

Research on Assessment Methods in Practical Subjects, 2025

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We are committed to using plain language. If you have any suggestions on how we can improve, let us know at editor@qualifications.gov.scot.

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Introduction

In 2017–18, a new question paper was introduced to practical subjects following the removal of unit assessment. The purpose of this question paper was to assess the candidates' ability to integrate and apply breadth, knowledge, understanding and skills from across the course. SQA received informal feedback that suggests these question papers are no longer an appropriate form of assessment for learners in seven courses:

- National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology
- Higher Fashion and Textile Technology
- National 5 Practical Cake Craft
- National 5 Practical Cookery
- National 5 Practical Electronics
- National 5 Practical Metalworking
- National 5 Practical Woodworking

From 18 January to 7 February 2024, a short survey was distributed to educators who are familiar with these subjects (SQA, 2025). As the project took place while learners for these subjects were completing their prelims, it was decided that learners would not be consulted at this stage. The results of the survey showed that agreement with removing the question paper varied widely across subjects:

Subject	%
Practical Metalworking (Nat 5):	79% agreed
Practical Woodworking (Nat 5):	75% agreed
Practical Cake Craft (Nat 5):	72% agreed
Fashion and Textile Technology (Nat 5):	67% agreed
Practical Cookery (Nat 5):	61% agreed
Practical Electronics (Nat 5):	58% agreed
Fashion and Textile Technology (Higher):	53% agreed

In addition to a survey, focus groups were conducted to understand views on removing the question paper, and to what extent it could be replaced by other forms of assessment. Focus groups were more mixed in terms of agreement. Educators in National 5 and Higher Fashion & Textile Technology, National 5 Practical Cookery, and National 5 Practical Electronics expressed strong views against removing the question paper.

Further, a literature review was completed to show how other qualifications in practical subjects assess learners.

Due to the mixed responses SQA received in subjects from the 2024 *Removal of the Question Paper in Practical Subjects* research (SQA, 2025), SQA commissioned further research on some of the subjects where views on removing the question paper were mixed or where there was evidence that more scope was needed.

The aim of this research is to help Qualifications Development reach a more conclusive decision about whether to remove the question paper in National 5 and Higher Fashion & Textile Technology, and National 5 Practical Cookery, by conducting a more holistic analysis of assessments. The methodology is revised based on the results of the 2024 consultation with the aim of achieving more conclusive results for the following questions:

- Do educators and learners think that SQA should remove the question paper in their subjects?
- Do educators and learners think that the practical assessment adequately covers knowledge and understanding?
- Is there another way of assessing knowledge and understanding?
- Do educators and learners broadly have similar concerns about removing the question paper as was indicated in 2024 focus groups?

Methodology

Unlike the 2024 research on removing question papers in practical subjects, educators *and* learners are identified for this research. Evidence from educators helps SQA to identify problems with assessments in their subjects from their perspective — for example, which elements are difficult to teach or to help learners prepare for. Evidence from learners helps identify problems that educators may not be able to identify — for example, learner workloads or assessment needs.

Educators

This research surveyed educators between 2 and 23 June 2025. A reminder to complete the survey went out in SQA news on 12 June. Participants were educators who currently teach or formerly taught any of the following subjects: National 5 and Higher Fashion & Textile Technology, and National 5 Practical Cookery. Educators were recruited through SQA co-ordinators, through a wider email advertising research projects being conducted around the same time. In addition, emails for recruitment went out through Qualifications Development to the Home Economics Network, and shared by some members of Qualifications Development with local authorities.

Ineligible participants who did not teach on any of the subjects identified for this research were routed to the end of the survey. Overall, there were 395 eligible participants, across the following subjects:

Table 1: Number of educator participants by subject

Subject	Number of educators (n)
National 5 Fashion & Textile Technology	84
Higher Fashion & Textile Technology	61
National 5 Practical Cookery	367

Generally, Home Economics has low numbers of uptake and educators compared to other subjects. As a result, exact figures for how many educators there are across Scotland in each of these subjects are not in the Teachers censuses (Scottish Government, 2024). Additionally, it is sometimes common for educators to deliver more than one Home Economic subject.

