

Course report 2026

National 5 Practical Cake Craft, 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

For information about the practical activity you should read the verification summary 2025–26 on the [Practical Cake Craft page](#) of our website.

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: 1,274

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 1,149

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	259	22.5	22.5	82
B	328	28.5	51.1	74
C	284	24.7	75.8	66
D	152	13.2	89.0	58
No award	126	11.0	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

Stage 1: designing — assignment, section 1

Stage 1 performed as expected. Most candidates completed all tasks in stage 1. Most candidates clearly demonstrated that they completed the design illustration, resources and plan of work before completing the practical activity.

Stage 2: implementing — practical activity

Stage 2 performed as expected and candidate performance was similar to previous years. Most cakes presented for verification were prepared to a high standard, and a few cakes were outstanding.

Stage 3: demonstrating knowledge and understanding — assignment, section 2

Stage 3 performed somewhat as expected. Feedback from the marking team indicated that stage 3 was fair in terms of course coverage and overall level of demand.

Stage 4: evaluating — assignment, section 3

Stage 4 performed as expected.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Stage 1: designing — assignment, section 1

Most candidate design illustrations were completed to a very high standard and designs demonstrated individuality within the design brief. Most candidates provided a detailed drawing that clearly included the occasion, cake type, coatings, the size of the cake and cake board, and the finishing techniques to be demonstrated.

Some candidates demonstrated good practice when their illustration was coloured in their chosen colour scheme and completed on a separate A3 sheet of paper. This allowed them the space to provide a detailed drawing of their cake and to showcase their chosen finishing techniques.

Most candidates identified the required equipment for their finishing techniques and described how to use it. Most candidates consistently completed their plans of work well. Most candidates created well-sequenced plans of work that provided adequate detail about how they planned to make their cake.

Stage 2: implementing — practical activity

Most candidates performed well in the practical activity and demonstrated a wide range of themes and finishing techniques in their cakes. Most candidates demonstrated five finishing decoration techniques, which allowed many of them to access the maximum marks available.

Stage 3: demonstrating knowledge and understanding — assignment, section 2

Most candidates explained the suitability of their cake for the chosen occasion. While most candidates identified a possible fault with their chosen cake, some candidates struggled to fully explain its cause or how to prevent it.

Stage 4: evaluating — assignment, section 3

More candidates than in previous years gave evaluative comments related to the specific questions asked.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Stage 1: designing — assignment, section 1

A few candidates did not specify the number of embossing or commercial cutters that they would use in their design illustration.

A few candidates did not give enough detail in their list of equipment. For example, they may have stated ‘cutter’ rather than ‘small star cutter’, or ‘crimper’ rather than ‘heart crimper’.

A few candidates did not give a detailed description of how they would use each piece of equipment on their cake. For example, they stated that they would use it ‘to crimp’ rather than, ‘I will use the wave crimper to crimp the edge of the cake board to ensure a uniform crimp is achieved.’

In the plan of work, a few candidates did not protect the tin before baking and did not specify that cakes should be cooled completely or cold before storing.

Stage 2: implementing — practical activity

A few candidates did not allow sufficient space on their cake board for their finishing technique, such as embossing or texturing, and then covered their technique with the cake. As the entire technique was no longer visible, this could not gain marks.

A few candidates confused embossing and crimping, stating that they were crimping when they were embossing, which led to marks being amended during verification.

Stage 3: demonstrating knowledge and understanding — assignment, section 2

Overall, candidates found this component more demanding than last year. Most candidates did not answer questions that required them to ‘explain’ their response

well. Most candidates attempted the questions and gave accurate facts but did not go on to explain their responses.

Candidates had to explain two functional properties of two ingredients in their chosen recipe. Many candidates gave an accurate fact about an ingredient but did not then provide a full explanation. A few candidates did not answer this question.

Most candidates attempted this question and gave accurate facts about their chosen processing techniques but did not provide a full explanation. Some candidates completely repeated the question in their answer, which gained no marks.

Stage 4: evaluating — assignment, section 3

More candidates than in previous years gave valid evaluative comments. Candidates must give a fact, an opinion and a consequence relating to the question asked in order to achieve 1 mark per answer.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Assignment

Candidates must complete all components of stage 1 of the assignment before they start to make the cake. They must complete design illustrations, resources and plans of work. If candidates complete any part of the plan retrospectively, they will not receive any marks.

Candidates should have access to the brief for the design illustration and should understand what must be included. You should encourage them to complete this in their own words and without support.

Candidates should complete the design illustration, resources and plan of work independently, under exam conditions. You must not provide templates.

It is good practice to complete the design illustration on a separate blank A4 or A3 sheet of paper, as it allows more space for the illustration.

Encourage candidates to write as clearly as possible into their workbook, so that markers can read their responses correctly. Candidates can also type the information for the design illustration and attach it to the design illustration sheet. This makes it easier for the candidate to follow their design, and for the marker to identify the required information.

Candidates must identify the shape of their cake and cake board in their illustration. Many candidates leave out this detail, as they assume it is implied by their illustration.

Candidates should refer to the coating in their assignment as sugarpaste, and not fondant.

Candidates should use metric, rather than imperial, measurements for recipes, cake tins and cake boards.

You must photocopy candidates' original design illustration and send the original to Qualifications Scotland. For the practical activity, you should provide the candidate with a photocopy of their design illustration to prevent them from altering it and

making the design illustration retrospectively. You must not submit scanned copies of design illustrations.

You must provide colour photographs. A few centres submitted black and white photographs, and candidates from these centres could not access marks for evaluative comment that mentioned the colours in the candidates' final design.

You must explain how to use the individual command words, and candidates should be aware of what is expected of them when they answer these questions. You should give them the opportunity to practise these skills.

You should make sure candidates have developed a good understanding of the entire course by the time they are completing stages 3 and 4.

For stages 3 and 4, candidates must use their own words. Stages 3 and 4 are a closed-book assessment and should be carried out under supervised conditions.

Practical activity

You should encourage candidates to demonstrate five finishing decoration techniques to maximise the marks that they can gain. Candidates must include at least two of the following techniques among their five finishing techniques: crimping, modelling and piping. These techniques can be awarded up to 9 marks each. Candidates should select a further three techniques, each of which can be awarded up to 4 marks, from embossing, stencilling, texturing, and using commercial aids or cutters. Candidates may choose to incorporate more than five finishing decoration techniques in their cake, but they will not receive marks for techniques completed in addition to the five selected for assessment.

Candidates who choose to incorporate their chosen 4-mark technique more than once should be aware that the whole technique will be marked according to the criteria in the marking instructions, rather than awarding marks for the best examples of the technique. The same applies to 9-mark techniques. Some candidates attempted three different examples of piping rather than two examples to gain 9 marks. However, if one example is poorly executed, this is considered when awarding marks for the technique.

When choosing what type of cake to make, candidates should be aware that their cake will be stored and kept for verification. This may limit their choice of cake to bake and the coatings that they apply.

You should provide candidates with two cake boards to give them more space to demonstrate finishing techniques, such as eight repetitions or texturing equivalent to 25% of the top of the cake.

Techniques must be clearly visible to gain marks.

You should make candidates aware of the difference between simple, straightforward, and detailed models to help them to maximise the marks that can be awarded.

Visiting verifiers noted that a few candidates used texturing on a model to add detail and expected both texturing and modelling to be awarded marks. You should make candidates aware that if they make detailed models, they can use additional techniques such as texturing or embossing to add detail. However, when these techniques are used to add detail to a model, they form part of the modelling and cannot also gain marks as separate techniques. Candidates can only gain marks for one technique.