



Course report 2025

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 with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 1,384

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 1,328

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	145	10.9	10.9	84
B	250	18.8	29.7	72
C	327	24.6	54.4	60
D	325	24.5	78.8	48
No award	281	21.2	100%	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

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

In this report:

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

You can find statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

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

The question paper performed as expected, with evidence from marker's reports and feedback from centres suggesting 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.

In some cases, candidates' responses lacked the depth and detail required at this level.

Assignment

Both assignment briefs were well received and accessible to all candidates. The most popular brief was 'Develop a dessert using Fair Trade ingredients that is suitable for a café'.

Markers noted a wide range of marks and quality of responses across both briefs. In some cases, candidate responses lacked the relevant detail in the research and justification sections needed for Higher level. As a result, candidates were unable to effectively justify their chosen ingredients, features or cooking method in relation to their research evidence. It was also noted that some research lacked a specific focus.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1(c)

Many candidates performed well in the Dietary Reference Value (DRV) question. Most candidates used an appropriate structure and appropriate answering technique to successfully analyse the diet of a 32-year-old pregnant woman. Candidates who performed well in this question demonstrated a sound knowledge of nutrition and were able to apply this knowledge to the context of the question, the 32-year-old pregnant woman. Those candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the sources of nutrients which allowed them to explain the contribution the meal made to her diet.

Question 2(a)

Many candidates answered the star profile question well. These candidates used an appropriate answering technique to structure their responses. These candidates made clear reference to the salmon rice bowl, whilst also demonstrating their understanding of ratings linked to sensory attributes. Successful candidates were able to provide a detailed fact about the rating, an appropriate judgement on the suitability of the salmon rice bowl for adults and a consequence on the impact of the appeal to adults.

Question 3(a)

Some candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the stages of food product development. Candidates who performed well in this question correctly identified the stages of food product development and could explain stages in relation to the development of a range of desserts.

Question 4(a)

Many candidates performed well in the Scottish Dietary Goal question. These candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the specific dietary goals and were able to correctly quote the figures within the goal. These candidates provided examples of how a school canteen could help to meet the goals whilst successfully going onto evaluate these examples.

Assignment

Section 1(a): exploring the brief

Most candidates performed well in this section as they identified the relevant key issues and went on to provide an appropriate explanation or justification.

Section 1(b): research

Many candidates carried out relevant research that was clear and concise. They were able to generate good quality research by having a focused aim that was then met through appropriate research. These candidates had well-structured investigations that were clearly and logically presented. They used sources of research that were relevant to the brief. They were then able to finalise each investigation with concise conclusions and points of information that made it clear how the findings could lead to the development of a product.

Section 3: product testing

Most candidates tested the final product successfully using two different, yet appropriate, testing techniques. These candidates presented tests that followed the guidance on presenting results from the course specification, appendix 3.

Section 4(a): evaluation

Some candidates successfully evaluated their final product using the results of their testing. These candidates provided their responses in a well-structured evaluative way, using an appropriate technique.

Section 4(b): improving or adapting the product

Many candidates successfully identified appropriate improvements or adaptations or variations to their product. These were clearly justified against either the results of research and investigations or the results of testing whilst also making links to the brief. Candidates also described the improvements, adaptations or variations clearly, for example quantities were provided when an ingredient was identified as being increased.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1(a)

Some candidates were unable to fully explain dietary factors that are linked to coronary heart disease. In some cases, candidates were providing lifestyle factors instead of dietary factors. Some candidates were unable to demonstrate the connection between the dietary factor and coronary heart disease.

Question 1(d)

Some candidates' knowledge of genetic modification was poor and as a result they were unable to provide a correct fact about the use of genetically modified products and subsequently could not evaluate the impact of this on consumers' choice of food.

Question 1(e)

Candidates' knowledge of the Advertising Standards Authority as an organisation protecting consumers was poor. Many candidates had little knowledge of the role of this organisation and as a result were unable to access the marks. This consumer organisation is listed in the 'Skills, knowledge and understanding' section of the [course specification](#).

Question 2(b)

Some candidates were unable to explain how an Environmental Health Officer can protect the consumer when purchasing food. These candidates had poor knowledge of this organisation.

Question 2(c)

Some candidates were unable to provide an evaluative response of the contribution of carbohydrates in the diet. These candidates were unable to provide a response that demonstrated a sound knowledge of carbohydrates, instead they were providing responses that were either inaccurate or lacked detail.

Question 4(c)

Some candidates were unable to demonstrate knowledge of food packaging on either the consumer or the environment. As a result, they were unable to provide a connection between the packaging and the consumer or environment and as a result were unable to access all marks.

Question 5(a)

Many candidates were unable to explain ways that a balanced and varied diet can be beneficial to the health of the elderly. It was apparent that many candidates did not have sufficient knowledge of the dietary needs of the elderly as an identified group. This is a group of individuals that is listed within the 'Skills, knowledge and understanding' section of the [course specification](#).

Question 5(b)

Some candidates lacked the nutritional knowledge to allow them to demonstrate the connection and inter-relationship between vitamin C and iron.

Question 5(c)

Many candidates had little or no knowledge of the word 'sustainable'. Therefore, they were unable to evaluate the use of sustainable ingredients in a café. 'Sustainable' is

a term referenced in the 'Skills, knowledge and understanding' section of the [course specification](#).

Assignment

Section 2(a): describing the product

In many cases, candidates did not access full marks as they provided a recipe that lacked detail in the ingredients list or the method. Many candidates did not provide metric measurements for quantities of ingredients, and in the method section, they did not provide adequate information to allow the recipe to be reproduced with identical results.