The survey comprised a total of 14 identical questions per subject area or level. Educators who indicated they teach across more than one subject or level, for example both National 5 and Higher Fashion and Textile Technology, were routed to 14 questions in total for each level. Seven questions were closed-answer, with four of the closed questions having the option for participants to explain their answer in a free-text box. One final question at the end of the survey was open text, asking if participants would like to add anything else about assessments in their courses.

The educator survey took a more exploratory approach than the 2024 research, which had only asked participants about the question paper. This research asked participants to rate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the ability for learners to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding across all assessments: the question paper, assignment, and practical activity. They were also asked to rate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the learning outcomes from the course specifications for each type of assessment.

There were also opportunities for educators to indicate which types of assessments had positive outcomes for learners, such as pathways, and which types of assessments would they ideally like to see in their course or courses. Lastly, educators were asked if they felt that any type of assessment should be removed and replaced with another type of assessment, modified, or if it should stay the same.

Open questions asked participants to expand on their answers. This allowed us to develop a greater depth of understanding of the views of educators. Qualitative questions were coded using an inductive approach; no coding framework was prepared ahead of analysis so that the coding could explore a breadth of responses.

Learners

Participants were learners who were in one of the following in 2024–2025: National 5 or Higher Fashion & Textile Technology, or National 5 Practical Cookery. A reminder to complete the survey went out in SQA news on 12 June. This research surveyed learners between 2 June–23 June 2025. Learners were recruited through SQA coordinators, through a wider email advertising a number of research projects being conducted around the same time. In addition, emails for recruitment went out through Qualifications Development to the Home Economics Network, and shared with local authorities.

Ineligible participants who were not learners on any of the subjects identified for this research in 2024–2025 were routed to the end of the survey. The learner survey was originally designed to be released before the Easter holidays to boost participant numbers. Although SQA does not normally conduct research with learners during or after the exam diet, an exception was made for this research due to IT issues. However, as a result of this, learner numbers are below expectations for this research.

One participant needed to be removed from the learner sample because they said in qualitative responses that they were a practitioner. Additionally, a further 31 learners were removed from the National 5 and Higher Fashion and Textile Technology sample due to concerns about the integrity of the learner data. These 31 responses provided identical or near identical quantitative responses, or identical qualitative responses. It is extremely unlikely that a group of learners would produce such similar responses while freely expressing their own views. SQA has a Code of Research Practice (SQA, 2025), which governs all of the organisation's research. In the code, it states 'All research participants must fully understand what they're agreeing to, and make a free choice to participate.' and 'methods should be carefully chosen to ensure that they are robust and fair to all groups involved'. As such, it is clearly questionable whether including such data would be in line with the Code of Research Practice.

When considering this issue, we looked for academic literature on how other researchers had handled similar situations. There are a number of examples of situations where survey responses fall outside normal survey behaviour due to respondents taking the survey more than once to influence the results, or, where respondents may have been encouraged to answer in a certain way. Multiple identical responses is one example of abnormal survey behaviour (Wang, 2023). In our case, 31 learner responses were removed due to providing either identical or near identical qualitative responses, or, identical quantitative responses. However, because we cannot ascertain exactly what has happened in this case, tables containing the full sample of

National 5 and Higher Fashion and Textile Technology respondents are included in the appendix.

Figures between one and four inclusive have been suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosure of personal information. All percentage figures for a course have been suppressed where values between one and four inclusive have been suppressed. Cells containing suppressed figures are marked up with the shorthand [c]. Overall, there were 90 eligible participants, across the following subjects

Table 2: Number of learner participants per grade, subject, and level

	National 5 Fashion & Textile Technology	Higher Fashion & Textile Technology	National 5 Practical Cookery	Total learners per grade level
S4	[c]	[c]	17	20
S5	17	[c]	22	38
S6	10	7	10	24
Other	[c]	[c]	[c]	7
Total learners per subject	34	11	53	90

The learner survey followed a more exploratory model. Some questions in the educator survey were omitted from the learner survey. This research asked participants to rate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with how fully they were able to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding across all assessments: the question paper, assignment, and practical activity. To keep the learner survey manageable, learners were not asked to rate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the learning outcomes from the course specifications for each type of assessment.

