

Course report 2026

National 5 Health and Food Technology, SCQF level 5

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question paper and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 1,539

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 1,569

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	540	34.4	34.4	84
B	413	26.3	60.7	72
C	337	21.5	82.2	60
D	171	10.9	93.1	48
No award	108	6.9	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find [statistical reports](#) on our website.

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's 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 make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use 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.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

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.

How the course assessment performed

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected. Markers and centres reported that the question paper was fair and provided appropriate coverage of course content, with a balanced range of question types. Most of the candidates accessed the full range of marks and there was good differentiation for A-C level candidates.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected.

The majority of candidates chose the 'Develop an iron-rich street food dish' brief and performance in this brief was marginally better than the 'Develop a one-pot savoury dish including Scottish ingredients'.

Candidates were able to access the full range of marks, however, some candidates submitted assignments with missing photographs and/or pages.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

Some candidates had difficulty distinguishing between 'describe' and 'explain' questions, with some answers lacking the detail required at this level however, overall performance improved in the question paper this year.

Candidates' knowledge of nutrition in terms of functions and sources was strong and candidates performed well in these questions.

Question 1(a): Most candidates could state one function and name one food source of both iron and vitamin A.

Question 1(b): Most candidates could describe two practical ways to reduce salt consumption in the diet.

Question 2(a): Performance in this question continues to improve, with most candidates scoring at least four marks by successfully evaluating the suitability of the 70-year-old man's typical daily meals, taking account of the dietary reference values for his age group and his inactivity due to a broken hip.

Question 2(c): Many candidates could describe the functional properties of eggs in a baked product.

Question 3(c): Some candidates could explain one way each problem identified by the environmental health officer could cause food poisoning, with most candidates achieving at least one mark.

Question 4(a): Most candidates correctly identified two stages in the development process of a new food product and some candidates gave detailed explanations. A few candidates identified product testing which was excluded within the question.

Question 4(c): Most candidates correctly explained how both introductory low prices and free sampling could affect consumers' choice of food.

Question 4(d): Many candidates correctly identified a function of Vitamin E.

Question 5(c): Most candidates correctly identified the recycling symbol, and many candidates explained how it may influence consumer choice.

Question 6(a): Most candidates correctly identified two pieces of statutory information found on a food label and explained the benefit of each point of information to the consumer.

Question 6(d): Most candidates gave a reason why water is important in the diet.

Assignment

Section 1(a): exploring the brief

Most candidates correctly identified three key issues from the brief, and many candidates explained why each one was important. However, a few candidates did not give three accurate explanations and gave brief statements instead which did not correctly explain why the key issue was important.

Section 1(b): research

Most candidates used valid research techniques. The most common techniques chosen by candidates were internet research, questionnaire and interview with relevant expert. A few candidates chose to carry out a focus group; however, this was completed with limited success.

Most candidates presented their research logically and provided detailed conclusions. Many candidates who chose to carry out an interview and/or a questionnaire did so accurately and were able to gain all the marks available. However, it was noted that a few (although more than expected) candidates did not state a source for the questionnaire or give a reason why the person they interviewed was an expert.

Some candidates found it difficult to carry out internet research that was relevant to the brief and therefore did not produce conclusions that could be taken forward towards developing a product.

Section 3: product testing

Many candidates completed this section well. Most candidates carried out a rating test and made at least three accurate conclusions from the data.

A few candidates did not give any reasons for choosing to carry out this test, and as a result they were unable to gain all available marks.

A few candidates did not give individual results and used averages or percentages in their conclusions and therefore were not able to gain marks.

Section 4(a)(iii): evaluation

Most candidates completed this section well. Most candidates gave carefully considered improvements or variations and explained the reasons for them in detail.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

Question 1(c): Few candidates correctly explained two health benefits of reducing salt in the diet. Many candidates only gave a fact, such as decreases the risk of coronary heart disease, but did not give any explanation or reason why this was the case.

Question 1(d): Few candidates could explain the advice Food Standards Scotland can give to consumers, and many candidates did not attempt this question.

Question 2(b): Some candidates did not explain how online shopping affected the 70-year-old man's choice of food. They either described why online shopping may benefit his circumstances or gave reasons why online shopping is good rather than mentioning the food he purchases.

Question 3(a): Most candidates could describe changes that could be made to the ingredients in the cheeseburger, but many candidates did not relate their explanations to current dietary advice. Instead, they explained how the changes could help to reduce the risk of dietary diseases which was not relevant for the question.

