



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Practical Cookery
Level(s)	Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The majority of candidates made very good use of the preparation time, weighing ingredients where appropriate and setting out their work area. Some centres did not give candidates the necessary guidance in the use of the preparation time, and candidates were disadvantaged.

Appropriate protective clothing was worn by the majority of candidates, and hair was pinned back, and jewellery and nail varnish were removed.

Refrigerators were used appropriately by the majority of candidates, and separate chopping boards were available in most centres for the preparation of raw meat and vegetables.

Knife skills demonstrated were appropriate for the level being assessed.

Some Intermediate 1 candidates found it difficult to work at the pace necessary to ensure the lasagne was in the oven for the correct time.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- ◆ The majority of Intermediate 2 candidates used short, focused statements in their time plan and did not rewrite the recipe.
- ◆ The majority of candidates refrigerated perishable foods correctly.
- ◆ Where separate chopping boards were available, candidates used them effectively to help prevent cross-contamination.
- ◆ The majority of candidates anchored chopping boards.
- ◆ A large number of candidates displayed excellent cooker control.
- ◆ At both Intermediate 1 and 2 the majority of candidates served all dishes within the time allowed and completed washing up.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Intermediate 1

The assignment was well received by centres and candidates. A number of candidates experienced difficulty in the following areas:

- ◆ Writing time plans with all the necessary personal and food hygiene points.
- ◆ Coring the apple.
- ◆ Finely chopping vegetables.
- ◆ Washing up in clean, hot water and drying with a clean, dry towel.
- ◆ Preparing vegetables quickly and accurately.
- ◆ Using the grill to prepare the Melba toast.
- ◆ Heating serving dishes.
- ◆ Tasting and seasoning dishes.

Intermediate 2

On the whole the assignment was well received by centres and candidates. A few candidates experienced difficulty in the following areas:

- ◆ Refreshing and storing cooked rice appropriately.
- ◆ Judging the timing for the addition of the pear to the tart.
- ◆ Serving the Pear and Ginger Tart with individuality and flair.
- ◆ Tasting and seasoning dishes prior to service.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Only ingredients stated in the recipe can be used. If ingredients need to be changed for dietary or religious reasons, this must be discussed with SQA as detailed in the Practical Assignment Centre Instructions.

Candidates who do not produce a workable time plan must be given one by the centre and awarded marks for the time plan they submitted. Candidates must not undertake this assignment with time plans that will not allow them to complete the assignment in the time allowed.

Time plans

- ◆ Time plans must not be a re-write of the recipe. A large number of Intermediate 1 candidates are still rewriting the recipe instead of using short statements in their time plans.
- ◆ Short statements referring to the recipe stages can be sufficient in most cases.
- ◆ Time slots should be no less than 10 minutes,+ and must be governed by the tasks being undertaken.
- ◆ Important points could be highlighted with capital letters or a highlighter pen.
- ◆ Hand washing must be included at the start of the time plan.
- ◆ Insert hand washing at appropriate times, eg after handling raw meat, eggs etc.
- ◆ 'Clean as you go' (CAYG) must be included at regular intervals.
- ◆ Ensure preheating of oven/grill is included.
- ◆ Ensure heating/warming of plates is included.
- ◆ At Intermediate 2 diagrams would be very useful as part of the Service Details, particularly for the course being served as four portions.
- ◆ Best practice would be for teachers to cross-mark planning booklets to ensure consistency throughout the centre.
- ◆ It is important to show evidence of how the assessment decision has been reached.
- ◆ Centres must ensure the time plans provided by them allow the assignment to be completed in the time.

Preparation time

- ◆ All perishable foods should be stored in the refrigerator until required during the assignment time.
- ◆ All tins should be opened.

- ◆ Vegetables can be portioned to a size a little larger than required to allow pupils to weigh during the assignment. This reduces waste.
- ◆ Vegetables can be peeled during preparation time if indicated in the list of ingredients.
- ◆ Ingredients measured during preparation time should be labelled to prevent confusion during the carrying out of the assignment.
- ◆ Perishable foods must be covered, labelled and placed in a fridge during preparation time.
- ◆ Ovens must be turned on during the assignment but can be preheated during the preparation time if they are required within a short time of the assignment commencing.
- ◆ Plates for the course served as four portions can be garnished/decorated in the preparation time.

Carrying out the assignment

- ◆ Recipes must be followed in the order they have been written in.
- ◆ Candidates could use a pencil, pen or highlighter to mark off the time plan and/or recipes as tasks are completed.
- ◆ Tasks should be carried out in the order written in the recipe.
- ◆ For safety reasons, chopping boards should be anchored to the work top with safety mats or damp paper towels.
- ◆ For safety reasons vegetable and cook's knives should be sharp.
- ◆ It is good practice to have suitable table-top containers/bins for vegetable peelings rather than paper towels.
- ◆ Candidates must re-weigh vegetables after preparation to ensure they use the correct weight or volume.
- ◆ For safety reasons, candidates must clear their chopping boards to a mise-en-place/separate tray/plate before preparing the next product.
- ◆ Candidates should be taught when it is appropriate to use a vegetable knife and when to use a cook's knife.
- ◆ Use of a garlic press is not appropriate for finely chopped garlic.
- ◆ Sweating of vegetables must be completed with the lid on.
- ◆ The use of a refrigerator should be encouraged for relaxing pastry and storing perishable foods until required.
- ◆ When rice is refreshed for later use, it should be refrigerated as it is a high-risk commodity.
- ◆ Hands must be washed after handling raw eggs, chicken or meat.
- ◆ Oil could have been measured into pots in preparation time.
- ◆ With the exception of the courgette, ingredients for the lasagne sauce could have been measured into the same container during preparation time (step 6).
- ◆ Hand-held electric mixers can be used for creaming sponges.
- ◆ Candidates must be encouraged to taste and season dishes hygienically throughout the Course so that it becomes second nature in the Practical Assignment.
- ◆ Garnishing and decorating skills should be developed, and individuality encouraged.
- ◆ Dishes served as four portions must show individuality and flair.
- ◆ Candidates can be given time prompts every 20 minutes and reminded of the appropriate serving times.
- ◆ Dishes can be served five minutes either side of serving time.
- ◆ Additional foodstuffs should be available in the kitchen in case food or dishes are spoiled by candidates.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2012	6897
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	6620
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 70				
A	31.8%	31.8%	2103	60
B	42.4%	74.2%	2807	50
C	19.0%	93.1%	1256	40
D	3.0%	96.2%	201	35
No award	3.8%	100.0%	253	-

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2012	5732
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	5936
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	54.7%	54.7%	3247	79
B	28.4%	83.1%	1686	67
C	12.0%	95.1%	711	55
D	1.7%	96.8%	100	49
No award	3.2%	100.0%	192	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.