



Course report 2025

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 with the published assessment documents and marking instructions. For information on the internally assessed component of this course: performance, please refer to the [2024-25 Qualification Verification Summary Report](#) on the subject page of our website.

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: 8,072

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 8,423

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	2,642	31.4	31.4	73
B	2,684	31.9	63.2	63
C	1,864	22.1	85.4	53
D	883	10.5	95.8	43
No award	350	4.2	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

All components performed as expected.

Question paper

This year's paper was considered fair in terms of course coverage and overall level of demand, with a range of questions suitable for both A and C-level candidates at National 5. Candidates achieved on average slightly lower marks than last year.

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.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

There was a slight drop in candidates' average marks this year compared to 2024; however, most performed well in questions 3(a), (b) and (c).

Assignment

There was a slight improvement in the average mark for the assignment this year compared to 2024.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

This year there were a few questions where candidates did not perform well. For some candidates, the knowledge was there, but the technique of answering these types of questions was not.

Surprisingly, questions linking to practical activities such as describing grilling and marinating were not done well. Some candidates seemed to have trouble articulating how each of these skills should be carried out. Most candidates did not achieve any marks for question 2(a)(i) and many candidates did not get the mark for question 2(b)(i).

Storage of ingredients also seemed to have been poorly done as most candidates struggled to explain why the ingredients in the question should be stored in the way described. Many candidates did not seem to understand that when storing an open

can of tomatoes in the fridge, it must first be removed from the tin and put into an airtight container.

Most candidates did not do well with the evaluation question 3(d). Although they demonstrated good knowledge of the ingredients, many candidates provided incomplete responses, which limited their ability to gain marks. This indicates a potential gap in learning for some candidates.

Other questions that candidates found demanding were:

- Question 1(a): many candidates did not read the subheadings within this question, of reduce, remove and add an ingredient, so did not achieve any marks, as they often placed a correct response under the wrong heading. Some candidates also identified adding more lemon to the dish to help meet current dietary advice to eat more fruit and vegetables. However, candidates would have needed to add a different fruit for this piece of current dietary advice to have been applicable.
- Question 1(b): many candidates could not explain the function of butter or lemon zest in the cheesecake, but instead described the ingredient's purpose, so therefore did not achieve the marks for this question.
- Question 1(c): many candidates could describe one sustainability target linked to the use of Scottish produce, but not two.
- Question 2(d): many candidates could describe how ingredients should be stored but they could not explain fully why each method of storage was suitable.

Assignment

This year most candidates attempted all three sections of the assignment, which was an improvement on previous years. However, when it came to the service details many candidates forgot to mention the placing of the mango dressing with the fritters or the placing of the chocolate drizzle with the dessert. As a result, they were unable to access all available marks.

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. It was evident this year that many candidates did not understand what is required to answer explain or evaluate questions.

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

When preparing candidates to answer the current dietary advice question, centres should ensure candidates can practice these types of questions with both subheadings and no subheadings.

Candidates should be supplied with a calculator, if they do not have their own, to complete the costing questions in the question paper.

Please note, the specimen question paper or any of the past 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 to be appropriate evidence. When creating prelim assessment papers, centres are advised to use three different papers to ensure a valid paper. If this advice is not followed, the evidence cannot be used for exceptional circumstances purposes if the occasion arises.

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. If for example, a dish

is to be served straight from the oven it is deemed to be hot, unless the recipe stipulates otherwise. If a candidate has extra time, the spacing between services should still follow the following format. The main is served 15 minutes after the starter, the dessert is served 10 minutes after the main and the exam finishes 5 minutes after the dessert is served.

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. 'Spoon' would not be appropriate terminology for 'tablespoon'.

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

Centres must send the originals of the assignment to SQA for marking, not a photocopied time plan, or the typed amended version, as the photocopies were difficult for the marking team to mark especially if they were originally written in pencil.

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

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

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](#).