



Course report 2024

Higher Health and Food Technology

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 1,389

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 1,384

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----|------------|------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|-----|
| A | Number of candidates | 274 | Percentage | 19.8 | Cumulative percentage | 19.8 | Minimum mark required | 84 |
| B | Number of candidates | 317 | Percentage | 22.9 | Cumulative percentage | 42.7 | Minimum mark required | 72 |
| C | Number of candidates | 323 | Percentage | 23.3 | Cumulative percentage | 66.0 | Minimum mark required | 60 |
| D | Number of candidates | 239 | Percentage | 17.3 | Cumulative percentage | 83.3 | Minimum mark required | 48 |
| No award | Number of candidates | 231 | Percentage | 16.7 | Cumulative percentage | 100 | Minimum mark required | N/A |

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper covered a broad range of course content, with many candidates performing well.

The question paper performed as expected, with marker's reports and feedback from centres indicating that the paper was accessible to all candidates. The paper gave candidates the opportunity to access marks through the normal style of questioning and good course coverage.

In some cases, candidates' responses lacked the depth and detail required at this level.

Assignment

Both briefs were well received and accessible to all candidates this session. The most popular brief was 'Develop a savoury dish that is high in calcium for a school canteen'.

Markers noted a wide range of marks and quality of responses across both briefs.

In some cases, candidate responses lacked relevant detail in the research sections. However, it was also noted that some research lacked focus which led to lengthy results that could then not be narrowed down.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1(b)

Most candidates performed well in the Dietary Reference Value (DRV) question. Most candidates used an appropriate structure and technique to successfully analyse the diet of a 26-year-old female. The candidates who performed well in this question demonstrated a good nutritional knowledge and were able to apply this knowledge to the context of the question, the 26-year-old-female, and the contribution the meal made to her diet.

Question 1(c)

Many candidates answered the star profile question well. These candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the ratings and the sensory attributes linked to the pasta salad. Many candidates used an appropriate technique to structure responses to this question.

Question 1(d)

Some candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the stages of food product development and could explain stages in relation to the development of a pasta salad.

Question 2(b)

Some candidates answered the marketing techniques question well. They showed a good understanding of each technique and used an appropriate evaluative technique to structure their answer.

Assignment

Section 1(a): exploring the brief

Many candidates performed well in this section by identifying the relevant key issues and providing clear explanations and justifications.

Section 1(b): research

Some candidates carried out clear and focused research that was of a good quality. The techniques used were appropriate, demonstrated correctly and clearly and logically presented. This research allowed these candidates to draw relevant conclusions and points of information and take this forward to the next stage.

Section 3: product testing

Many candidates tested the final product successfully using two different, yet appropriate, testing techniques. These tests were focused, clearly and appropriately presented, whilst producing good quality results.

Section 4(a): evaluation

Many candidates successfully evaluated the food product using the results of the testing. Many candidates used an appropriate technique to structure their answers.

Section 4(b): amendments

Many candidates successfully described the amendments that could be made to the food product and explained the link to the investigation or results of testing.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 2(c)

Candidates' knowledge of organisations that can support consumers when purchasing food was poor and many candidates were unable to fully explain the role of the Trading Standards Department and/or the Environmental Health Department. Many candidates were unable to access the full range of marks for this question.

Question 3(b)

Many candidates were unable to explain the functional properties of eggs and fat in a baked product.

Question 3(c)

Some candidates' knowledge of the interrelationship between Vitamin A, C and E and calcium, phosphorus and vitamin D was poor and therefore they were unable to access the full allocation of marks.

Question 4(a)

Many candidates were unable to evaluate how ethical issues affect consumer's food choice. Knowledge of sustainability and genetically modified food was poor with many candidates being unable to provide accurate facts about these ethical issues.

Question 4(b)

Candidates' knowledge of food additives was poor, and they were unable to explain how additives can benefit a manufacturer. As a result, many candidates were unable to access the full allocation of marks.

Question 5(a)

Many candidates were unable to evaluate technological developments for the consumer. They did not demonstrate appropriate knowledge of each development, ultra heat-treated products, and functional foods.

