



External Assessment Report 2012

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 these candidates were disadvantaged.

Appropriate protective clothing was worn by the majority of candidates, and personal hygiene practices were observed.

Refrigerators were used appropriately by the majority of candidates, and most centres had chopping boards identified to be used only for the preparation of either raw meat or vegetables.

The knife skills demonstrated were appropriate for the level being assessed.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The majority of candidates used short, focused statements in their time plan and did not rewrite the recipe.

The majority of candidates refrigerated perishable foods correctly.

Where colour coded chopping boards were available candidates used them effectively to help prevent cross-contamination.

The majority of candidates anchored chopping boards.

At Intermediate 2, the majority of candidates served all dishes within the time allowed and completed all washing up.

The preparation of the roulade was very good, as was the whipping of the cream.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Intermediate 1

A number of candidates experienced difficulty in the following areas:

- ◆ writing time plans with all the necessary personal and food hygiene points
- ◆ securing chopping boards
- ◆ not using the correct chopping board for raw chicken
- ◆ tasting and seasoning dishes
- ◆ adjusting consistency of the sauce for the chicken
- ◆ finely chopping
- ◆ washing up in clean, hot water with a clean, dry towel
- ◆ preparing vegetables quickly and accurately
- ◆ controlling the cooker hob
- ◆ using the grill to cook the chicken
- ◆ heating of serving dishes

Intermediate 2

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

- ◆ tasting and seasoning of dishes prior to service
- ◆ knowing the difference between boiling and simmering

- ◆ knowing the difference between chopping and dicing
- ◆ filling the cannelloni tubes
- ◆ finely dicing the chilli
- ◆ correct cooking of mushrooms

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Only ingredients stated in the recipe can be used.

Candidates who do not produce a workable time plan must be given one by the centre.

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 rewrite of the recipe.
- Time slots should be no less than 10 minutes, and must be governed by the tasks being undertaken.
- Hand-washing must be included at the start of the time plan.
- Insert hand-washing at appropriate times, eg after handling raw meat, chicken, eggs.
- Ensure heating/warming of plates is put into the time plan at the appropriate time.
- Cross marking of planning booklets within the centre would ensure standardisation.
- At Intermediate 2 level, diagrams would be very useful as part of the Service Details, particularly for the course being served as four portions.

Preparation time

- ◆ Perishable foods should be stored in the refrigerator.
- ◆ 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 also helps to reduce waste.
- ◆ Ingredients measured during preparation time should be labelled to prevent confusion during the carrying out of the assignment.
- ◆ Onions and garlic could be peeled as stated in the list of ingredients.
- ◆ 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.

Carrying out the assignment

- ◆ Candidates must re-weigh vegetables after preparation to ensure they use the correct weight or volume.
- ◆ Candidates must clear their chopping boards to a mise-en-place/separate tray before preparing the next product.
- ◆ Perishable foods must be kept refrigerated until required.
- ◆ Hands must be washed after handling raw eggs, chicken or meat.
- ◆ Candidates should be taught when it is appropriate to use a vegetable knife and when to use a cook's knife.
- ◆ Sweating of vegetables should be completed with the lid on.

- ◆ Candidates must be encouraged to taste and season dishes hygienically throughout the Course so that it becomes second nature in the Practical Assignment.
- ◆ Dishes must be served on clean plates.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	6474
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	6897
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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	29.3%	29.3%	2021	59
B	37.7%	67.0%	2599	49
C	22.0%	89.0%	1515	39
D	3.6%	92.6%	249	34
No award	7.4%	100.0%	513	-

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2011	5417
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	5732
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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	57.1%	57.1%	3271	79
B	29.0%	86.1%	1662	67
C	10.1%	96.2%	579	55
D	1.4%	97.6%	82	49
No award	2.4%	100.0%	138	-

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.