



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Practical Cookery
Level	Intermediate 1, 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 are still rewriting the recipe in the time plan.
- ◆ The majority of candidates made good use of the preparation time, weighing all ingredients and collecting all equipment.
- ◆ There was good use of digital scales in some centres, ensuring accuracy of measurement.
- ◆ Candidates displayed a good knowledge of personal hygiene and, in general, the standard of protective clothing was good this year.
- ◆ The majority of candidates managed to serve all dishes in the time allowed.
- ◆ It is important that candidates work safely when using sharp knives and chopping boards. Chopping boards must be anchored using a damp paper towel or non-slip matting.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- ◆ Candidates made good use of preparation time, weighing ingredients and collecting all equipment.
- ◆ In most cases, vegetables were weighed after preparation.
- ◆ Clean-as-you-go (CAYG) was used effectively in most centres.
- ◆ At Intermediate 2, most candidates managed to serve all dishes at the correct time and complete all washing up.
- ◆ Some candidates displayed good cooker control and work station management.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Intermediate 1

A large number of Intermediate 1 candidates experienced difficulty in the following areas:

- ◆ handling the cook's knife — the vegetable knife was used instead
- ◆ cooking the rice to the correct texture
- ◆ achieving the correct consistency for the curry sauce
- ◆ cutting the sponge into three equal pieces — a template would have helped
- ◆ handling the bar gateau when coating the sides with cream and chocolate
- ◆ piping the gateau with cream to an acceptable standard
- ◆ tasting and seasoning of the dishes — this was not carried out by the majority of candidates, who subsequently failed to achieve marks for this

Intermediate 2

A large number of Intermediate 2 candidates experienced difficulty in the following areas:

- ◆ roughly chopping the vegetables
- ◆ cooker control, particularly when simmering
- ◆ skimming the soup when it was necessary
- ◆ minimising waste when passing
- ◆ garnishing the soup with flair
- ◆ adjusting the consistency and seasoning of the Moroccan chicken sauce
- ◆ finely chopping the coriander
- ◆ rolling the shortcake paste to the correct thickness
- ◆ whisking the cream to the correct consistency
- ◆ tasting and seasoning the dishes before presentation

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ It is good practice for time plans to indicate 'wash hands' at the start.
- ◆ Time slots do not need to be at regular intervals but must be realistic and allow the identified tasks to be completed. The minimum time block should be 10 minutes.
- ◆ Time plans must not be a rewrite of the recipe and can be colour-coded to make them easier to follow for some candidates.
- ◆ Some candidates may find it beneficial to score out tasks as they are completed.
- ◆ CAYG, washing of hands at appropriate times, change in oven temperature, and checking of cookery process should all be included in a good time plan.
- ◆ Mistakes in time plans should be corrected before the practical exercise so that candidates have a workable plan.
- ◆ Candidates who do not manage to produce a workable time plan must be provided with one.
- ◆ At Intermediate 2, candidates should be encouraged to include diagrams in their service details, particularly for the dish being served on four individual plates.
- ◆ Safe use of knives must be emphasised, along with anchoring of chopping boards.
- ◆ All candidates should be taught to use a cook's knife correctly and know when it should be used in preference to a vegetable knife.
- ◆ Candidates must be taught to clear their chopping boards of one product before starting to prepare the next.
- ◆ Candidates must be taught to wash their hands after handling raw eggs and raw chicken/meat.
- ◆ Good food hygiene must be encouraged, eg covering food when placing in the fridge.
- ◆ All perishable food must be stored in the fridge when not being used.
- ◆ Uncooked perishable foods must be covered and stored in the bottom of the fridge, or ideally in a separate fridge away from cooked perishable foods.
- ◆ All hot food being reserved for use later in the assignment should be covered and stored in a cool area away from the cooker.

- ◆ Where ingredients are being added at the same time, they can be collected in the same container to save on washing up, eg both flour and cocoa powder in a sieve sitting on greaseproof paper for the chocolate gateau.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to taste and season dishes throughout the year so that it becomes automatic during an assessment.
- ◆ Greater emphasis should be placed on garnishing and decorating techniques.
- ◆ Piping (cream or potatoes) is a skill that should be given more emphasis by centres.
- ◆ Candidates must use hot, soapy water to wash dishes during the assignment, and change it regularly to prevent washing up in cold, dirty water.
- ◆ It is quite permissible to give candidates periodic time checks during the practical assessment. Highlighting the serving times and indicating the 10-minute tolerance zone for serving can prove beneficial.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2009	5684
Number of resulted entries in 2010	6202

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	28.1%	28.1%	1744	59
B	42.1%	70.2%	2610	49
C	21.4%	91.6%	1325	39
D	2.7%	94.3%	169	34
No award	5.7%	100.0%	354	—

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2009	4875
Number of resulted entries in 2010	5440

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	58.5%	58.5%	3184	79
B	27.7%	86.2%	1507	67
C	9.6%	95.9%	524	55
D	1.3%	97.1%	69	49
No award	2.9%	100.0%	156	—

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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.