



Course report 2023

Higher Health and Food Technology

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. You should read the report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022: 1,247

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 1,389

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	169	Percentage	12.2	Cumulative percentage	12.2	Minimum mark required	70
B	Number of candidates	314	Percentage	22.6	Cumulative percentage	34.8	Minimum mark required	59
C	Number of candidates	380	Percentage	27.4	Cumulative percentage	62.1	Minimum mark required	49
D	Number of candidates	309	Percentage	22.2	Cumulative percentage	84.4	Minimum mark required	38
No award	Number of candidates	217	Percentage	15.6	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

Please note that rounding has not been applied to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper covered a broad range of course content, with many candidates performing well.

The question paper performed as expected, with reports from markers and general feedback from centres indicating that the paper was accessible to all candidates. The paper gave candidates the opportunity to access marks through the normal style of questioning and good course coverage.

Some candidate responses lacked depth and detail.

Assignment

Both briefs were well received and accessible to all candidates this session. The most popular brief was 'Develop a high energy snack suitable for athletes'.

Markers observed a wide range of marks and quality of responses across both briefs.

Some candidate responses lacked detail, particularly in the research and justifications of features and ingredients sections.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1(c)

Many candidates coped well with the Dietary Reference Value (DRV) question. Many candidates were able to effectively analyse the diet of a 3-year-old female by using a structured and appropriate answering technique.

Candidates who performed well in the DRV question demonstrated a good understanding of the nutritional needs of the 3-year-old female and the contribution the meal made to her diet.

Question 1(d)

Some candidates answered the star profile question well. These candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the ratings and the sensory attributes linked to chicken noodle soup.

Question 5(a)

Many candidates showed a good understanding of the factors that can influence a student's choice of food.

Assignment

Section 1(b): research

Many candidates carried out quality research using appropriate techniques that were demonstrated correctly, were clearly and logically presented, and valid. These candidates also provided good points of information to summarise their research.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1(a)

Candidates' knowledge of the contribution of sodium in the diet was poor and many candidates were unable to access the full range of marks available. Many candidates only gained 1 or 2 of the 3 marks.

Question 1(b)

Candidates' knowledge of type 2 diabetes was poor, resulting in them being unable to access the full range of marks. Many candidates did not explain the factors that could contribute to this dietary disease. Instead, they stated what the factor was without providing the explanation required at Higher level.

Question 1(e)

Candidates' knowledge of Food Standards Scotland was poor. Many candidates were unable to access the full range of marks for this question.

Question 2(b)

Candidates' knowledge of ways that the Environmental Health Department can protect the consumer was limited. As a result, many candidates were unable to access the full range of marks for this question.

Question 2(c)

Many candidates' knowledge of the interrelationship between dietary fibre and water was poor.

Question 3(a)

Many candidates explained the stages of food product development instead of explaining how a manufacturer could improve each stage of food product development for the chicken fried rice dish. This resulted in them not accessing the marks for this question.

Question 4(a)

Many candidates were unable to explain the factors that can hinder iron absorption.

Question 4(c)

Some candidates' knowledge of the benefits to health of a balanced and varied diet was limited.

Assignment**Section 1(a): identifying a range of key issues from the brief**

Some candidates were unable to fully justify the key issues they identified. They did not provide a clear justification of all issues, for example the restaurant.

Section 2(b): justifying an appropriate food product based on information generated from the research and relevance to the brief

Many candidates did not fully justify the features and ingredients. They either did not link to the research, or they repeated previous justifications for other features and ingredients.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres must use the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding information in the course specification to prepare candidates for the question paper. Teachers and lecturers can use the course specification as a planning tool when delivering the course. Candidates can also use the course specification to help them with revision.

Candidates should have experience of completing exam-style questions under timed conditions.

The evidence from this year's question paper suggests that candidates' knowledge could improve in some areas, particularly consumer organisations. Centres must ensure that they spend enough time teaching these areas of course content and practising relevant exam-style questions.

For the DRV question, candidates should learn how to correctly analyse the diet of the individual specified. Candidates should not simply state the function of a nutrient in the table. Candidates must provide a clear impact of this nutrient intake on the individual and its relevance to their age, stage, and circumstances.

Candidates should not offer a suggestion of an alternative food item; they must specifically analyse the foods included in the meal. Candidates should learn to only analyse three nutrients. Where candidates attempted to provide more than three analyses, their responses lacked the detail required at Higher level.

In the star profile question, candidates should provide an evaluative response that provides a complete fact that demonstrates a clear understanding of the rating relating to the product. This year, many candidates did not demonstrate they understood why the chicken noodle soup was rated '4' or 'high' for spiciness. They simply stated that the soup was spicy. Candidates must also ensure that their response is fully evaluative and linked to the group or individual in the question.

It is important that candidates understand that they can be assessed on food product development in several ways. For example, this year the food product development question asked candidates to explain how the stages could be improved as the dish had failed to meet sales targets. Many candidates simply provided an explanation for the stage instead of an explanation about how the stage could be improved. Centres should provide candidates with the opportunity to practise the different styles of exam questions in this area of course content.

Assignment

The Higher Health and Food Technology course will return to full assessment requirements from session 2023–24 onwards. The assignment will return to its original format.

Candidates must complete their assignments using the candidate workbook provided by SQA. They must not use any other format.

It is each centre's responsibility to ensure that they submit all candidate evidence to SQA for marking. They should ensure that candidate evidence has no missing sections or pages. If evidence is missing, candidates may not be able to access all the available marks.

Centres should use appendix 3 in the course specification to guide candidates to producing valid research. In some cases, research produced by candidates is not concise. It can be too lengthy and does not result in qualitative data. Candidates must present their research in a concise manner.

It is not good practice to allow candidates in the same centre to carry out almost identical research. Centres should ensure that the questions, layout, and results are different when candidates are carrying out research and investigations. Although candidates can use the same research technique, for example a questionnaire, the content, layout, and points of information must be different.

Candidates must present individual results and should not use percentages to summarise data.

When completing section 2(a): describing the product, candidates must write the recipe with metric measurements and list all ingredients. The recipe method should be very clear, allowing the product to be reproduced with identical results. The recipe should include portion sizes, cooking methods, and times.

In section 2(b) candidates must ensure that their justifications are not repetitive. They need to use a variety of information generated from their research to justify each feature and ingredient.

Research should not be teacher-led. It must be individual to each candidate, allowing them to progress and develop an individual product. Centres must not provide too much support for candidates.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade 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 for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty 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 on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).