Course report 2024

National 5 Practical Cake Craft

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:   1,283

Number of resulted entries in 2024:   1,253

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	187	Percentage	14.9	Cumulative percentage	14.9	Minimum mark required	76
B	Number of candidates	353	Percentage	28.2	Cumulative percentage	43.1	Minimum mark required	67
C	Number of candidates	332	Percentage	26.5	Cumulative percentage	69.6	Minimum mark required	58
D	Number of candidates	248	Percentage	19.8	Cumulative percentage	89.4	Minimum mark required	49
No award	Number of candidates	133	Percentage	10.6	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 largely performed as expected. Feedback from the marking team suggested that the question paper was fair in terms of course coverage and overall level of demand. Some questions were accessible to all candidates while others were more challenging. Most candidates attempted all three questions and completed the paper in the allocated time.

Assignment

Feedback from the marking team suggested that most candidates completed all stages of the assignment. Most candidates clearly demonstrated that the design illustration, resources, and plan of work was carried out, as required, prior to completing the practical activity.

The assignment performed as expected and there were no adjustments made to the grade boundary.

Practical activity

Performance in the practical activity was in line with previous years and the assessment performed as expected.

Feedback from verifiers suggested that most cakes presented for verification were prepared to a high standard, a few cakes were outstanding. Candidates had a good understanding of finishing techniques and the marks available.

The verification team reported that most centres used the 'National 5 Practical Cake Craft: practical activity recording sheet', to record candidate marks for the practical activity. Most centres provided detailed comments in the assessment recording sheet against the marks awarded. This provided evidence that the assessor had a clear understanding of how to apply the marking instructions.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper
Most candidates attempted all questions in the question paper with good performance being noted in question 1(a), question 1(d), question 1(e)(ii), question 2(a), question 2(b) and question 2(c). The candidates who gained the highest marks were able to respond to 'explain' and 'evaluate' questions and provide a developed explanation.

Assignment
Section 1(a) Design illustration
Design illustrations were completed to a very high standard. Candidate's designs demonstrated individuality within the design brief. Most candidates provided a detailed drawing which clearly included the occasion, cake type, coatings, size of cake and cake board and finishing techniques to be demonstrated.

Good practice was demonstrated when the illustration was coloured in their chosen colour scheme and completed on a separate A3 sheet of paper. This allowed candidates the space to provide a detailed drawing of their cake and showcase their chosen finishing techniques.

Section 1(b) Resources
Most candidates were able to choose an appropriate recipe and provide a justification for their chosen recipe. Most candidates were able to identify the required equipment for their finishing techniques and describe their use.

Section 1(c) Plan of work
Plans of work were consistently completed well. Most candidates created a plan of work that was correctly sequenced and provided adequate detail as to how they planned to make their cake.

Practical activity
Most candidates performed well in the practical activity, candidates continue to demonstrate a wide range of themes and finishing techniques for their cake.

Most candidates took the opportunity to demonstrate five finishing decoration techniques. This allowed the candidates to maximise the marks that could be awarded.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Candidates found this component more demanding. Questions that required candidates to either 'explain' or 'evaluate' their response were poorly completed, with some candidates achieving few marks in these areas.

Question 1(b)

A few candidates did not attempt this question. Candidates were asked to explain how to ensure good results when using the melting method to make a gingerbread loaf. Some candidates identified valid points, but then gave no explanation as how this would achieve a good result. Most candidates were not aware of two ways to ensure good results. A few candidates misinterpreted this question and discussed melting chocolate.

Question 1(c)

Most candidates were unable to identify another test, other than skewer test. Many candidates who correctly identified the skewer test were using forks and knives and could not be awarded marks.

Question 3(a)

Candidates were asked to explain three steps to ensure good results when making a whisked sponge. Few candidates achieved three marks. Many candidates identified a valid step, but then gave no explanation.

A few candidates discussed creaming.

Question 3(b)

Candidates were asked to evaluate the use of fresh cream as a filling for a gateau. Candidates should have provided three responses which included a fact, judgement, and opinion. While many candidates could demonstrate a valid fact about fresh cream, they did not then give a judgement and a consequence that related back to the question about its suitability as a filling for a gateau. Only a few candidates achieved three valid answers. Many candidates achieved only one evaluation.

Assignment

Section 1

A few candidates did not include a suitable recipe. The recipe they included was handwritten and there were omissions to the recipe or the method. Candidates do not need to write out the recipe, they can include a printed recipe.

A few candidates included a recipe that did not reflect the quantities of the cake they had chosen. For example, they included a recipe for a 15 cm cake but were producing a 20 cm cake or a two-tiered cake.

A few candidates listed all the equipment required to make the cake. This is not necessary; they should only be listing the details of the equipment required for the finishing decoration techniques.

A few candidates did not give enough detail in their list of equipment. For example, they stated 'cutter' rather than '1 cm star cutter' or 'crimper' rather than 'heart crimper'.

