

Qualifications Framework Examiner's Report

Qualifications Framework

Stage 2: Food Standards Oral Examiner's Report May 2026

General

The Food Standards Oral exam is a test of the candidate's knowledge of the full range of food legislation but naturally, emphasis will fall on the Food Safety act 1990, Assimilated EU Regulations 178/2002, Assimilated EU Regulation 1169/2011 and the Food Information Regulations 2014.

The oral exam will also give candidates the chance to demonstrate experience they have gained practically and in the field. As such, attention will be given to the candidate's response in situations they may encounter when carrying out official controls as well as the candidate's knowledge of powers and rationale for decisions they make.

Marks for the May 2026 Oral exam ranged from 28 to 86 and there were 28 candidates. 7 of these candidates fell below the 40 per cent pass mark. 12 candidates scored above 60 with the remainder falling between 40 per cent and 60 per cent.

Candidates that fell below the pass mark failed to identify certain pieces of key legislation such as that relating specifically to sampling and gave limited explanations of the sampling process. The sampling legislation and process to carry out sampling should be fully explained, from the approach to taking the sample, through to physically taking the sample and then ensuring continuity of evidence post sample, should formal action be taken.

When questioned about powers, candidates should look to explain powers beyond the initial powers of entry. Limitations and requirements when exercising powers should be mentioned as well as discussion about what can be done once 'through the door'. If committed to memory easy marks can be picked up here.

The Food Standards Scoring System is within the scope of the Food Law Code of Practice, and it is important that candidates are familiar with its provisions. There was limited knowledge of the provisions for the lower scoring candidates.

Candidates should familiarise themselves with the hierarchy of enforcement in the Food Law Code of practice and how it is applied but also be aware of situations where it is not necessary to move through the hierarchy of enforcement.

Included within the hierarchy of enforcement is the use of improvement notices but they are not suitable in all circumstances and so candidates need to be aware of when they can be used and not assume they can be issued for all legislative breaches.

As within previous years, when asked about actions to be taken during non-compliance the best answers were concise, to the point and showed a clear determination in dealing with a situation. This fluency is often helped where candidates have had the opportunity to gain practical experience and shadow food qualified colleagues.

Candidates are asked specific questions and should focus on answering the question and while they should be thorough in response also be succinct. The exam is 20 minutes long and elaboration into areas that have not been questioned may prevent demonstration of knowledge elsewhere.

Knowledge was generally consistent in relation to mandatory particulars on prepacked foods. Some candidates had very good knowledge of legislation relating to more common compositional requirements, Nutrition and Health claims, Beef and Veal labelling and Products Containing Meat. Marks were lost where candidates were not familiar with these pieces of legislation. While compositional legislation and nutrition and health claims are often considered supplementary to the main pieces of legislation used in Food standards, the provisions of these pieces of legislation are likely to be needed in general food standards work.