Section 2(b): justification

Many candidates did not fully justify the features, ingredients and cooking method of their final product. In many cases, links to the research were missing and they did not provide a factual justification as to why the product was appropriate. In some cases, candidates did not make a link or connection to the assignment brief.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres must use the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding information in the course specification on the [Health and Food Technology subject page](#) on our website 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.

It is advisable that candidates have an opportunity to complete an exam-style assessment under timed conditions. If this can be done on more than one occasion it would be beneficial to candidates.

Reviewing candidates' knowledge at several stages of the course is recommended and candidates should have the opportunity to practice exam-style questions regularly. that contain appropriate and relevant command words. All areas of the course content should be covered.

Teachers and lecturers should support candidates by demonstrating the most appropriate ways to structure answers for each of the command words. This should be demonstrated from the beginning of the course to ensure they are fully understood.

The contemporary food issues topic continues to be an area of the course where candidates' knowledge could be improved. It is vital that candidates are supported through each of the areas of course content and that the contemporary food issues topic is scheduled into teaching time.

Candidates' knowledge of consumer organisations is an area of course content that has been highlighted as weak. It is vital that centres support candidates to learn the different organisations listed in the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding

section of the course specification. Candidates should then be able to demonstrate how these organisations protect the consumer in relation to food issues.

Centres should ensure that candidates understand each of the functional properties listed in the course content. Candidates should also be able to explain the impact of these when using ingredients within the product development process.

Candidates should have a good knowledge of all factors that affect consumer choice of foods, this includes all the ethical issues listed in the course specification.

For the Dietary Reference Value questions, candidates must ensure that they focus their answers on the context in the question. It is essential that candidates relate their responses to the individual, for example, the 32-year-old pregnant woman. To prepare candidates for this question centres must cover all the individual groups listed in the course content. Candidates must not simply state the function of the nutrient, instead they must link this function to the individual in the context of the question.

When candidates analyse the contribution of the meal, they must not offer an alternative food item or meal, instead they must only analyse the ingredients and foods in the meal provided. Teachers and lecturers should teach candidates to analyse three different nutrients and to use an appropriate technique to do so. If candidates provide more than three evaluations, then their answers will lack the depth required at Higher level.

For the current dietary advice questions, it is advised that centres use the most up-to-date dietary advice. Presently, this is outlined in the Scottish Dietary Goals, published in March 2016. Candidates should use these goals when answering exam questions and must be able to include accurate figures to allow them to access the full allocation of marks.

In the star profile question, candidates should be taught to provide a fact that is detailed. The facts must reflect a clear understanding of both the attribute ratings and the reasoning behind those ratings. For example, the candidate should be able to state the rating and explain why the attribute is rated like this. Otherwise, candidates will be providing an incomplete fact. They must then also be able to

provide an appropriate judgement and a consequence that is linked to the fact. In some cases, candidates were providing responses that were not fully evaluated.

Assignment

Centres must not provide candidates with too much scaffolding and support to complete the assignment. Centres should ensure they follow the advice provided in the SQA coursework assessment task and course specification to ensure that any advice and support is classed as 'reasonable assistance'.

It is the responsibility of centres to ensure that candidates complete the assignment in the correct time frame and do not spend more than four hours writing up the research and any longer than one hour to complete the evaluations.

Sections 1, 2 and 3 are conducted under some supervision and control. Candidates may carry out investigations and research outwith the learning and teaching setting.

Sections 1, 2, and 3 of the assignment should be completed with a degree of teacher or lecturer supervision. Candidates may undertake investigations and research independently, including outside of the structured learning and teaching environment.

Section 4: the evaluation must be completed under direct supervision. Candidates are allocated one hour to complete this section and should have access to their previously completed work during this time.

Please ensure that all parts of the assignment are completed using the SQA candidate workbook. Alternative formats or templates must not be used.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that all candidate evidence has been submitted to SQA, including all photographs and all pages of the research. If parts of the assignment are missing, then candidates are unlikely to be able to access all marks.

For the research section of the assignment candidates must not produce research that is too similar. Each candidate should produce investigations that vary in layout,

focus and results. Although candidates may use the same research technique, the content should be different across candidates.

The aims for the research and investigations should be clear and concise. Many candidates gave aims that are too long and complicated which in turn makes it more difficult for candidates to access marks.

Research and investigations should be more focused on the key issues in the brief, for example 'fairtrade' or 'café'.

Percentages or pie charts should not be used to summarise data; individual results must be provided.

Candidates should avoid using the term 'popular' in their assignment. Many candidates use this term to justify their food product; however, they have no factual evidence to suggest that this would make their product popular.

In section 2(a) it is essential that candidates produce a detailed recipe that includes metric measurements for all ingredients. All ingredients used in the development of the product must be included in the ingredients list. As this is a product development task, the method must be detailed enough to allow for the product to be made with identical results. Portion sizes, cooking methods, cooking times, bakeware sizes and serving temperature, for example 'served hot' should be included in the recipe.

In section 2(b), candidates must provide a justification as to why they have chosen an ingredient or feature or a cooking method whilst also linking to the brief and the research.

Candidates **should not** produce two dishes or accompaniments.

In section 4(b), candidates should include a clear description of any improvement, adaption or variation of the product. For example, the candidate should state 'add 50g of strawberries' instead of stating 'increase the fruit or strawberry content'. Also, for each of the improvements, adaptations or variations the candidate must provide an explanation as to why each one is appropriate, linked to the needs of the brief and the information gathered in research and investigations and/or testing.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, we aim 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, we hold 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 our 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. We 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.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).