A few candidates did not give a detailed description as to how each piece of equipment was to be used on their cake. For example, they stated that they would use it, 'to crimp' rather than, 'I will use the wave crimper to crimp the edge of the cake board to ensure a uniform crimp is achieved'.

In the plan of work a few candidates omitted protecting the tin before baking and did not specify that cakes should be cooled completely or cold before storing.

A few candidates did not specify the number of embossing or commercial cutters that they would complete on their design illustration.

Section 2
Many candidates struggled to link their evaluation to the given criteria and their responses were statements rather than evaluations.

Practical activity

A few candidates did not allow sufficient space on their cake board for their finishing technique, such as embossing or texturing, and covered their technique with the cake. As the whole of the technique executed was no longer visible, no marks could be awarded.

A few candidates were not aware of the difference between embossing and crimping, as candidates identified that they were crimping when they were embossing, which led to marks being amended during verification.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres must ensure that candidates are well prepared for the question paper by ensuring that they know how to respond to each command word.

Teachers, lecturers, and candidates can access specimen question papers, past papers and marking instructions on the Practical Cake Craft subject page on SQA's website to help them understand the level of response required and how the paper is marked.

Centres should recommend special arrangements for candidates with illegible handwriting.

Assignment

All components of stage 1 of the assignment must be completed before candidates start to make the cake. Design illustrations, resources and plans of work must not be retrospective. If there is any part of the plan done retrospectively, candidates will not be awarded any marks.

Candidates should complete the design illustration, resources, and plan of work independently under examination conditions. No templates should be provided. The design illustration can be completed on a separate blank A4 or A3 sheet of paper. This is good practice, as it allows more space for the illustration.

Candidates with illegible handwriting should be encouraged to type the information into their workbook. Candidates can type the information for design illustration and then stick the information on to the design illustration sheet, this will make it easier for the candidate to follow and for the marker to identify the required information.

Candidates should identify the shape of their cake and cake board on their illustration. Many candidates omit this detail as they think it is implied by their illustration.

Candidates should refer to coating in their assignment as sugarpaste and not fondant.

In section B 'resources', candidates should only list the equipment required for the finishing decoration techniques.

Candidates should use metric measurements for recipes, cake tins and cake boards, not imperial.

Candidates should include the recipe and the method they will use to make their chosen cake. The recipe should be for the exact quantities required for the size of their chosen cake or cakes. Some candidates included recipes that do not reflect the quantity of cake required for their chosen size of cake. The recipe does not need to be written or typed by the candidate, as some candidates made important omissions when copying out a recipe.

Candidates can include a photocopy of an appropriate recipe and attach it to their workbook.

Candidates' original design illustration should be photocopied, and the original retained to send to SQA. A photocopy of the design illustration should be given to the candidate for the practical activity. This will prevent the candidate altering the design illustration, making it retrospective. A scanned copy of the design illustration is not acceptable, only the original design illustration should be sent to SQA.

Colour photographs should be provided. A few centres submitted black and white photographs. Candidates from these centres could not access the marks for colour balance or any other evaluative comment provided that mentioned the colours in the candidates' final design.

Practical activity

Centres should encourage candidates to demonstrate five finishing decoration techniques to maximise the marks that can be awarded. Candidates must select two of their five techniques from crimping, modelling, and piping. These techniques can be awarded up to 9 marks each. A further three techniques, which can be awarded up to 4 marks each, should be selected from embossing, stencilling, texturing, and use of commercial aids or cutters.

Candidates may choose to incorporate more than five finishing decoration techniques in their cake, but techniques carried out in addition to the five techniques they have selected for assessment will not be awarded marks. Candidates who choose to incorporate their chosen 4-mark technique more than once, should be aware that the whole technique will be marked together according to the criteria in the marking instructions, not the best of the technique.

The same applies to 9-mark techniques. Some candidates are attempting three different examples of piping rather than two to gain 9 marks, however, sometimes one example is poorly executed, and this is considered when awarding marks for the technique.

Candidates can choose which type of cake they wish to make. However, centres should make candidates aware that as the cake must be stored and kept for verification; this may limit their choice in the type of cake they choose to bake, and coatings they apply.

Some centres are providing candidates with two cake boards. This gives candidates more space to demonstrate finishing techniques such as eight repetitions or texturing equivalent to 25% of the top of the cake. If a technique is not clearly visible, it cannot be awarded marks.

Centres should make candidates aware of the difference between simple, straightforward, and detailed models to allow them to maximise the marks that can be awarded. Visiting verifiers were aware that a few candidates had identified that they were texturing on a model and wished both texturing and modelling to be marked. Centres should make candidates aware that if they make detailed models, additional techniques such as texturing or embossing can be added to the model. The added detail on the model will be marked accordingly.

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](#).