Question 4(b): Many candidates accurately evaluated one use of organic ingredients in the ready meal; however, most candidates did not give enough information to gain all three marks.

Question 5(a): Most candidates gave descriptions rather than explanations of how the dietary diseases could be prevented.

Question 5(b): Most candidates could identify two rules a manufacturer should follow when carrying out sensory testing; however, only a few candidates correctly explained why the rules are important. A few candidates identified types of sensory test rather than rules for carrying them out.

Question 6(b): Many candidates gave descriptions rather than explanations of why factory farming could affect consumer food choice.

Assignment

Section 2(b): justification

Some candidates gave ingredient lists that included imperial measures or used vague terminology such as 'small amount' or 'pinch'. As this is a product development exercise, these terms may not produce consistent results each time the product is made.

Some candidates gave a method that did not make reference to all the ingredients or did not include instructions as to how they should be prepared.

Some candidates did not make clear reference to the brief or use the identified key issues, relying on information from investigations to justify the inclusion of ingredients or features.

Some candidates used the same piece of information to justify multiple ingredients.

Section 1(b)(iv): demonstrating links between the investigation

Some candidates are copying and pasting descriptions of products from websites. These descriptions do not accurately describe the product — they are designed to tempt consumers to purchase the product or make the recipe and therefore do not give the correct information needed to gain marks.

A few candidates gave complete recipes with no further information, links to recipes with no description, or very limited information about their ideas.

Some candidates did not relate the reasons for their ideas to the brief and/or their investigations.

Section 3: product testing

A few candidates did not display individual results to the tests and used percentages or averages.

Preparing candidates for assessment

You should make sure you are using the most up-to-date versions of our course documents. They are available on [Health and Food Technology subject page](#) on the Qualification Scotland website.

The appendix section gives valuable information regarding requirements for the assignment.

You should encourage candidates to read the instructions in the assignment and the whole question in the paper carefully to ensure they gain all the available marks.

Question paper

Encourage candidates to practise answering exam-style questions in the allotted time. You should review marking instructions from previous question papers with candidates, as these include helpful model answers and guidance, particularly in relation to the different command words.

Candidates should have a clear understanding of how to interpret and apply each command word and they should ensure their answers directly link back to the question.

You must make sure candidates understand the difference in depth required between 'describe' and 'explain' questions and give them opportunities to practise this. Many candidates were disadvantaged this year as they did not fully explain their answers.

Answers to evaluation questions should include a judgement and an impact relating to the detail in the question.

You should encourage candidates to take time to read each question carefully so that they do not:

- miss important information
- continue with a thread from the previous question
- give information which has not been asked for

You should make sure candidates are aware of the knowledge and understanding they may be assessed on in the question paper. This information is outlined in the 'mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding' section of the course specification.

You should make sure that you have covered all areas of course content and that candidates can answer all types of question. For example, you should make sure candidates have detailed knowledge of organisations that protect consumers and Food Standards Scotland as candidates did not give detailed answers this year.

Assignment

You must not give candidates too much support when they are completing the assignment.

You must make sure that all sheets are submitted for marking. Some assignments were submitted with missing or poorly formatted pages and/or photographs. Make sure candidates number their sheets and use the checklist before they sign the flyleaf.

You should check that all information and diagrams are legible. If candidates include diagrams or pie charts that rely on a colour key for displaying information, these must be submitted in colour or clearly notated to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged.

Descriptions of appropriate product ideas should be written by the candidate and not copied and pasted from a website. The marker should be able to visualise the product — the description should not read like an advertisement for the product.

Justifications of ingredients or features should each be linked to a different source of information which can easily be found in the investigations. Candidates should not use the same source or question for each.

Candidates should not use a key issue as a feature for the justification section. For example, some candidates used 'savoury' as both a key issue and a feature.

Candidates should ensure that they refer to the brief and at least one key issue in each justification.

Recipes should be in realistic proportions and should always use metric measurements and British ingredient terminology. This is important as it is a product development exercise, and the recipe should, in theory, be able to be reproduced numerous times with identical results. Candidates must ensure all ingredients in the recipe are referenced in the method and that there is no duplication of preparation techniques.

In the product testing section, individual results are required, an appropriate key must be provided and used accurately, and the conclusions should come from the results of the test.

You must not provide candidates with a proforma for sensory testing. If they use a proforma they will not be able to gain all the marks for that section. You must ensure that sensory testing is completed individually and that candidates devise their own key.