

Qualifications Framework Examiner's report

Qualifications Framework

L6 Food Coursework Examiner's Report May 2026

General

Since the introduction of the L6 Food transition coursework audit assessment in 2024, I have had the privilege of acting as the Examiner. This guidance reflects the themes that have consistently emerged from examining the coursework over the first two years. It complements the published task guidance and marking criteria and is intended to help candidates, supervisors and employing authorities prepare stronger submissions.

Introduction

The coursework audit assessment is different from the apprenticeship. The apprenticeship demonstrates that the educational standard has been achieved; the CTSI assessment confirms whether the candidate has demonstrated the competence required by the Food Standards Agency for authorisation as a Food Standards Inspector.

One of the clearest observations from the first two years is that candidates who require resubmission rarely lack technical knowledge. More commonly, they have not demonstrated that knowledge through the evidence presented. The examiner can only assess what is contained within the coursework.

General Observations

- Read the whole task before starting. The most common reason marks are lost is because only part of the task has been answered.
- Use the published marking criteria as a final checklist before submission.
- Choose examples that allow you to demonstrate judgement and practical application, not just straightforward compliance.
- Evidence is important. Clear photographs, visit records, certificates of analysis and correspondence all strengthen your coursework.

Task 1 - Food Legislation and Enforcement Bodies

Successful submissions explain how the principal legislation interlinks and how the different enforcement bodies work together. There is no preferred format; reports, essays and well-structured bullet points can all be effective.

Examiner's observations

- This task tends to be answered either very comprehensively or very poorly. Strong candidates explain the legislation in their own words rather than reproducing it.
- Many candidates concentrate on either the legislation or the enforcement bodies, but not both.
- Practical examples help demonstrate genuine understanding.

Task 2 – Food information and labelling

The task requires four products covering the required packaging categories together with an assessment of compliance and appropriate regulatory action.

Examiner's observations

- It is astonishing how many coursework submissions do not include all four required product categories.
- Many candidates appear to rush this task. Clear, legible label photographs are essential to enable the examiner to confirm the accuracy of the submission.
- Annotated labels or a tabular format with a short explanation often works particularly well.
- Products which are more artisan or from smaller companies offer more opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and application than products from large retailers and major manufacturers.
- The examiner is always pleased to see copies of advisory emails or letters to traders because they demonstrate practical experience.
- Finish every product with a clear complies / does not comply conclusion.

Task 3 - Sampling

Demonstrate the complete sampling process from planning to interpretation of results and subsequent action.

Examiner's observations

- Ensure every required sample type is included.
- Explain why each product was selected and how it relates to the sampling programme.
- Marks are available for interpreting certificates of analysis, not just taking the sample.
- If one sample is explained in detail but the others are not, marks are lost because each sample is assessed individually.
- This task tends to suffer from cut and paste errors where for example a sausage becomes cheese. Take time to write an appropriate report for each element.

Task 4 - Detailed Review of One Piece of Food Legislation

Choose legislation that is relevant to current food standards work and explain its practical importance.

Examiner's observations

- The strongest reports focus on legislation that is current, under review or recently amended.
- Interpret guidance rather than simply providing links to it.
- Discuss both the strengths and practical challenges of the legislation.

Task 5 – Routine enforcement work

Demonstrate planning, inspection techniques, evidence gathering and professional judgement.

Examiner's observations

- Explain why the visit was undertaken and the preparation completed beforehand.
- Reference Primary Authority where relevant.
- Good submissions explain why decisions were made, not simply what happened.

Task 6 – Compositional requirements

Assess each product against both compositional standards and general food information requirements.

Examiner's observations

- Tabular presentations often work well for this task.
- Products from smaller manufacturers frequently provide greater opportunity to demonstrate judgement than products from major retailers or manufacturers.
- Assess all nutrition or health claims where relevant.
- Reach a clear compliance decision for every product.

Task 7 - Additional Food Legislation Review

Demonstrate the ability to explain specialist legislation clearly and concisely.

Examiner's observations

- Avoid confusing or rambling explanations.
- Explain legislation concisely in the way you would to a business.
- Focus on practical application rather than extensive research.

Conclusion

Advice for Candidates

- Plan evidence collection throughout the apprenticeship.
- Where a coursework task is based on a training exercise, this should be clearly stated. There is no disadvantage in doing so. However, candidates should not invent the circumstances surrounding an inspection or sampling exercise, as this may affect marks awarded for planning and the overall credibility of the evidence submitted.
- Keep your report concise and focused on the task.
- Explain your reasoning as well as your conclusions.
- Review every task against the marking criteria before submission.

Advice for Supervisors

- Provide opportunities for candidates to experience the full range of food standards work.
- Review portfolios during preparation, not just before submission.
- Encourage candidates to reflect on why decisions were made.

Conclusion

The overwhelming majority of candidates are capable officers who are committed to developing as Food Standards Inspectors. Where coursework requires further work, it is usually because the evidence submitted does not clearly demonstrate the published competencies, rather than because the candidate lacks the necessary knowledge. The strongest coursework submissions are concise, evidence-based and clearly demonstrate professional competence. Candidates who explain how they approached an issue and why they reached their decisions consistently provide the most persuasive evidence. Above all, candidates should remember that assessors can only award marks for evidence that has actually been submitted.

My hope is that these observations, drawn from the first two years of examining, will help candidates produce stronger portfolios, assist supervisors in supporting them effectively and reduce the number of unnecessary resubmissions.