



Course report 2019

Subject	Practical Woodworking
Level	National 5

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. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

Feedback received suggested that the question paper was well balanced in terms of demand and course coverage.

The question paper performed as expected. Candidates were able to access all questions in the paper. The marking team noted that a number of candidates were still unable to demonstrate basic knowledge of tools and joints and candidates struggled to perform when they had to give extended response to questions.

Practical activity

This was the first year of the new practical activity — table mirror. All the centres visited during the verification process had used this new assessment for session 2018–19.

The practical activity performed as expected and it was of the same degree of difficulty as the instruments of assessment from previous sessions. The table mirror consisted of a flat-frame construction mirror frame; a carcass construction drawer and unit; along with four turned feet and several drill holes for the machining and turnery section. There was a mixture of joint construction with no joints used more than twice.

All centres were using the marking instructions and logbook that were introduced in session 2017–18, and many centres continue to comment favourably about the marking instructions. Centres also appreciated the new understanding standards videos.

The vast majority of centres were marking to the national standard.

Candidates were well prepared for the majority of the practical activity. However, verifiers noticed that the turnery was often rushed, and some centres felt that the requirement of producing four identical feet was challenging for the candidates.

The majority of verifiers thought that candidates had concentrated on the construction aspect of the practical activity and the logbook had been rushed at the end. A lot of candidates were still including PPE checks as answers instead of machine and tool checks — these cannot be awarded marks. Candidates must complete the log book individually, as they work through the practical activity. Completing the logbook is not a group, or teacher-led activity.

Verifiers really appreciated when the assessment record contained comments about the candidate's performance or why a given mark had been awarded. This aided the verification process and is encouraged.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

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

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Question 1(b) | Many candidates were able to identify the distance to be set between the spurs on the mortise gauge by using information from a working drawing. |
| Question 2(d) | Most candidates were able to describe two stages in removing the waste material from a corner bridle joint. |
| Question 2(g) | 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 give a health and safety check that was carried out before using a chisel. |
| Question 3(d) | Many candidates were able to identify the name of a dowel joint from a diagram. |
| Question 3(i) | Most candidates were able to state the name of a wood glue. |
| Question 4(c) (i) | Most candidates were able to identify from a diagram the correct direction of sanding. |

The candidates who gained the highest marks were able to respond to 'explain' questions, and justify their answers in depth when required.

Practical activity

The verification team reported that there were some excellent examples of practical work. Centres have developed a sound grasp of the standard required for the practical activity.

The standard of the finish, on the practical activity, was generally very good. Attention to detail, such as removing pencil lines, sanding lines, saw marks, was apparent.

The majority of verifiers noted the standard and quality of surface preparation carried out by the candidates. There was a mixture of finishes applied to the completed table mirrors.

A minority of candidates had completed some of the tasks incorrectly. For example, the four holes for the feet had been drilled on the top of the carcass unit. If the measuring and marking out had been checked by the assessor prior to the candidate drilling the holes, then the error may have been avoided.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

The majority of candidates were unable to identify basic joints or tools. Where candidates had to give more extensive responses to questions they were unable to provide the detail required to achieve all of the available marks.

Some candidates' responses to 'explain' and 'describe' questions were too short and lacked sufficient detail to gain marks. Candidates had the opportunity to use sketches to assist them, but most did not use sketches to aid their responses.