There were also opportunities for learners to indicate which types of assessment they felt were related to positive statements, such as pathways, and which types of assessment would they ideally like to see in their course(s). Because they had just taken exams, learners were not asked to state whether they felt any assessment should be removed and replaced with another type, modified, or stay the same.

Learners were also asked a small number of demographic questions, to gauge the fairness of assessments. Learners were asked if they used the Exceptional Circumstances Service for the exam, to show whether any learners in the survey had not completed the question paper. In addition, learners were asked if they used assessment arrangements for any of their assessments in their subjects, in addition to any other subject. This helps us to understand

whether learners felt that assessment arrangements had any impact on their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with those assessments. Also, we wanted to know whether using assessment arrangements on any *other* course had any impact on their overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction compared to learners who did not use assessment arrangements..

Learner participants were asked whether they had used the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) for the question paper in one or more subjects this year; 90 participants provided an answer. The majority of participants stated that they had not used the EECCS for any of these subjects. There were learner participants who had used EECCS in all three of the subjects surveyed, but at a relatively low level. The subject with the highest level of utilisation was National 5 Practical Cookery (19%). For Fashion and Textile Technology at both National 5 and Higher level, we did not get enough responses to be able to provide data for this.

Half of participants (51%) stated that they did not use any assessment arrangements in any course this year. 33% of participants said that they used assessment arrangements in either National 5 or Higher Fashion and Textile Technology, National 5 Practical Cookery, or another course.

Learners were also given the opportunity to expand on their answers in open-text boxes. This allowed us to develop a greater depth of understanding of their views. Qualitative questions were coded using an inductive approach; no coding framework was prepared ahead of analysis so that the coding could explore a breadth of responses.

Limitations

One limitation to the learner and educator surveys is the representativeness of the sample. Exact numbers for the proportion of educators who deliver National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology, Practical Cookery, or Higher Fashion and Textile Technology are not available for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Scottish Teacher Census only has figures for courses with large uptake; other courses are added together. Additionally, SQA does not carry exact figures for educator numbers. An additional complexity is that educators might teach across several of these subject at once. However, based on SQA estimations, the sample of educators in this research may be between 49% and 55% of educators on these courses combined. Although numbers for Fashion and Textile Technology are much smaller than Practical Cookery, it is unclear if this is because Fashion and Textile Technology has fewer practitioners overall.

Across all courses, the learner sample is small compared to the learner uptake for these subjects in 2024—2025. The representativeness of this sample cannot be guaranteed. Additionally, removing further learners due to concerns about the integrity of the data impacted the breadth of analysis for Higher Fashion and Textile Technology in particular, where remaining numbers of learners are too small to report due to data suppression for small numbers.

This research did not include data on the location of participants, so the geographical spread of participants or characteristics of centres is unknown. Open-question qualitative responses may also not be representative of the entire learner or educator sample. This is because not all participants chose to respond to open questions and, in general, the strength of participants' views to open questions cannot be quantified.

One question in the learner sample was changed on 9 June; the original qualifying questions 'Are you completing one or more of these subjects (2024–25)? Please tick all that apply.' was changed to 'Have you completed one or more of these subjects (2024–25)? Please tick all that apply.' This was due to the number of learners beginning the survey who were disqualified from the research by the original question, who may have thought that 'are you completing...' would relate to the 2025–26 cohort in these subjects. However, it is likely that the numbers of learners unqualified for this research outnumbered the numbers of learners qualified for this research due to collecting data on these learners after the exam diet.

Ethics

This research was approved by SQA's ethical review process and follows SQA's [Code of Research Practice](#). Although some learners volunteered information in open comments that SQA considers to be sensitive topics from a children and young person's perspective, such as exam results, these sensitive topics were not asked about in the survey and were volunteered by participants.

