



Common questions about National 5 Hospitality: Practical Cake Craft

Coursework assessment

What is the difference between texturing and embossing?

Texturing

Texturing is achieved by using a scribing tool to create an irregular surface. This technique must be used before the icing sets. Examples include grass, wood or brick effects. Using brown sugar or crushed biscuit for example does not meet the criteria for texturing. To achieve 4 marks for texturing in the practical activity, candidates must apply texture to the equivalent of at least 25% of the top of the cake. If texturing is used to add detail to models, for example to create hair or teddy bear fur, this is marked as detail for modelling, and not as texturing.

Embossing

Embossing is applied to soft sugarpaste with an individual specialist tool to create specific individual designs, guidelines for piping (for example lettering), or an overall design on the top and/or side elevations of cakes or a cake board. To achieve 4 marks for embossing in the practical activity, candidates must make at least eight separate impressions.

Impression mats and embossing rolling pins

If candidates use impression mats or embossing rolling pins, they are more likely to meet the criteria for texturing. In some cases, however, they could meet the criteria for embossing. Use of impression mats or embossing rolling pins must always be marked using the detailed marking instructions for the practical activity. If the

technique is to be marked as embossing, there must be at least eight separate repetitions to meet the criteria for up to 4 marks to be awarded.

Does texturing on a model count as a separate technique or is this just modelling, for example a textured teddy bear? Would the candidate get marks for both?

No. Adding texture to a model adds detail. One model cannot be treated as two different finishing decoration techniques.

For texturing, is it 25% of the top of the cake or the entire area of the cake (top and sides)?

25% of the top of the cake.

Can you get marks for piping on top of crimping?

If a candidate pipes on top of their crimping, marks can only be awarded for their piping. Marks would not be awarded for crimping in this situation as not all the technique can be seen.

If the design illustration shows shell piping around bottom and top of cake but the resources say star nozzle used to pipe stars at bottom of cake and shell nozzle used around top — how does this impact the mark?

Plans can change. As markers, we would mark what the candidate planned.

For stencils what constitutes four times? What about lettering?

If the candidate is using individual letter stencils, they would need to choose a word that is more than four letters long. If the stencil is the full word, they would need to place the word stencil on the cake four times.

Do candidates have to state the size of cutters they are using, for example 2.5cm?

They should imply some detail about which cutter they plan to use. Small, medium, large would suffice but they can measure it if they wish.

What happens if a candidate does not select two of the 9-mark finishing decoration techniques in their practical activity?

To achieve all 30 marks for finishing decoration techniques, a candidate must demonstrate two of the 9-mark techniques.

A candidate who demonstrates one 9-mark technique will only be able to achieve a maximum of 21 marks, that is, up to 9 marks for the one 9-mark technique selected, plus up to 4 marks each for three less complex techniques.

A candidate who does not demonstrate any of the 9-mark techniques will only be able to achieve a maximum of 12 marks, that is, up to 4 marks each for three less complex techniques.

A candidate who demonstrates all three 9-mark techniques must indicate in their candidate workbook which two techniques they want to be assessed. They will not be awarded any marks for the third 9-mark technique. A third 9-mark technique cannot be marked as a 4-mark technique.

Detailed marking instructions for finishing decoration techniques can be found in the National 5 Practical Cake Craft assignment and practical activity assessment task.

Why are some of the finishing decoration techniques in the practical activity worth more marks than others?

Piping, modelling and crimping are more complex than the other finishing decoration techniques listed in the course specification. Consequently, candidates can be awarded up to 9 marks for demonstrating these more complex techniques if they meet all the criteria in the detailed marking instructions. However, if a candidate only demonstrates a limited amount of the technique, or does not meet all the criteria,

then they cannot achieve all the available marks. To achieve all 30 marks for finishing decoration techniques, a candidate must demonstrate two of these techniques.

How is modelling marked in the practical activity?

To achieve all 9 marks for modelling in the practical activity, candidates must produce at least three detailed models. The criteria for models can be found in the detailed marking instructions in the National 5 Practical Cake Craft assignment and practical activity assessment task.

If a candidate includes modelled flowers in their design, then these must be modelled from a ball of a suitable modelling medium, and include all features appropriate to the flower, such as petals, stamens, calyces and leaves. Flowers produced using cutters or models produced from moulds do not meet the criteria for models and should be marked according to the criteria for use of commercial aids or cutters.

Models that do not meet the criteria for 'detailed' should be marked against the criteria for 'straightforward' and awarded marks accordingly (for example people or animals where features have insufficient detail). Similarly, models that do not meet the criteria for 'straightforward' should be marked against the criteria for 'simple' and awarded marks accordingly (for example simple shapes like parcels).

How detailed do models need to be to be allocated a potential 9 marks?

It is difficult to say without showing an example. However, as a rough guide, if a model of an animal or person has facial features, use of different colours, shapes and possibly textures, they would be considered 'detailed'.

Is it necessary to include dates and times in the plan of work?

Specific dates and times are not required. Good practice would be either to use the key steps indicated in the candidate workbook, or to indicate that tasks are completed on, for example, day 1, day 2 and so on.

Do boards and cake sizes need to be in centimetres? Or can they be done in inches?

Centimetres is best practice but candidates will not be penalised for using inches.

If candidates don't trim their rich fruit cake because they are using marzipan, does this mean they get 0 marks in the practical as the 'technique hasn't been executed'?

Adding marzipan to a cake and levelling it that way 'counts' as trimming/levelling so they would be awarded marks if carried out correctly.

In the plan of work do candidates need to state the quantity of sugar paste or marzipan they are using to cover the cake?

No.

What happens if the candidate has no recipe or if there are omissions or it is wrong?

The specific marks for the recipe have been removed as the candidate should simply be choosing a recipe from a selection from their teacher. They should not be re-writing it.

Only pictures of the final cakes are required in part 2. Does that mean that pictures of plugged cakes are not required now?

Yes, that is correct.

Is it acceptable to use the Stage 3 and 4 closed book for a prelim?

Yes.

Can candidates have a recipe for stages 3 and 4?

No. There are five basic ingredients that they can answer questions on; candidates should know what these are.

Where can I find additional support materials?

Understanding Standards materials relating to course assessment can be found in the Understanding Standards section of SQA's secure website. PowerPoint presentations and workshop materials, including a specimen question paper, are available. For more information about Understanding Standards materials, please visit: www.sqa.org.uk/understandingstandards

You will find general questions and answers about National Qualifications on our website at www.sqa.org.uk/faq

Important: From 1 February 2026, Qualifications Scotland becomes fully operational, replacing SQA and becoming the new national awarding body. This document will remain current and you can continue to use it. It will be updated in the style of Qualifications Scotland when it's next due for review.