Course report 2023

National 5 Practical Cake Craft

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:   1,466

Number of resulted entries in 2023:   1,283

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	350	Percentage	27.3	Cumulative percentage	27.3	Minimum mark required	74
B	Number of candidates	360	Percentage	28.1	Cumulative percentage	55.3	Minimum mark required	65
C	Number of candidates	284	Percentage	22.1	Cumulative percentage	77.5	Minimum mark required	56
D	Number of candidates	188	Percentage	14.7	Cumulative percentage	92.1	Minimum mark required	47
No award	Number of candidates	101	Percentage	7.9	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 largely performed as expected. Feedback from the marking team suggested that the question paper was fair in terms of course coverage and overall level of demand. Most candidates attempted all three questions and completed the paper in the allocated time.

Assignment

The modifications to the assignment were carried forward to this session with section 2: Evaluating removed.

Feedback from the marking team suggested that most candidates completed all stages of the assignment.

Most candidates clearly demonstrated that the design illustration, resources and plan of work was carried out, as required, prior to completing the practical activity.

The assignment performed as expected and there were no adjustments made to the grade boundary.

Practical activity

Performance in the practical activity was in line with previous years.

All candidates in the centres visited completed a final cake and not a portfolio.

The verification team reported that there were some excellent examples of practical work in the centres they visited. Candidates had a good understanding of finishing techniques and the marks available.

Assessors made good use of the marking instructions and in some centres verified, assessors had made very detailed comments on the marking grid to support where marks were awarded to candidates.

The practical activity performed as expected and there were no adjustments made to the grade boundary.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper
Most candidates attempted all questions in the question paper with good performance being noted in question 1(a), question 2(a), question 2(c)(i) and question 3(d).

The candidates who gained the highest marks were able to respond to 'explain' and 'evaluate' questions and provide a developed explanation.

Assignment

Section 1(a) Design illustration
Most candidates performed well, providing a detailed drawing which clearly included the occasion, cake type, coatings, size of cake and cake board and finishing techniques to be demonstrated.

Good practice was demonstrated when the illustration was coloured in their chosen colour scheme, and completed on a separate A3 sheet of paper, as it allowed candidates the space to provide a detailed drawing of their cake and showcase their chosen finishing techniques.

Section 1(b) Resources
Most candidates were able to choose an appropriate recipe and provide a justification for their chosen recipe. Most candidates were able to identify the required equipment for their finishing techniques and describe their use.

Section 1(c) Plan of work
Most candidates created a plan of work that was correctly sequenced and provided adequate detail as to how they planned to make their cake.

Practical activity
The marks submitted for candidates remain high and candidates continue to demonstrate a wide range of themes and finishing techniques for their cake.

Most candidates took the opportunity to demonstrate five finishing decoration techniques. This allowed the candidates to maximise the marks that could be awarded.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Candidates found this component more demanding. Questions that required the candidates to either explain or evaluate their response were poorly completed, with some candidates achieving few marks in these areas.

Question 2(b)

Candidates were asked to evaluate the use of cupcakes for a charity coffee morning. While many candidates could demonstrate a valid list of facts about cupcakes, they did not then give a judgement and a consequence that related back to the question about its suitability for a charity coffee morning.

Question 3(a)

This question asked candidates to evaluate the instructions found on a packet of sugarpaste. This question was more demanding than expected. A few candidates did not attempt the question. Other candidates correctly identified a fact about an instruction, but then did not give a judgement and a consequence. Some candidates wrote under the heading's fact, opinion and judgement and gave a correctly evaluated answer, but then no further answers. Candidates should have provided three responses which should include a fact, judgement and opinion. Only a few candidates achieved three valid answers.

Question 3(b)

Candidates were asked to describe two different methods of applying lettering to a sugarpaste coated cake. A few candidates misinterpreted this question and did not give techniques.

Question 3(c)

This question asked candidates to explain three stages involved in preparing a mixture to make a swiss roll. Some candidates did not understand how a swiss roll is produced. Many candidates identified a valid stage in the production, but then gave no explanation.