This research also demonstrates alignment with the UNCRC Incorporation (Scotland) Act by including the voices of children and young people in SQA qualification development.

National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology

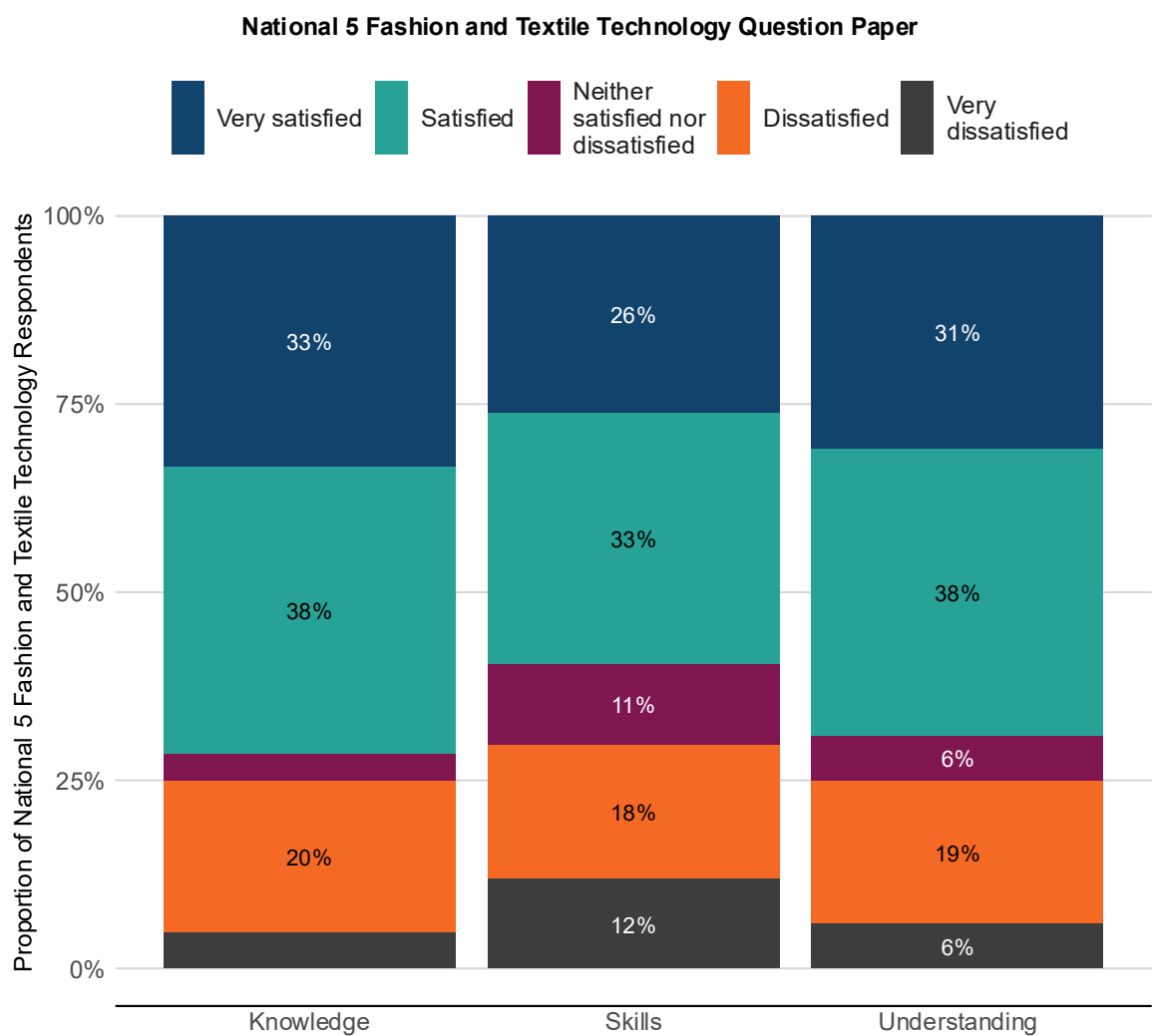
Educator views on assessment

It must be noted that only 84 respondents stated that they had taught National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. Whilst their responses may give an indication of the way educators feel, this is an unknown percentage of the total number of educators that teach this subject.

