



Course report 2024

National 5 Practical Cookery

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 in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 7,460

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 8,072

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade.

A	Number of candidates	2,339	Percentage	29.0	Cumulative percentage	29.0	Minimum mark required	73
B	Number of candidates	2,440	Percentage	30.2	Cumulative percentage	59.2	Minimum mark required	63
C	Number of candidates	1,901	Percentage	23.6	Cumulative percentage	82.8	Minimum mark required	53
D	Number of candidates	887	Percentage	11.0	Cumulative percentage	93.7	Minimum mark required	43
No award	Number of candidates	505	Percentage	6.3	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 more statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

All components performed as expected.

Question paper

This year's paper was considered fair in terms of course coverage and overall level of demand, with a range of questions suitable for both A and C-level candidates at National 5.

Assignment

All centres used the published SQA recipes to carry out the assignment.

This component was marked by SQA and required candidates to write a logical plan of work, requisition minimal equipment and give service details on how they would prepare and serve the three recipes.

Candidate performance in the assignment was maintained at the same level as last session.

Practical activity

All centres used the published SQA recipes to carry out the practical activity.

The practical activity was of similar demand to previous years. Candidates were generally well prepared for the practical activity and achieved slightly lower marks than last year. For some, this was as a result of lack of urgency when it came to service and dishes not being served on time, which resulted in service marks not being awarded.

During verification visits it was evident that centres had worked extremely hard to ensure candidates were well prepared for this assessment component.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

There was a considerable improvement in candidates' average marks this year compared to 2023.

Question 1(a): most candidates were able to access a range of marks by linking to current dietary advice.

Questions 3(c), (d) and (e): many candidates answered these questions well.

Assignment

There was a noticeable improvement in the number of candidates attempting all three sections of the assignment.

Practical activity

Although the average mark was slightly lower than that of 2023, the overall marks submitted for candidates were still high, with most candidates performing well.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

This year there were a number of questions where candidates did not perform well. For some candidates, the knowledge was there, but the technique of answering these types of questions was not.

Surprisingly, questions linking to practical activities such as describing boiling, testing for readiness, and rubbing in were not done well. Candidates seemed to have trouble articulating how each of these skills should be carried out. Most candidates did not achieve any marks for questions 1(c) or 1(d).

Pureeing also seemed to cause some confusion as many candidates did not even attempt to identify the correct piece of equipment to use for this process.

Other questions that candidates found demanding were:

- ◆ Question 1(b): many candidates did not achieve any marks for this question.
- ◆ Question 2(c): many candidates could not explain the sustainable ingredients identified. The few candidates that did explain the ingredients obtained marks in the majority of cases by explaining the locally grown onions.
- ◆ Question 2(d): candidates could describe how ingredients should be stored but they could not explain fully why each method of storage was suitable.

Assignment

This year candidates wrote the time plans in a range of sequences. However, many candidates copied the recipes word-for-word in the time plan which is not good practice.

Practical activity

Although the average mark was slightly lower than that of 2023, there were no obvious barriers or areas of difficulty identified in this year's recipes. However, some candidates did not leave adequate time to cook their vegetable fritters which resulted in them being served uncooked or not at all, which impacted service details and was then reflected in the marking.

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.

Categories such as preparation techniques, safe and hygienic storage of food, and sustainability are all topics that candidates should be taught, and can appear in the question paper, year on year.

Please note, the specimen question paper or any of the past papers must not be used in their entirety as a centre assessment for candidates and later submitted to SQA as evidence. These papers are freely available on SQA's website and could have been accessed by candidates, so are not deemed as appropriate evidence. When creating prelim assessment papers, centres are advised to use three different papers to ensure a valid paper. If this advice is not followed, the evidence cannot be used for exceptional circumstances purposes if the occasion arises.

Assignment

Centres should allow an appropriate amount of teaching and learning time to prepare candidates for the demands of writing a logical time plan and ensuring that dishes are served at the required time and at the correct temperature.

The time plan is not only an aid to help candidates organise themselves during the practical activity (essential tasks), but also there to remind them to carry out those activities which are often forgotten (desirable tasks), for example re-weighing of prepared ingredients (where required), clean as you go, tasting and seasoning, pre-heating oven and service dishes (where required). These are all tasks that many candidates forget to do during the practical activity. The time plan is a reminder that time must be made for these tasks during the practical activity and is not a re-write of the recipes. By including these activities, candidates will be able to access all marks available.

When completing the equipment requisition section of the assignment, it is essential that candidates write some equipment for all three recipes to be able to access any marks in this section. Also, candidates must use the correct terminology when listing equipment, for example cutting board is not appropriate terminology for a chopping board.

For service details, candidates must ensure they serve the food as detailed in the recipe. If the recipe states a hot, clean dish, then this must be specified in the service details. The candidate should also make it clear where the garnish or decoration will be located, using a drawing or description. The marker and assessor must be able to visualise what the finished dish will look like, for the candidate to achieve the marks.

Centres must send the originals of the assignment to SQA for marking, not a photocopied time plan, as these were difficult for the marking team to mark especially if they were originally written in pencil.

It is essential that all candidates are given the opportunity to amend time plans and service details once they have been submitted to SQA. This is to ensure they are workable, and the candidate is not disadvantaged prior to carrying out the practical activity. If a candidate requires a centre-devised time plan, they should be given adequate time to become familiar with it. The candidate should not be given it at the point of starting the implementing stage.

Centres are reminded that candidates must not have access to an electronic copy of the recipes when completing this assessment component, this is clearly stated in the 'Instructions for centres for the assignment and practical activity' document. It must also be completed in one sitting over a 1 hour and 45 minutes period, unless a candidate is entitled to extra time.

Practical activity

Centres are reminded that the recipes should only be given to candidates on three occasions:

- ◆ during the one permitted practice of each dish
- ◆ during the planning stage
- ◆ during the implementing stage

Candidates should not have access to the recipes on any other occasion. Under no circumstance should candidates be given access to the Practical Cookery Understanding Standards presentation on SQA's secure site, as this is to aid the marking of the assessment and is not for candidate use.

Centres are reminded that candidates are only permitted to practice each of the dishes once.

If a candidate decides they cannot continue with the implementing stage, they cannot be given another opportunity, unless on health grounds. They can only be given the opportunity to undertake it on one occasion.

If you are unsure of any of these points, then please contact SQA.

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](#).