Candidates found the following questions challenging:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Question 1(c) | Most candidates were unable to describe how to set up a mortise machine to cut a mortise to 30mm. |
| Question 1(e) | Many candidates did not achieve marks for their explanation of why a rebate joint was chosen over a butt joint. Candidates tried to state a reason, however they did not explain it and did not give enough information to achieve the available marks. |
| Question 1(f) | A number of candidates were unable to state health and safety checks carried out on an orbital sander. These candidates gave either a generic health or safety response for personal safety or a health and safety check for a machine tool. |
| Question 1(g) | Most candidates were unable to describe how to measure a bathroom cabinet to check if it was square. Instead these candidates responded by checking angles with try squares instead of measuring diagonals. |
| Question 2(h) | Most candidates were unable to explain the purpose of stopping. |
| Question 3(b) | A number of candidates were unable to describe how to set a marking gauge to half a depth of material without the use of a rule. |
| Question 3(g) | Most candidates were unable to achieve this mark as they could not fully explain why a countersunk screw was used instead of a round head screw. They gave a response about sitting flush but then did not go on to fully explain about the effect this would have on the storage unit wobbling, rocking or scratching the surface that it would sit on. |
| Question 4(a) (i) | Many candidates were unable to describe how plywood is constructed. |
| Question 4(a) (ii) | Many candidates were unable to describe how chipboard is constructed. |
| Question 4(d) (ii) | A number of candidates were unable to explain why they had chosen a particular grade of abrasive paper in the final stage of surface preparation. |
| Question 4(e) (i) | A number of candidates were unable to state two suitable finishes for a wooden high chair. |
| Question 4(e) (ii) | Most candidates were unable to achieve this mark as they could not fully explain why some finishes were not suitable for a wooden highchair. |
| Question 4(f) | Most candidates were unable to state the name of knock down fittings from a diagram. |

Practical activity

The verification team noted that candidates found the turnery and logbook sections the most demanding.

For the turnery section, some candidates were not able to turn to specific dimensions and work to a given template.

For the logbook, some candidates are not using their own words to record the checks they carried out. The completion of some parts of the logbook should be carried out throughout the course.

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. In addition, they should note the specific joints and tools that candidates may be asked to identify.

Candidates should ensure that they read the question paper properly.

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.

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.

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 could prepare candidates for the question paper by utilising some classroom time to go through theory-based knowledge and example questions. This will help to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of the topic areas. Likewise, a discussion of expected responses (including the marking instructions) would also benefit candidates.

Component 2 – practical activity

Centres are reminded that the practical activity will continue to be the table mirror (for the next two sessions) but the construction will change annually, and a new set of working drawings and detailed cutting list will be available for session 2019–20. The generic parts and materials list will remain the same (for the next two sessions) for requisition/ordering purposes.

Centres should ensure that they cover all course content and that candidates have opportunities to practise all practical skills before they begin the practical activity.

Mortise machine

The practical activity tests candidates in a range of skills including the interpretation of working drawings, the use of hand tools to cut joints, and finishing. The use of power or machine tools, rather than hand tools, in the cutting of joints is not permitted (unless specific instruction is given in the practical activity) and marks cannot be awarded for this.

As such, it is expected that candidates will cut all joints using hand tools as this is intrinsic to the course. In the practical activity marking instruction, there is a distinct set of marks allocated to the machining and turnery section — marks are not awarded for machining elsewhere.

Past practical activity assessments had multiple instances of the same joint but this is no longer the case. In those assessments, the use of the mortise machine was permitted only when the candidate had demonstrated their skills to standard, and only in specific circumstances because there was no need to see the specific skills demonstrated again. The language used in SQA's understanding standards videos — specifically flat-frame construction — makes it clear that hand tools must be used.

Turnery

All turnery must be attached.

Overall assembly and assembly tolerances

Centres must consider the overall sizes given in the practical activity assessment task. There are several overall dimensions and candidates are allowed a tolerance of $\pm 3\text{mm}$ for each one.

A minority of centres did not apply the National 5 Practical Woodworking tolerance for marking out and cutting of $\pm 1\text{mm}$. Candidates need to work accurately to the sizes on the working drawings. It is not sufficient for the candidate just to have cut the joint anywhere.

Logbook

Centres should continue to focus on the logbook and ensure that candidates know how to complete it. The information in the logbook should be clear and in candidates' own words. Centres should refer to the example logbook on the National 5 Practical Woodworking subject page of SQA's website and the Practical Woodworking videos published on the Understanding Standards website.

Filler

Centres are reminded that joint/gap filler should not be used to obscure the joints before the verification process has been completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	4748
Number of resulted entries in 2019	5298

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	34.7%	34.7%	1840	70
B	30.4%	65.1%	1608	60
C	20.9%	86.0%	1106	50
D	8.8%	94.7%	464	40
No award	5.3%	-	280	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ 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.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.