

Course report 2026

National 5 Practical Cookery, 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.

Note: we've made changes to the course assessment from session 2026–27.

Check your [subject page](#) for more information.

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 cookery 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: 8,423

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 8,912

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	2,668	29.9	29.9	73
B	2,770	31.1	61.0	63
C	2,010	22.6	83.6	53
D	956	10.7	94.3	43
No award	508	5.7	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

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. Candidates achieved on average slightly higher marks than last year.

Assignment

All centres used our published recipes to carry out the assignment. The assignment is marked by Qualifications Scotland. In the assignment, candidates write a logical plan of work, requisition equipment and give service details on how they would prepare and serve the three recipes.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

Most candidates performed well in questions 1(a), 3(a), 3(b) and 3(c).

Assignment

Many candidates performed well in requisitioning equipment and completing service details.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

- Q1(b): many candidates could identify a suitable cooking method for a burger, but most candidates were unable to explain an advantage of this cooking method.
- Q1(c): most candidates could not explain why eggs and breadcrumbs are used to make a burger, and as a result they did not gain marks for this question.
- Q2(a): most candidates could not explain the term 'cross-contamination'. They could identify that it is important to wash hands, for example after handling raw eggs, but they could not explain why it was important and instead used the term 'to prevent cross-contamination', which did not allow them to gain the mark for this question.
- Q2(b): most candidates were not able to explain why the ingredients should be stored in that way.
- Q2(c): most candidates did not perform well in the evaluation question. Although they demonstrated some knowledge of the ingredients, most candidates provided incomplete responses, which limited their ability to gain marks in this question.
- Q2(d): some candidates struggled to come up with more than one safety rule when using hot pots and pans. Many candidates instead referred to general kitchen safety rules, which did not allow them to gain the second mark for this question.

- Q3(d): most candidates did not gain marks for this question. Candidates encountered the most difficulty with the organic fruit and vegetables and the Fairtrade foods parts of the question.

Assignment

Most candidates attempted all three sections of the assignment. However, for the service details, some candidates mentioned the icing sugar for the dessert but did not mention it being drizzled on the top of the pie. Some candidates included additional decorations, which is not permitted, and as a result, they were unable to access all available marks.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper

- You must ensure that candidates are well prepared for the question paper by ensuring that they know how to respond to each command word.
- You should ensure you cover categories such as preparation techniques, safe and hygienic storage of food, cross-contamination, and sustainability as these topics can appear in the question paper, year on year.
- For the current dietary advice question, you should ensure candidates can practise these types of questions with subheadings and no subheadings.
- You should make sure candidates are supplied with a calculator if they do not have their own, so they can complete the costing questions in the question paper.

You must not use the specimen question paper or any of the past papers in their entirety as a centre assessment for candidates. They cannot be used as appropriate evidence because they are freely available on our website.

When you create prelim assessment papers, you should use a minimum of three different papers. If you do not follow this advice, the evidence cannot be used for exceptional circumstances purposes.

Assignment

There will be no assignment next year, however aspects of the assignment may appear in the question paper. Please read the revised National 5 Practical Cookery Course Specification on the [subject page](#) of our website and the revised specimen question paper for exemplification.