Course Report 2016

Subject	Hospitality: Practical Cookery
Level	National 5

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

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

Centres are reminded at this point that all internal assessors should read this Course Report in conjunction with the most current supporting documentation in preparation for the course assessment. This includes:

♦ General Assessment Information
♦ Practical Activity Instructions for Centres
♦ Practical Activity Instructions for Candidates
♦ Round 2 Key Messages

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

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, which must be carried out under assessment conditions.

For the purpose of this assessment, candidates require the planning booklet, the published recipes and pens/pencils (three or four different colours helps to colour code the time plan dishes for ease of use by the candidate). They may also require additional 'scrap paper' for rough drafts or notes they create within the given time to support the final time plan being produced. They should not take pre-prepared notes or supports into the assessment environment. Some centres may have the benefit of IT to allow candidates to produce their time plans electronically.

The candidate should receive the marks gained on the first attempt of their plan; it may be amended to ensure it is a 'workable' time plan. The majority of centres carried this out with an invigilator appointed to oversee the completion, which demonstrates good practice.

Stage 2: Implementing

Centres should ensure all candidates are given adequate time to set up for this stage. There is no specified time; but professional judgement should be used to ensure they are fully prepared. Additional resources should be available for the candidates, if required during the activity.

Centres were provided with a holistic marking scheme to record candidate performance throughout the task. Centres are reminded that they should not be creating their own marking schemes to record candidate performance. There is adequate support available in the holistic marking grid to allow reflection and decision making for the candidate performance.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component: Practical Activity

Stage 1: Planning

In light of the changes this year, this area saw some minor changes in candidate performance.

Candidates responded well to carrying this out under assessment conditions, submitting at the end of the allocated time. The feedback suggested this was their preferred method, but it should be noted that not all candidates performed well in this environment. In future, a suggested time slot will be included in documentation for centres.

Stage 2: Implementing

As demonstrated by the change in the grade boundary outcome for those achieving a C band, and the alteration in the distribution of marks across the board, candidates performed well.

Candidates performed well in creating the main course of honeyed pork with noodles, co-ordinating activities accordingly.

Also, the lemon tart was generally well handled, showing evidence of confidence when handling pastry. Decoration generally showed the required 4 portions.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component: Practical Activity

Stage 1: Planning

Some candidates did not perform as well as in the past, as they were marked on their first attempt. In some cases, this entitled them to a centre-devised time plan, which they used for the implementing stage. This can give them an advantage, and should only be used in extreme cases where the original cannot be improved after initial marking.

Some candidates experienced difficulties in processing and applying information sourced from the three courses and their time plans. Centres should consider whether these

candidates are being presented at the appropriate level. Experience should be gained through the completion and success of the 'Organisational Skills for Cooking' Unit.

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.

A number of candidates struggled with this stage on this occasion. A number found it too stressful and had to leave; a few gave up once they realised they would not gain any marks for the service of the first course, so reducing their possible success. This year certainly posed a challenge for a few at this level, possibly identifying a number of candidates who would have been more suited to National 4 level.

The most challenging aspect of the three course meal was the starter — a number of candidates did not manage to get the vegetable rostis fully cooked, and therefore did not receive any marks for service. This also had an impact on their performance overall, as they also struggled to get the main course completed. Their organisational skills were certainly challenged throughout.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component: Practical Activity

Stage 1: Planning

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

Candidates should develop the skills necessary for planning during the completion of the 'Organisational Skills for Cooking' Unit. They should not be given an 'outline', created by the centre, in the final course assessment.

Centres were provided with a holistic marking scheme to record candidate performance throughout the task. Centres are reminded that they should not be creating their own marking schemes to record candidate performance at this point. There is adequate support available in the holistic marking grid to allow reflection and decision making for the candidate performance.

Stage 2: Implementing

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

1. When they practise each dish once only.

2. When they create their time plan.
3. When they carry out the implementing stage.

Candidates should not be given the recipes on any other occasion.

Centres are reminded to use the holistic marking as accurately as possible to reflect performance on the day. Assessors should avoid, where possible, marking their own candidates.

Given the significant changes that were introduced this year, it is important for assessors to ensure they access support and assistance to ensure they are implementing the National Standard accurately. Understanding Standards events are offered to all assessors. Also, local support/training may also be available from Nominees to share the standards.

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 appliances, they should ensure they know how to use them 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', no marks should be awarded for the service of that dish. It is important that this is implemented throughout.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	6460

Number of resulted entries in 2016	6257

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	23.5%	23.5%	1473	82
B	34.7%	58.2%	2171	70
C	26.7%	85.0%	1673	58
D	7.0%	91.9%	435	52
No award	8.1%	-	505	-

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.