Assignment

A few candidates did not include a suitable recipe. The recipe they included was handwritten and there were omissions to the recipe or the method. Candidates do not need to write out the recipe, they can include a printed recipe.

A few candidates included a recipe that did not reflect the quantities of the cake they had chosen. For example, they included a recipe for a 15cm cake but were producing a 20cm cake or a two-tiered cake.

A few candidates listed all the equipment required to make the cake. This is not necessary; they should only be listing the details of the equipment required for the finishing decoration techniques.

A few candidates did not give enough detail in their list of equipment. For example, they stated 'cutter' rather than '1cm star cutter' or 'crimper' rather than 'heart crimper'.

A few candidates did not give a detailed description as to how each piece of equipment was to be used on their cake. For example, they stated that they would use it to 'crimp' rather than, 'I will use the wave crimper to crimp the edge of the cake board to ensure a uniform crimp is achieved'.

Practical activity

A few candidates did not place finishing techniques, such as embossing, carefully on their cake board, and it was covered when the cake was placed on the cake board. Candidates could not be awarded marks as the technique was not visible.

A few candidates were not aware of the difference between embossing and crimping, as candidates identified that they were crimping when they were embossing, which led to marks being amended during verification.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

The course will return to full assessment requirements from session 2023-24 onwards.

Please refer to the course specification for more information on the course assessment structure.

Question paper

Centres must ensure that candidates are well prepared for the question paper by ensuring that they know how to respond to each command word.

Teachers, lecturers and candidates can access specimen question papers, past papers and marking instructions on SQA's website to help them understand the level of response required and how the paper is marked.

Centres should recommend special arrangements for candidates whose handwriting is such that it may disadvantage them in a written examination.

Assignment

All components of stage 1 of the assignment must be completed before candidates start to make the cake.

Design illustrations, resources and plans of work must not be retrospective. Candidates should complete the design illustration, resources and plan of work independently under examination conditions. No templates should be provided.

The design illustration can be completed on a separate A4 or A3 sheet of paper. This is good practice, as it allows more space for the illustration.

Candidates' original design illustration should be photocopied, and the original retained to send to SQA. A photocopy of the design illustration should be given to the candidate for the practical activity.

Candidates should refer to coating as sugarpaste and not fondant.

Candidates with illegible handwriting should be encouraged to type the information into their workbook. Candidates can type the information for design illustration and then stick the information on to the design illustration sheet, this will make it easier for the candidate to follow and for the marker to identify the required information.

Measurements for recipes, cake tins and cake boards should be in metric, not imperial.

In section B 'resources', candidates should only list the equipment required for the finishing decoration techniques. Candidates should make a clear justification as to why they chose the type of cake to make for their chosen occasion. Some candidates gave a very brief statement with no justification.

Candidates should include the recipe and the method they will use to make their chosen cake. The recipe should be for the exact quantities required for the size of their chosen cake or cakes. Some candidates are including recipes that do not reflect the quantity of cake required for their chosen size of cake. The recipe does not need to be written or typed by the candidate, as some candidates made important omissions when copying out a recipe. Instead, candidates can include a photocopy of an appropriate recipe and attach it to their workbook.

Practical activity

Centres should make candidates aware of the difference between simple, straightforward and detailed models to allow them to maximise the marks that can be awarded.

Visiting verifiers were aware that a few candidates had identified that they were texturing on a model and wished both texturing and modelling to be marked. Centres should make candidates aware that if models are to be detailed, additional techniques such as texturing, or embossing can be added to the model. This detail is on the model to make it detailed and included in the marking of the model.

Candidates can choose which type of cake they wish to make. However, centres should make candidates aware that the cake must be stored and kept for verification; this may limit the choice in the type of cake they choose to bake, and coatings applied to the cake.

Centres should consider the use of two cake boards to give candidates more space to demonstrate finishing techniques. If a technique is not clearly visible, it cannot be awarded marks.

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.