Question paper

Participants were asked about how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way the different types of assessment in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology let learners demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. 83 educators provided a response to the question regarding question papers.

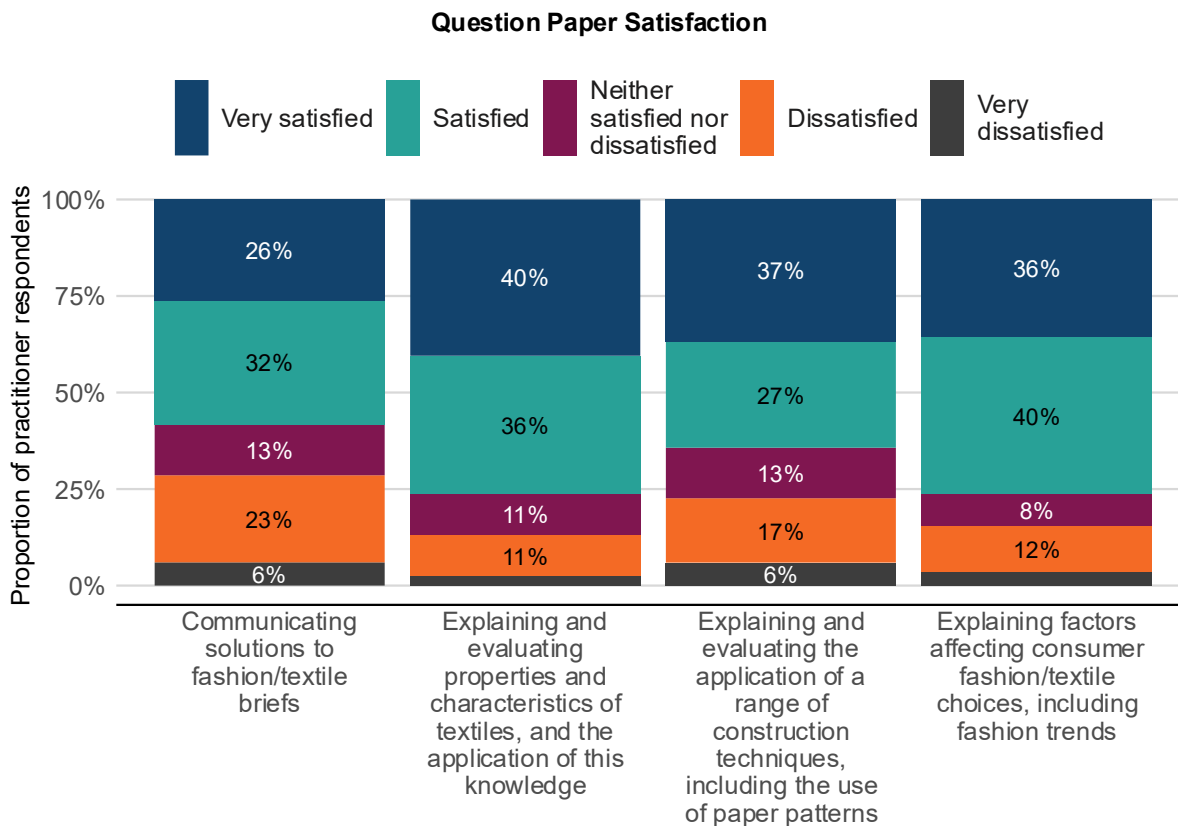
Figure 1: Question paper satisfaction in National 5 Fashion and Textiles – practitioners



Overall, practitioners said they were very satisfied or satisfied with how the question paper assessed knowledge (71%), skills (58%) and understanding (69%).

- Educators felt that the question paper was not quite as good at assessing skills as it was knowledge or understanding. 30% of participants were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way that the question paper assessed skills.

