



Course report 2024

National 5 Practical Woodworking

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.

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: 7,951

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 8,366

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	2,610	Percentage	31.2	Cumulative percentage	31.2	Minimum mark required	70
B	Number of candidates	2,444	Percentage	29.2	Cumulative percentage	69.4	Minimum mark required	60
C	Number of candidates	1,797	Percentage	21.5	Cumulative percentage	81.9	Minimum mark required	50
D	Number of candidates	894	Percentage	10.7	Cumulative percentage	92.6	Minimum mark required	40
No award	Number of candidates	621	Percentage	7.4	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 performed as expected. Candidates were able to access all questions in the paper. The marking team noted that candidates displayed a lack of knowledge for common materials, joints, tools and processes taken directly from the course specification and a lack of preparation in responding to exam-style questions and specific command words.

Despite some feedback suggesting that the question paper was too difficult and inaccessible for candidates, the 2024 cohort performed better, achieving a greater mean mark than the 2019 cohort.

Practical activity

The practical activity performed as expected. All centres used the practical activity assessment task for session 2023–24 from SQA's secure website, which was the only valid assessment.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

Areas that candidates performed well in

Most candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of practical woodworking and answered the following questions well:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Question 1(k) | Many candidates were able to clearly describe two environmental benefits of using waste material, often reflecting on good workshop practice in their answers. |
| Question 2(g) | Many candidates were able to identify the ratio of the haunched mortise and tenon joint that would be cut to 1:3 thickness. |
| Question 3(a)(iii) | Many candidates were able to identify and state the name of a mallet and sawing board from a diagram. |
| Question 3(c) | Most candidates were able to clearly describe how to manufacture the heart using the given tools. Although many candidates were unable to name the tools in question 3(b) they used the labels 'tool A' and 'tool B' when attempting this question. Many candidates achieved full marks with a sketched response only. |
| Question 3(d) | Many candidates were able to clearly describe what can be done to minimise the chance of splintering to the underside of the wood when drilling. |
| Question 3(e) | Many candidates were able to clearly state two safety checks carried out on the jigsaw. |
| Question 3(h) | Some candidates were able to explain why the wood had split when chiselling — clearly identifying that the joint would need to be isolated first. This was the most attempted question in the paper and candidates seemed confident in answering the question due to the quality of graphic and type of question. |
| Question 3(j) | Many candidates were able to describe two stages in cutting a stopped housing joint. Many candidates used sketches to support their answer with those who did, generally achieved a higher mark. |
| Question 3(k)(i) | Many candidates were able to identify the sash cramp from the given diagram. |
| Question 3(k)(ii) | Many candidates were able to state two safety checks that would be undertaken immediately after gluing and cramping. |
| Question 3(m)(i) | Many candidates were able to state one environmental advantage of using chipboard instead of pine. |
| Question 3(m)(ii) | Many candidates were able to state one disadvantage of using chipboard instead of pine. Most candidates successfully made reference to the strength or durability of the materials. |
| Question 4(d) | Most candidates were able to state at least three safety issues with the woodturning lathe shown. |

The candidates who gained the highest marks were able to respond to 'explain' questions, showing clear cause and effect in their answers and responding with the level of depth required for such a question.

Practical activity

Most candidates completed the practical element to a very high standard.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Most candidates were unable to identify basic woodworking materials, joints, tools or processes. Where candidates had to give more extensive responses to questions, they were unable to provide the detail required to achieve all available marks.

Some candidates' responses to 'explain' and 'describe' questions lacked sufficient detail to gain marks. Candidates had the opportunity to use sketches to assist them, candidates who did use sketches to aid their responses generally achieved more marks.

A few candidates failed to attempt a single question, leaving their question paper completely blank. Other candidates had a number of no responses across their paper, failing to attempt even the most accessible questions such as multiple-choice questions or state-type questions.

Candidates found the following questions demanding:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Question 1(c) | Most candidates were unable to calculate the total length of timber required to make the frame using information gained from the working drawing. Some candidates incorrectly lifted a single measurement from the diagram. |
| Question 1(d) | Most candidates were unable to identify a tape measure as an alternative measuring tool to a steel rule. |
| Question 1(e) | Most candidates were unable to identify how the frame could be marked out to reduce waste. Candidates who gave a sketched response were more likely to achieve a mark than those who gave a written response only. |
| Question 1(f) | Most candidates were unable to identify a sliding bevel as the adjustable marking tool used to mark out the mitre angle. |
| Question 1(g) | Most candidates were unable to state the angle based on the working drawing. Many candidates incorrectly stated the angle to be 60 degrees. |
| Question 1(h) | Most candidates were unable to identify the cramping device. |
| Question 1(j) | Most candidates were unable to identify the type of fixing. |
| Question 2(a) | Most candidates could not fully explain why the frame was rebated before cutting into sections. Many candidates incorrectly referred to the benefits of rebate joints while others stated that it was 'easier' or 'quicker' to do this without fully explaining why this would be beneficial. |
| Question 2(b) | Many candidates were unable to describe the function of the parts of the rebate plane. |
| Question 2(c) | Many candidates were unable to identify the process of scraping. Some candidates incorrectly identified this process as 'stopping'. |

