Course Report 2017

Subject	Hospitality: Practical Cookery
Level	National 5

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

All centres used the published SQA recipes to carry out the course assessment, including guidance for planning and implementing.

All internal assessors should read this course report in conjunction with current supporting documentation. For the 2017 assessment these include:

♦ General assessment information for National 5 Hospitality: Practical Cookery
♦ Practical Activity Instructions for Centres
♦ Practical Activity Instructions for Candidates
♦ Practical Cookery Verification Key Messages (Round 2 messages are combined in the same document along with Round 1 messages and not published until October 2017)

For session 2017–18, a number of changes will come into effect, and centres should make themselves familiar with the documentation published on the SQA website.

Centres are reminded that they should not be confirming dates and times for the implementing stage until they have heard from SQA to determine whether they have been selected for visiting verification. This date is usually at the end of January each year.

This year, a number of candidates performed well, as reflected in the grade boundary outcomes.

Component: Practical activity

Stage 1: Planning

Planning booklets should be used in their given format, with no additions or amendments. Additional guidance should not be given to support the creation of the time plan — this should be completed under assessment conditions.

Candidates require the planning booklet, a set of the published recipes, and pens/pencils to complete the planning stage. Different coloured pens/pencils allow the dishes to be colour-coded for ease of use by the candidate, which is good practice. Centres may have the benefit of IT to allow candidates to produce their time plans. Candidates may also require additional 'scrap' paper for rough drafts/notes they create within the given time to support the final time plan being produced. They should not take previously-prepared notes into the assessment environment.

The time allocation for this task is 1 hour 30 minutes. For those candidates with additional support needs, this time can be extended, but prior approval must be obtained from SQA to allow this to happen.

Most centres carried this out with an invigilator appointed to oversee the completion of the time plans under assessment conditions, which is good practice.

Candidates should receive the marks gained on their first attempt of the time plan. Thereafter, they can have support to make amendments to ensure they have a workable time plan.

Stage 2: Implementing

Centres should ensure all candidates are given adequate time to set up for this stage. There is no specified time — professional judgement should be used to ensure they are fully prepared. Additional ingredients should be available for the candidates, if required during the activity. If a candidate has not produced a workable plan, they can be given a centre-devised time plan.

The detailed marking instructions identify the skills, techniques and processes for each recipe, and give an illustration of performance within each band of available marks. The marks available for each dish will vary from year to year, but the total marks for each area will always be within set parameters. Centres must mark candidate performance using a holistic approach as per the detailed marking instructions.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component: Practical activity

Stage 1: Planning

Building on the changes introduced last year, and the candidate response to carrying this out under assessment conditions, a time allocation of 1 hour 30 minutes was set this year for this task. Most candidates were able to form some sort of time plan within this time scale and obtain marks towards their final grade.

Stage 2: Implementing

Candidates performed well in creating all three dishes in the allocated time, and as a result were able to access all available marks for the preparation, cooking and service of the dishes.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component: Practical activity

Stage 1: Planning

Some candidates are still finding the writing of the time plan challenging and this can be seen from the allocation of marks being awarded after their first attempt. As a result, some candidates are having to use a centre-devised plan. This should only be used in extreme cases where the original cannot be improved after initial marking.

Some candidates are still experiencing difficulties in processing and applying information sourced from three courses and their time plans. Centres should consider whether these candidates are being presented at the appropriate level.

Stage 2: Implementing

Where a candidate requires a centre-devised time plan, they should be given adequate time to become familiar with it. The candidate should not be given it at the point of starting the implementing stage.

The majority of candidates served their three dishes either on time or within the five-minute window, and therefore had access to all available marks.

The most challenging aspects of the dishes this year was the timing and cooking of the pavlovas and mediterranean tart. Candidates adopted a variety of approaches to ensure successful timing, with some using both top and main ovens where available. This approach was deemed to be acceptable if the cooker at their workstation was of that design.

The completion of this course required a high standard of multitasking, which some candidates found very demanding however, the majority coped well.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

As the course assessment is changing from August 2017, centres should make themselves aware of all the updated documentation currently available on the SQA website.

Component: Practical activity

Stage 1: Planning

Centres must use all support documents to fully prepare candidates for the course assessment. Candidates should be presented at the most appropriate level to suit their capabilities.

For the course assessment, candidates should not be given an 'outline' created by the centre, as may be done during the course, to assist with the development of time planning skills.

Centres are reminded that they should not be creating their own marking scheme to record candidate performance. There is adequate support available in the detailed marking instructions to allow reflection and decision making based on candidate performance. The marking instructions for the practical activity make this clear.

Stage 2: Implementing

Centres are reminded that the recipes should only be given to candidates on three occasions:

♦ during the one permitted practice of each dish

- ♦ during the planning stage
- ♦ during the implementing stage

Candidates should not have access to the recipes on any other occasion.

Centres are reminded to use the holistic marking instructions as accurately as possible to record performance on the day.

If a candidate decides they cannot continue with the implementing stage, they cannot be given another opportunity, unless on health grounds. They can only be given the opportunity to undertake it on one occasion.

If candidates are using any electrical appliance, they should ensure they know how to use it and that the appliances are working prior to the start time. Candidates should not be disadvantaged by using equipment for the first time during this stage.

If any part of a finished dish is deemed 'inedible', or is not served, no marks should be awarded for the service of that dish. It is important that this is implemented throughout.

Given the significant changes that are to be introduced in 2017–18, it is important for assessors to ensure they access support and assistance to ensure they are implementing the national standard accurately. Webinars and Understanding Standards events are offered to all.

Whilst it was pleasing to see that the conditions of assessment for coursework were adhered to in the majority of centres, there were a small number of examples where this may not have been the case. Following feedback from teachers, we have strengthened the conditions of assessment criteria for National 5 subjects and will do so for Higher and Advanced Higher. The criteria are published clearly on our website and in course materials and must be adhered to. SQA takes very seriously its obligation to ensure fairness and equity for all candidates in all qualifications through consistent application of assessment conditions and investigates all cases alerted to us where conditions may not have been met.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	6257

Number of resulted entries in 2017	5648

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	35.9%	35.9%	2026	80
B	31.9%	67.8%	1802	70
C	21.1%	88.8%	1190	60
D	4.9%	93.7%	274	55
No award	6.3%	-	356	-

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.