



Alternative Certification Model 2020–21: National QA Exercise Key Messages

Subject	Practical Cookery
Level	National 5

This report provides information on themes emerging from the national quality assurance exercise, which is part of the Alternative Certification Model for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

A sample of candidates' assessed work from selected centres was reviewed to determine whether assessment was in line with the national standard. The evidence submitted may have been partial or incomplete and is unlikely to have represented all of the evidence that will be gathered to allow the centre to determine a provisional result.

The centres selected for review in this subject and at this level have been provided with specific feedback on the evidence that they submitted. The comments below highlight key points about the assessment approaches and instruments used and the sampled centres' assessment judgements, for all centres delivering the subject at this level to reflect upon and make any appropriate adjustments.

Section 1: Comments on approach to assessment

This has been a challenging year for both centre staff and candidates, and it is clear from the evidence submitted the amount of work that has taken place to support candidates during these difficult times. Centres submitted a range of evidence to be reviewed, covering all three components of the course. Some centres devised their own assessment materials, while others used the published SQA assessment materials.

The evidence submitted ranged from partially completed to fully complete, and covered the question paper, assignment and practical activity. It was clear that the majority of centre staff had read and followed the subject-specific guidance.

Component 1: question paper

The majority of centres used the SQA 2021 question paper. Some centres completed it in one sitting, while others split it over two sittings, but still gave candidates the appropriate allocation of time. Centres who created their own question papers, did tend to pitch at the correct level but, for some assessors, this presented problems when it came to marking. Some centres used previously published papers to assess their candidates' level of understanding. However, centres are reminded that these papers cannot be used in their entirety as evidence for provisional grades because they are in the public domain and so are not a valid form of assessment.

Component 2: assignment

A few centres submitted evidence for this area of the course. Most of them followed the subject-specific guidance and used previously published SQA recipes from 2017 onwards. However, centres that did not follow these guidelines encountered problems when it came to marking.

Component 3: practical activity

Most centres used the unit assessment support pack recipes for cookery skills, techniques and processes (spiced leek and potato soup with melba toast and apple meringue pie), as recommended in the subject-specific guidance. Evidence for this area of the course included photographic evidence, supported with a commentary. However, some of the evidence submitted did not make it clear how, exactly, candidates achieved marks. For any practical assessment there should be some form of written record to support candidate performance and identify where marks have been awarded.

Very few centres encountered any problems with their approach to assessment.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

During the review process, the majority of centre judgements were in line with national standards.

Component 1: question paper

In most centres, marker judgement for 'describe' and 'costing' questions met the standard, however marking for 'explain' and 'evaluate' questions was less consistent. For explain questions, many markers accepted a statement without any real explanation. For evaluate responses, candidates must include judgement and/or opinion to gain the marks. As a result, many question papers were marked leniently. This was even more evident in centre-devised question papers, where marking instructions lacked sufficient exemplification of requirements, as set out in the 2021 SQA marking instructions.

There are many examples of these types of questions on SQA's Understanding Standards website to support markers' understanding.

Component 2: assignment

Marking of equipment lists and service details generally met the standard.

Marks for the assignment appeared lenient, as some makers failed to give appropriate weight to the desirable tasks when assessing the effectiveness of the time plan. Many of the time plans had most of the essential tasks listed, but very few of the desirable tasks. As a result, they achieved higher marks than they should have. When allocating marks to the time plan, it is important to ensure the plan is logical. Some candidates were given high marks for recording all essential tasks, without their plan actually being logical, so these centres were asked to review their marking.

Component 3: practical activity

The quality of evidence reviewed for the practical activity was of a good standard. However, assessor feedback in many cases was very limited, with few commentaries available to support marking judgements. Many centres tend to create a holistic recording grid for this component of course, but this was not submitted, which made it difficult to review the accuracy of the marking. The photographic evidence submitted did support assessor judgements, which in many cases appeared fair. Marking tended to be slightly more lenient for less skilled candidates. In these cases, centre staff were asked to review their marking.

To ensure fairness and credibility, many centres used very good internal quality assurance processes. In many cases, this highlighted and helped rectify errors in marking.

Overall, centre staff have worked hard to maintain the integrity of the course and to ensure all three components were correctly assessed, and should be commended for this.