



# **Course report 2023**

## **National 5 Practical Cookery**

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: 6,887

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 7,460

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

<b>A</b>	Number of candidates	2,308	Percentage	30.9	Cumulative percentage	30.9	Minimum mark required	71
<b>B</b>	Number of candidates	2,482	Percentage	33.3	Cumulative percentage	64.2	Minimum mark required	60
<b>C</b>	Number of candidates	1,659	Percentage	22.2	Cumulative percentage	86.4	Minimum mark required	49
<b>D</b>	Number of candidates	712	Percentage	9.5	Cumulative percentage	96	Minimum mark required	38
<b>No award</b>	Number of candidates	299	Percentage	4	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**

All components performed as expected, with the exception of explain type questions in the question paper, which were addressed and considered when the grade boundary was set.

### **Question paper**

This year's paper was considered fair in terms of course coverage and overall level of demand. However, explain questions still seem to cause the most difficulty for most candidates.

### **Assignment**

All centres used the published SQA recipes to carry out the assignment.

This component was marked by SQA, and required candidates to write a logical plan of work, requisition minimal equipment and give service details on how they would prepare and serve the three recipes.

This year did see a slight decline from 2022 in the marks achieved by candidates in the overall assignment. However there did seem to be an improvement in the time plans but a decline in the marks achieved for the equipment list and service details, which were areas that were completed well in the past.

### **Practical activity**

All centres used the published SQA recipes to carry out the practical activity.

The practical activity was of similar demand to previous years. Candidates were generally well prepared for the practical activity, and achieved slightly lower marks than those in 2022.

## **Section 2: comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

#### **Question paper**

This year did see an improvement in the average mark of candidates compared to 2022.

- Question 1(a): Most candidates were able to access a range of marks linking to current dietary advice.
- Question 2(a): Most candidates were able to access some of the marks when describing the correct storage of ingredients.
- Question 3(b): Most candidates identified the correct equipment for zesting.
- Question 3(c): Most candidates were able to give a reason why the cheesecake crumbles and breaks when cut.
- Question 3(d) and (e): Most candidates answered the costing question well.

#### **Assignment**

There was a noticeable improvement in the time plans this year, especially among those who word processed or typed their plans.

#### **Practical activity**

Although the average mark was slightly lower than that of 2022 most candidates performed well.

### **Areas that candidates found demanding**

#### **Question paper**

This year there were a number of questions where candidates did not perform well. Questions that required the candidate to explain their response were poorly completed, with many candidates achieving few marks in these areas.

Very few candidates achieved any marks for questions 2(b) and 2(d), as they did not appear to know what was meant by the term 'sustainable beef' or the preparation technique 'blanching'. A large number of candidates did not even attempt these questions.

For some candidates, the knowledge was there, but the technique of answering these types of questions was not. This meant many candidates were unable to access marks for this type of question.

Other questions that candidates found demanding were:

- Question 1(b): Few candidates achieved any marks linking to why cutting the potatoes into even sized pieces was important in the making of mashed potatoes.
- Question 1(d): Many candidates identified that the flour would thicken the sauce but did not identify flour as the thickening agent.

Question 2(c): Many candidates could identify that organic produce did not contain artificial pesticides or fertilisers but could not explain the advantage or disadvantage of this when buying organic carrots.

Question 2(e): Most candidate could identify the purpose of removing jewellery and covering any cuts or wounds with a blue plaster but could not explain why this was important when preparing food.

### **Assignment**

The writing of the time plans improved this year. Many candidates were able to identify the essentials within recipes but struggled more with including the desirables within their plans — both of which are important. Many candidates are still tending to copy the recipes word for word which is not good practice. This year also saw some candidates make no attempt at the time plan — this practice should be discouraged.

### **Practical activity**

Although the average mark was slightly lower than that of 2022, there were no obvious barriers or areas of difficulty identified in this year's recipes. However, some candidates and centres did not follow the instructions of serving the main course in two separate dishes which was then reflected in the marking.

## **Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment**

### **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, in particular, 'explain' and 'evaluate'.

Categories such as preparation techniques, safe and hygienic storage of food, and sustainability are all topics that candidates should be well prepared for, and can appear in the question paper, year on year.

Please note, the specimen question paper or any of the past question papers must not be used in their entirety as a centre assessment for candidates and later submitted to SQA as evidence. These papers are freely available on SQA's website and could have been accessed by candidates, so are not deemed as appropriate evidence.

### **Assignment**

Centres should allow an appropriate amount of teaching and learning time to prepare candidates for the demands of writing a logical time plan and ensuring that dishes are served at the required time and at the correct temperature.

The time plan is not only an aid to help candidates organise themselves during the practical activity (essential tasks), but also there to remind them to carry out those activities which are often forgotten (desirable tasks), for example re-weighing of prepared ingredients (where required), clean as you go, tasting and seasoning, pre-heating oven and service dishes (where required). These are all tasks that many candidates forget to do during the practical activity. The time plan is a reminder that time must be made for these tasks during the practical activity and is not a re-write of the recipes. By including these activities candidates will be able to access all marks available.

When completing the equipment requisition section of the assignment, it is essential that candidates write some equipment for all three recipes to be able to access any marks in this section. Also, candidates must use the correct terminology when listing equipment, for example cutting board is not appropriate terminology for a chopping board.

For service details, candidates must ensure they serve the food as detailed in the recipe. If the recipe states a hot clean plate, then this must be specified in the service details. The candidate should also make it clear where the garnish or decoration will be located, either by a drawing or description. The marker and assessor must be able to visualise what the finished dish will look like, for the candidate to achieve the marks.

Centres are reminded that candidates must not have access to an electronic copy of the recipes when completing this assessment component, this is clearly stated in the 'Instructions for centres for the assignment and practical activity' document. It must also be completed in one sitting over an 1 hour and 45 minutes period, unless a candidate is entitled to extra time.

## **Practical activity**

Centres are reminded that candidates are only permitted to practice each of the exam dishes once, and the production of copycat recipes with only minor amendments, such as using different colour peppers etc is not allowed and is deemed in breach of SQA security protocols and considered malpractice.

At National 5, time plans are an important part of the course and adequate teaching time should be given to them, to allow candidates the confidence to at least attempt this aspect of the assignment.

It is essential that all candidates are given the opportunity to amend time plans and service details once they have been submitted to SQA. This is to ensure they are workable, and the candidate is not disadvantaged prior to carrying out the practical activity.

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

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. Under no circumstance should candidates be given access to the SQA PowerPoint presentation on SQA's secure site, as this is to aid the marking of the assessment and is not for candidate use.

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 you are unsure of any of these points, then please contact SQA.

## 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](#).