Fig 2: Educator satisfaction with elements of question paper



- Generally, educators were more satisfied than dissatisfied that the question paper gave learners the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Educators were least satisfied (58%) that that question paper gave learners opportunity communicate solutions to fashion or textile briefs. 29% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied that the question paper gave learners the opportunity to demonstrate this.
- 86% of educators were satisfied or very satisfied that the question paper allows learners to explain factors affecting consumer fashion and textile choices, including fashion trends and explain and evaluate properties and characteristics of textiles, and the application of this knowledge.

Educators were also asked whether there was anything they would like comment about the question paper. 31 participants (37%) left comments. Most comments about the question paper were negative. Unlike the assignment, positive and negative comments about the question paper did not tend to contradict each other, suggesting more distinct positives and negatives. However, the volume of negative comments does not in this case indicate overall negativity; compared to the closed-question responses, this is likely to be because educators with positive comments did not have as much to say or skipped commenting.

Negative comments

Negative comments about the question paper were varied. The most frequent negative attribute about the question paper was that it was unfair to certain learners. Unfairness stemmed from disadvantaging learners who are: English as an Additional Language pupils; learners who are unable to identify which areas to study for due to the 'vast' amount of content covered; and learners who have better practical skills than traditional exam skills.

I think the paper should be multiple choice to make it more inclusive for ALL learners — it puts talented kids off taking our subject. It's an exercise in memory not understanding

I feel that pupils who have a language barrier are prohibited from demonstrating knowledge due to the 'structure' requirements of answers.

I feel that the breadth of knowledge learners require at National 5 is far too much to be able to complete the QP to a good standard. Many learners struggle with the style of the questions/evaluating resulting in the loss of marks. Even though the learners may have a sound knowledge and understanding of textiles, constructions techniques etc they lose out because they struggle to justify or evaluate. It is really disappointing at times. I do think it is important to keep some kind of QP element but maybe more a short answers and slightly less emphasis on evaluation. Also, maybe more specific areas being tested.

Some pupils struggle with the specific wording needed for some of the questions. This can lower their scores if they are good at the practical side.

Other negative comments were about how the question paper was too large in its scope, which can be difficult for educators to cover in the time given with other assessments. Others said that there is some relevant content missing from the current question paper:

I think the question paper depth and rigour could be increased. Most candidates only take 30 minutes to complete the N5 QP and still achieve high marks. The number of questions could be increased and the total number of marks increased to match the rigour of other N5 subjects.

For the content of the course, the question paper seems insufficient of questions. They learn so much more in one area, to answer just 1 question on it.

For National 5, candidates are over assessed on construction techniques as these are also assessed in the assignment and the practical activities.

There as so many processes / treatments done to fabric during production of both natural & synthetic fabrics the textile properties are now out date in SQA web page therefore teaching outdate information.

Participants also questioned whether the question paper measured learners on skills, knowledge, and understanding that are relevant to fashion and textiles, especially as it related to industry, and that the course specifications do not align with what is being tested:

I feel as though the practical activity demonstrates the pupils ability more than the question paper. It is a practical subject and all the skills needed for the course are demonstrated in the assignment and practical, the question paper doesn't support the learning of practically able students.

Communication solutions to fashion/textiles briefs do not reflect the way designers work in industry and are too focused on how the candidate is communicating their point rather than if their knowledge is correct

Colleges and universities across the country don't use 'commercial pattern papers and markings' to create garments but N5 question paper always includes questions in relation to 'commercial' pattern markings. Such marking cannot be found in books and when pupils go to study Fashion further they are getting confused.

Questions being asked which are not covered by the descriptions in the skills, knowledge and understanding section of the course specification.

One participant cited issues with questions 1 and 2 of the question paper specifically:

Understanding standards information is not very clear and questions are missing. There seems to be a lot of misunderstanding of what would / wouldn't receive a mark (as I have found from chatting to other teachers) for some questions particularly Q1 / Q2 and I do not think this is helped by accessing understanding standards.

Other negative comments were that the question paper had harsh marking, and should be removed from the course.