Question 2(e)	Most candidates could not fully explain the advantages of using stain as a finish instead of varnish. Many candidates presented knowledge of finishes and knew of the comparison but were unable to fully explain the advantages. Some candidates achieved a single mark due to cause and effect being given across both advantages.
Question 3(a)(i)	Most candidates were unable to identify the joint in the diagram as a haunched mortise and tenon joint.
Question 3(a)(iv)	Most candidates were unable to fully explain why a haunched mortise and tenon joint would be used for the corner of the frame. Many candidates correctly stated that the joint would be stronger but failed to explain why.
Question 3(f)	Most candidates were unable to identify two hand tools used to form the curved edge. Many candidates correctly identified a coping saw but most candidates were unable to identify a spoke shave.
Question 3(g)	Most candidates were unable to identify the cutting gauge from the diagram. Many candidates incorrectly identified this tool as a marking gauge.
Question 3(i)	Most candidates were unable to identify the bull-nose plane from the diagram.
Question 3(n)	Most candidates were unable to describe the benefits of using wood obtained from sustainable sources. Many candidates incorrectly stated that fewer trees would be cut down or incorrectly stated that the wood would be stronger from such sources.
Question 4(a)(i)	Most candidates were unable to identify the line type as a centre line.
Question 4(a)(ii)	Most candidates were unable to identify the symbol as a diameter symbol.

Practical activity

A few candidates produced log books which were incomplete or did not meet the standard.

A few candidates used machines, for example, mortise machine, or a scroll saw to cut joints that are not specified by SQA in the coursework assessment task.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres and candidates should refer to the section of the course specification that lists topic areas and the breakdown of relevant marks for each area to identify the full breadth of knowledge candidates can be expected to show in the question paper. In addition, it is essential that all centres and candidates are aware that any content found within the course specification can appear in a question paper, even if not used in the practical activity. It is important to highlight that all content in the question paper column of the 'Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment' table in the course specification can be sampled in the question paper. The course specification can be found on the [Practical Woodworking subject page](#) on SQA's website.

Candidates do not have to physically use a tool or complete a process to be asked about this topic area in the question paper. Centres must ensure that candidates are aware of all content found within the course specification, regardless of whether the centre uses or owns these tools, materials or processes. It is important to highlight that in the question paper all contexts cannot be workshop based.

If centres deem certain tools or processes to be unsafe for candidate use then they should provide other means for candidates to gain this knowledge, such as practical demonstrations, online tutorials or demonstrations, or annotated images.

Candidates should ensure that they read each question fully before responding.

Centres should encourage candidates to support their response with sketches where appropriate. Some candidates found it difficult to articulate their responses fully — using a sketch could help them to convey or add clarity to their response. Sketched only responses can achieve full marks if sufficient detail is included.

Centres should remind candidates that they can use pencil to construct a sketch but, once they have finalised it, they must go over the sketch with blue or black ink.

Centres are reminded that the question paper can be completed electronically. Illegible handwriting was a consistent issue. Instances were also recorded where candidates had responded in different languages to English and would benefit from exam support organised by the centre.

Centres must appropriately prepare candidates for the question paper by utilising classroom time to suitably revise course content. Prelims can be a useful preparation for candidates, but centres must be fully aware of the standards of the exam to make this a comparable assessment. This will help to reinforce candidates' knowledge and understanding of the topic areas as well as good exam technique.

Centres should prepare candidates by revising command words and the potential responses generated by them. Single-word responses may gain marks where the command word is 'state' or 'name'. However, where the command word is 'describe' or 'explain', a single-word

response or series of bullet points will not gain marks. In these instances, a fuller response, typically formed as a sentence, to convey the description or explanation is required. It would be good practice for centres to use example questions and to discuss expected responses based on agreed marking instructions. However, centres should not rely solely on past papers as revision materials and exam preparation as these will not adequately cover the full content of the course.

Practical activity

Candidates should give time and consideration to the first two areas of the log book as they are worth 10 marks. The assessor completes the third area, 'safe working procedures', which is worth 5 marks. If candidates do not get the opportunity to fix naturally occurring machine tool, power tool, or tool care and maintenance issues, assessors can present them with scenarios. For example, an assessor could give a candidate a working drawing of a mortise and tenon joint, and ask them to set a mortise gauge accordingly, or present them with a blunt tool to repair.

Centres are reminded that candidates should write their own statements. If cohorts have the same statements or have copied statements from SQA's exemplar log books, these statements cannot be awarded marks.

Centres must complete mark sheets to allow verification to take place, confirmed when the verifier makes initial contact. Assessor comments on the mark sheets are important to explain why a candidate was awarded marks.

Centres must assess 'measuring and marking out' before candidates cut joints. This gives candidates the opportunity to take remedial action and cut correctly measured and marked-out joints.

Centres must not award full marks for 'independence of work' if the practical activity is incomplete. The mark a candidate receives must reflect both the quantity and the quality of the work they produce. Candidates cannot receive full marks for incomplete work.

Centres must not alter the lengths or widths of material under any circumstances. Centres should source the material thickness specified in the assessment task. Centres can change the thickness only by exception, and they must amend the working drawings to take account of this. If centres do not amend the working drawings, candidates cannot gain any marks for 'measuring and marking', as all the sizes will be wrong relative to the thickness of the material used.

Centres must provide candidates with working drawings without any alterations (except where changes to thickness are necessary), and they cannot give candidates additional drawings, dimensions, or information.

Candidates cannot use machines to cut joints (unless specified by SQA in the coursework assessment task).

Teachers and lecturers should read the 'instructions for teachers and lecturers' section of the practical activity coursework assessment task carefully every year, as this can change from task to task.

When making assessment judgements on 'application of finish', assessors must consider the standard expected at National 5 level.

Candidates should take care when choosing an appropriate finish to avoid blemishes such as:

- ◆ runs that are visible
- ◆ evidence of raised grain
- ◆ an accumulation of wax
- ◆ brush marks that can be seen
- ◆ uneven staining

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](#).