

FACTFILE: GCE NUTRITION & FOOD SCIENCE AS 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 AS 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 the detail and depth required at AS 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:

Examine the **specific nutritional requirements** of a **teenager**.
(AS1 Nutrition and Food Science: Principles of Nutrition 2022)

The content words in the question above are in bold. The key words 'specific' and 'teenager' indicate that the response must focus only on the nutrients specific to a teenager and not just describe the functions of every nutrient. The key phrase 'nutritional requirements' is directing the student to focus on why the nutrient being examined is important for a teenager.

Explain how **physical activity** can **benefit** the **mental health of children**.
(AS2 Nutrition and Food Science: Diet, Lifestyle and Health 2022)

The content words in the question above are in bold. The key words 'physical activity' and 'benefit' indicates that the response must focus on benefits of physical activity only. The key phrase 'mental health of children' is directing the student to choose mental health benefits relevant for children only rather than generic examples.

2. Command words

Command words clarify what to do with the content. In the example questions above the key words **Examine** and **Explain** are command words rather than content words. Command words are more demanding at AS Level than they were at GCSE and it is important that students are made aware of this if they are to attain top band marks. It is essential that students become familiar with the commonly used command words for this subject.

Glossary of Command Words AS1 and AS2

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

Comment on	
To give an opinion and support this with evidence.	<p>Example question: Comment on fortified breakfast cereal with milk as an appropriate food choice for a school-age child.</p> <p>In this question the student is expected to support their view on the meal with nutritional facts relating to the foods given and the needs of a school-age child.</p>
Compare	
Show similarities and differences between examples given.	<p>Example question: Compare the nutritional significance of sugars from fruit juice with sugars from fresh fruit.</p> <p>When responding to this question students need to write down something about sugars from fruit juice <i>in comparison</i> with sugars from fresh fruit using comparative words such as 'whereas', 'better', 'more than', and/or 'less than'.</p>
Consider	
Look at closely and provide a detailed response, usually with the purpose of reaching a conclusion. See also Examine.	<p>Example question: Consider the benefits of physical activity for older adults in relation to bone and joint health.</p> <p>When responding to this question, the student is expected to identify benefits of physical activity for older adults and describe how these benefits specifically aid bone and joint health.</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 how cardiovascular disease develops.</p> <p>In this question the student is expected to describe with precision what happens in the body to lead to cardiovascular disease.</p>
Discuss	
Discuss is a command word used when there are relevant interesting key points to present.	<p>Example question: Discuss the lifestyle advice recommended to prevent Type 2 diabetes.</p> <p>The student should identify and explain in detail appropriate lifestyle advice as well as commenting on the relevance of the advice in the prevention of Type 2 diabetes.</p>

Examine	
Look at closely and provide a detailed response, usually with the purpose of reaching a conclusion. See also Consider.	Example question: Examine the specific nutritional requirements for a pregnant woman. When responding to this question the student is expected to provide a detailed description of the nutrients required during pregnancy. In addition, they should comment on the importance of each nutrient at this life stage.
Explain	
To give enough information to make something clear or easy to understand. Often used with 'why' or 'how'.	Example question: Explain the health benefits of physical activity for children aged 5-12 years. The student is expected to organise their information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary to make clear to the examiner why physical activity is important to the health of children aged 5-12 years. Coherence is extremely important in providing explanatory answers.
Justify	
To explain the reasons, usually good reasons for a point of view, decision or advice.	Example question: Justify three dietary recommendations to reduce the risk of cancer. In this question the student should respond by stating briefly three relevant recommendations to reduce the risk of cancer. Each recommendation should be accompanied with detailed explanations on how it will reduce the risk of cancer.
Outline	
To give a short, organised description of the main points. See also Summarise.	Example question: Outline the effect on health of both a deficiency and an excess of fluorine. The student is expected to give a short description of the effect on health of both a deficiency and an excess of fluorine without going into detail. The response should get all the main facts across in as succinct a manner as possible.
Summarise	
To give a concise account of the key points. See also Outline.	Example question: Summarise the potential effects of dehydration. When responding to this question the student is expected to state the main potential effects of dehydration precisely and concisely.

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.

