



Course report 2023

National 5 Practical Woodworking

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: 7,258

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 7,951

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	3,923	Percentage	49.3	Cumulative percentage	49.3	Minimum mark required	49
B	Number of candidates	1,870	Percentage	23.5	Cumulative percentage	72.9	Minimum mark required	42
C	Number of candidates	1,365	Percentage	17.2	Cumulative percentage	90	Minimum mark required	35
D	Number of candidates	456	Percentage	5.7	Cumulative percentage	95.8	Minimum mark required	28
No award	Number of candidates	337	Percentage	4.2	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 requirement to complete the question paper was removed for session 2022–23.

Practical activity

All centres used the practical activity assessment task for session 2022–23 from SQA's secure website, which was the only valid assessment.

The practical activity performed as expected. We have issued the same practical activity assessment task every session since 2019–20. Therefore, the demand has not changed.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Most candidates completed the practical element of the assessment task to a very high standard.

Many candidates produced incomplete or inadequate log books, which did not meet the National 5 standard.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Practical activity

Candidates should give time and consideration to the first two areas of the log book as they are worth 10 marks. The assessor completes the third area, 'safe working procedures', which is worth 5 marks. If candidates do not get the opportunity to fix naturally occurring machine tool, power tool, or tool care and maintenance issues, assessors can present them with scenarios. For example, an assessor could give a candidate a working drawing of a mortise and tenon joint, and ask them to set a mortise gauge accordingly, or present them with a blunt tool to repair.

Centres must assess 'measuring and marking out' before candidates cut joints. This gives candidates the opportunity to take remedial action and cut correctly measured and marked-out joints.

Centres must not award full marks for 'independence of work' if the practical activity is incomplete. The mark a candidate receives must reflect both the quantity and the quality of the work they produce. Candidates cannot receive full marks for incomplete work.

Centres must not alter the lengths or widths of material under any circumstances. Where possible, centres should source the material thickness specified in the assessment task. Centres can change the thickness only by exception, and they must amend the working drawings to take account of this. If centres do not amend the working drawings, candidates cannot gain any marks for 'measuring and marking', as all the sizes will be wrong relative to the thickness of the material used.

Centres must provide candidates with working drawings without any alterations (except where changes to thickness are necessary), and they cannot give candidates additional drawings, dimensions, or information.

Candidates cannot use machines to cut joints (unless specified by SQA in the practical activity assessment task).

Teachers and lecturers should read the 'instructions for teachers and lecturers' section of the practical activity assessment task carefully every year, as this can change from task to task.

When making assessment judgements on 'application of finish', assessors must consider the standard expected at National 5 level. Candidates should take care when choosing an appropriate finish to avoid blemishes such as:

- ◆ runs that are visible
- ◆ evidence of raised grain
- ◆ an accumulation of wax
- ◆ brush marks that can be seen
- ◆ uneven staining

Candidates can choose any of the finishes listed in the National 5 Practical Woodworking Course Specification. To achieve full marks, candidates must ensure they apply their chosen finish with no blemishes to all components of the finished product.

Where the marking instruction states 'All...', this refers to everything the candidate is required to do, and not everything that the candidate has done.

Centres should continue to make use of the [Understanding Standards website](#). This resource provides exemplification and supporting commentary of completed log books. Videos are also available on how to apply the marking instructions for the practical activity.

Session 2023–24

This course will return to full assessment requirements from session 2023–24 onwards. This means that candidates must complete the question paper and the annually issued practical activity. The practical activity will change every session.

We will publish a new version of the 'Practical activity assessment task: table mirror' (with distinct differences) on SQA's secure website by the end of October 2023. This will be **the only valid practical activity assessment task** for session 2023–24.

The [parts and materials document](#) is still relevant and is already published on the National 5 Practical Woodworking subject page.

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](#).