farmer' and 'producer countries' are directing the student to choose the economic and social benefits relevant to farmers in producer countries only.

2. Command words

Command words clarify what to do with the content. In the example questions above the key words **Explain** and **Describe** are command words rather than content words. Command words are demanding at this level and must be adhered to if the response is to merit top band marks. It is essential that students become familiar with the commonly used command words for this subject.

Glossary of Command Words A21 Options A and B

The table below provides definitions and examples of commonly used command words for **A2 Nutrition and Food Science**. The definitions are specific to this specification. Example questions are taken from past papers 2018-2022.

Assess	
To make an informed judgement about the value of a claim after weighing up the options. See also Evaluate.	<p>Example Question: Assess the potential risks to food safety from veterinary medicines and animal feed.</p> <p>In this example the student is expected to identify and describe in detail the potential risks to food safety from veterinary medicines and animal feed. They should then comment on how serious they consider these risks to be when weighed up against safety standards and when compared to other risks to food safety.</p>
Consider	
Look at closely and provide a detailed response, usually with the purpose of making a judgement or reaching a conclusion. See also Examine.	<p>Example question: Consider the major challenges to achieving food security.</p> <p>When responding to this question, the student is expected to identify and describe in detail the major challenges to achieving food security as well as explaining the likely impact these challenges will have on food security.</p>
Describe	
To say what something is like. To give its relevant qualities. Descriptions focus less on the meaning of something and more on its particular characteristics.	<p>Example question: Describe the quality assurance systems food manufacturers should use to ensure safe food production.</p> <p>In this question the student is expected to describe what the quality assurance systems look like with precision and detail. There is no requirement to make a judgement or present a critical response.</p>
Discuss	
Discuss is a command word used when there are relevant interesting points, views or issues to write about.	<p>Example question: Discuss the possible theories for the increased incidence of food allergies.</p> <p>The student should identify and explain in detail the possible theories as well as commenting on the validity and reliability of the theories.</p>
Evaluate	
To make a judgement about how good or bad or how successful or unsuccessful something is, usually against specific criteria. Evaluation involves considering evidence for and against. See also Assess.	<p>Example question: Evaluate environmental or green claims as a source of information for consumers who wish to make sustainable food choices.</p> <p>Here the student is expected to identify and describe environmental and green claims currently used on food products as well as explaining how useful these claims are as a source of information for consumers.</p>

Examine	
Look at closely and provide a detailed in-depth response, usually with the purpose of making a judgement or reaching a conclusion. See also Consider.	<p>Example question: Examine the work of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in relation to food allergy and intolerance.</p> <p>When responding to this question the student is expected to provide a detailed in-depth description of the work of the FSA in relation to food allergy and intolerance. In addition, they should comment on the value of this aspect of work by the FSA.</p>
Explain	
To give enough information to make something clear or easy to understand. Often used with 'why' or 'how'.	<p>Example question: Explain why food safety is a public health priority.</p> <p>The student is expected to organise their information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary to make clear to the examiner why food safety is a public health priority. The response should provide as much detail as possible. Coherence is extremely important in providing explanatory answers.</p>
Explore	
To discuss in detail; to look at a wide range of points or issues related to the topic.	<p>Example question: Explore some of the reasons why food poverty is a significant issue for many people in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>In this question the student is expected to identify a range of reasons for food poverty in Northern Ireland. They should then provide further detail on each reason for example considering why it is a significant reason, how it has developed and what makes it unique to Northern Ireland. This command works requires the student to have a sound and detailed understanding of the issue of food poverty.</p>
Justify	
To explain the reasons, usually good reasons for a point of view, decision or advice.	<p>Example question: Propose and justify advice to consumers on how to make food choices that have a positive impact on food security and sustainability.</p> <p>In this question the student should respond by stating briefly a range of relevant advice to consumers on how to make sustainable food choices. The advice should be accompanied with detailed explanations on how these choices will have a positive impact on food security and sustainability.</p>
Outline	
To give a short, organised description of the main points. See also Summarise.	<p>Example question: Outline the possible risks associated with preservatives in food.</p> <p>The student is expected to give a short description of each possible risk without going into detail. The response should get all the main facts across in as succinct a manner as possible. There is no requirement to make a judgement or present a critical response.</p>

Summarise	
To give a concise account of the key points. See also Outline.	<p>Example question: Summarise the main principles of the EC regulation No. 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs.</p> <p>When responding to this question the student is expected to state the main principles of the given legislation precisely and concisely. There is no requirement to make a judgement or present a critical response.</p>

The table above contains examples of some command words which may appear in examination questions. Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

Suggested Activity

Look at past paper questions and identify the content words and command words. Once you are confident that you have identified what you are being asked to do in the question, plan an answer.