Assignment

Section 2(a): describing the product

Many candidates did not provide an appropriate description of the food product. Many recipes lacked detail in the ingredients list, with many candidates not providing metric quantities for ingredients. Many candidates did not provide an accurate method.

Section 2(b): justifying an appropriate food product based on information generated from the research and relevance to the brief

Many candidates did not fully justify the features, ingredients and cooking method(s). They did not provide a link to the research and instead provided opinion. In some cases, they

repeated previous justifications for other features, ingredients and cooking method(s). Some candidates also provided a feature or ingredient that was an aspect of the brief.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres must use the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding information in the course specification on the [Health and Food Technology subject page](#) on SQA's website to prepare candidates for the question paper. Teachers and lecturers can use the course specification as a planning tool when delivering the course. Candidates can also use the course specification to help them with revision.

It is advisable that candidates have an opportunity to complete an exam-style assessment under timed conditions.

Assessing candidates' knowledge at several stages of the course is recommended and candidates should have the opportunity to practice exam-style questions regularly.

It is recommended that teachers and lecturers support candidates by demonstrating the most appropriate ways to structure answers for each of the command words. This should be reinforced throughout the course.

Evidence from this year's question paper suggests that candidates' knowledge could improve in some areas of course content, particularly within the Contemporary Food Issues area of the course. Centres must ensure that enough time is spent on the delivery of all areas of the course and ensure that candidates are given opportunity to practice exam-style questions on all of these areas.

Candidates must know each of the consumer organisations and the role they play in supporting the consumer.

Centres should ensure that candidates can apply their knowledge of functional properties to a range of food products.

For the Dietary Reference Value question, candidates must ensure that they provide a clear impact of the nutrient intake on the individual within the question and relate it to the person's age, stage and circumstances. Candidates should not simply state the function of the nutrient.

Candidates must not offer an alternative food item or meal. Candidates must only analyse the ingredients and foods within the meal provided.

Teachers and lecturers should teach candidates to analyse three different nutrients and to use an appropriate technique to do so. If candidates provide more than three evaluations, then their answers lack the depth required at Higher level.

Within the star profile question, candidates should ensure that the fact provided is detailed, demonstrating a clear understanding of the reason for the rating. Again, this year, some candidates were providing incomplete facts and therefore their responses were not fully

evaluative. For example, some candidates did not state why the colour of the pasta salad was rated '4' for colour or 'high' for colour.

Assignment

Centres must ensure that candidates are not given too much scaffolding and support when completing the assignment.

Teachers and lecturers must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that the evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work.

It is the responsibility of centres to ensure that candidates complete the assignment in the correct time frame and do not spend more than four hours writing up the research and any longer than one hour to complete the evaluations.

The assignment must be completed using the candidate workbook provided by SQA. Candidates must not use any other format.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that all candidate evidence has been submitted to SQA and this includes the three photographs required for Higher Health and Food Technology. If parts of the assignment are missing, including photographs, then candidates may not be able to access all the marks.

For section 2(a) candidates' recipes must include metric measurements and all ingredients used in the production of the product must be listed. The recipe method must be accurate and allow the product to be replicated with identical results. Portion sizes, cooking methods, cooking times and bakeware sizes should be included within the recipe.

In section 2(b) justifications should be clearly linked to research. These justifications should not be repeats for each ingredient, feature and cooking method and should draw on a variety of different research points.

When it comes to research it is not good practice for centres to allow candidates to carry out almost identical research or investigations. The layout, focus of research including questions and results should be different for each candidate.

Although it is not unusual for candidates to use the same research technique, for example an interview, the questions, layout and results must be different.

Percentages should not be used to summarise data; individual results must be provided.

In section 4(b) candidates should ensure that any improvement, adaptation or variation is clearly described. For example, instead of stating 'add more vegetables' the candidate should describe the quantity and type of vegetable '25g of sweetcorn and 50g of peppers will be added'. For each of the improvements, adaptations or variations, the candidate must provide an explanation as to why each one is appropriate, linked to the needs of the brief and the information gathered in the investigations or the results of testing.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).