Positive comments

Positive comments about the question paper expressed strongly that the question paper is an important part of the course, and that it makes National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology more credible, improving standards and learner pathways:

The inclusion of a question paper as part of the assessment for National 5 Fashion and Textiles provides a valid and reliable means of measuring candidates' knowledge and understanding of key theoretical concepts. It allows learners to demonstrate their grasp of subject-specific content, knowledge that is essential for informed decision-making in practical work. Without this form of assessment, learners may not engage as deeply with the theoretical aspects of the course, which risks undermining their overall understanding and progression within the subject. The absence of the question paper

could result in a disproportionate focus on practical elements alone, ultimately devaluing the academic rigour of the qualification. This would be detrimental to the subject as a whole, weakening its status within the curriculum and reducing opportunities for learners to build a comprehensive skill set that combines both knowledge and practical ability. The structured format of the question paper also ensures consistency across centres, supports equitable assessment standards, and complements the practical assignment by assessing a broader range of learning outcomes outlined in the course specification.

The question paper allow the candidates to effectively demonstrate their learning in context to a given question. The QP covers all course content within the QP and enables the candidates to show their knowledge and understanding of fabric (properties/characteristics), construction techniques, consumer choice and item development strategies. The QP is a fir approach to assessing the pupils and ensures that it has the same rigour as other subjects. Without the QP the course content would not be assessed fully. The course content would not align well if merged into a fuller assignment. Lots would be missed or it would be an overwhelming assessment for candidates and practitioners.

You cannot take away the question paper. It absolutely vital for rigour. I've been teaching for 30 years and I am already concerned about the calibre and lack of standards of new teachers coming into the profession due to the reduction of middle management and increase in workload. Taking away external exams would result in courses losing even more value and decrease its academic standards.

Suggestions for change

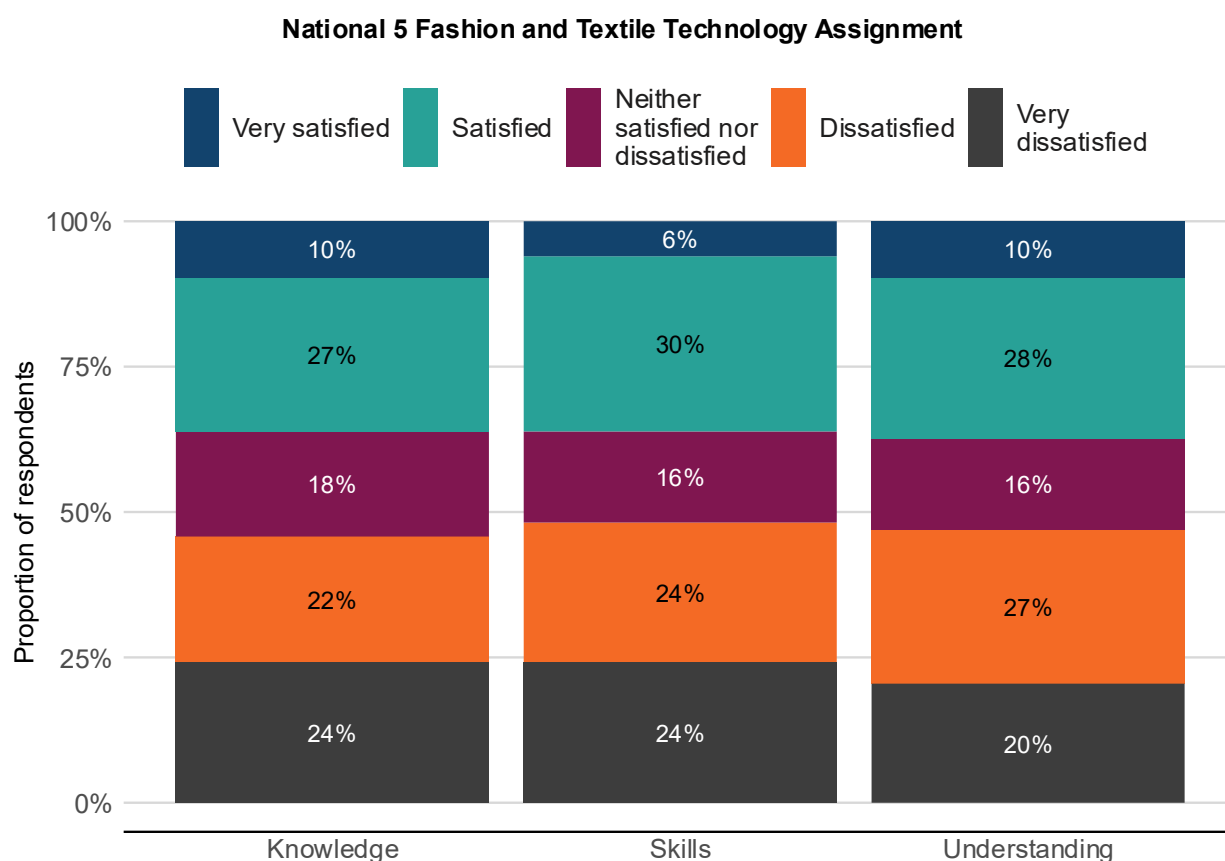
Some educators left comments suggesting ways improve the question paper. No one suggestion for change was made more commonly than any other. Suggestions for change were to:

- Change the format of question to short answer
- Change the format of questions to multiple choice
- Connect the question paper to practical work
- Increase the specificity of what is being tested in the question paper
- Increase the content of the question paper
- Reduce emphasis on evaluation
- Provide more resources that helps educators and learners know what areas within topics to study for the theory part of the question paper

Although few educators left comments with suggestions for improvement, together these suggestions all suggest that the amount of content and format of the question paper could be changed to better reflect learners in the course.

Assignment

Fig 3: Assignment satisfaction in National 5 Fashion and Textiles — practitioners



Educators are much less satisfied with the assignment compared to the question paper. 37% are satisfied or very satisfied with how the assignment allows learner to demonstrate knowledge, compared to 36% for skills and 38% for understanding.

- A more sizable proportion (16–18%) of educators were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with how the assignment allows learners to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject compared to the question paper (5-11%).
- 46% of educators are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with how the assignment allows learners to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject, with 48% for skills, and 47% for understanding.

33 participants (39%) left comments about the assignment. The volume of comments about the assignment compared to other assessments in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology is likely due to a larger amount of negative sentiment. A large majority of comments about the assignment ranged from having significant problems, to being removed from the course entirely.

In addition, problems with the assignment were much more varied than the other assessments in this course. For example, while the practical activity and question paper had around five to six types of negative comment, the assignment elicited around 13 to 15 types of negative comment. This may suggest a wide and diverse range of issues.

Negative attributes

The most common negative comments about the assignment were questions about the relevance of the assignment for the course, with educators describing concerns about whether the assignment is relevant to real world practice, or whether it truly assessed knowledge, skills, and understanding relevant to the course. Although research and evaluation skills are the learning outcomes for the assignment, educators asked whether this is appropriate for Fashion and Textile Technology. This is reflected in the data, where fewer educators were satisfied with the opportunity for learners to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding in the assignment:

The assignment is absolutely not fit for purpose. It is a data analysis task, and relies on pupils working in a very contrived way that no designer ever would in real life. The marks for it nationally are poor and it needs a major overhaul.

Pupils are currently penalised for using their own knowledge during the assignment, which is unfair. I feel strongly that if a candidate has developed good knowledge and understanding of properties and characteristics they should be allowed to use this information (provided it is correct) in their assignment and not be penalised due to it not being stated during the investigations. Parts of the N5 assignment are very repetitive and assess more the pupils literacy skills rather than their ability to develop a product. It would be more appropriate to look at how the candidate is using the information rather than how they have written their conclusion points

I do not believe that the assignment gives pupils real life knowledge/experience. The assignment would be better suited as a research project based on their practical activity. A smaller, more concise assignment would be beneficial.

There is absolutely ZERO learning for students in this assignment and I think it should be scrapped. It's a nightmare to teach and kids feel like they are being tortured doing it! It's outdated and not relevant to any real world skills in industry. Practically and logistically doing it in school adds to my workload as all sites required, eg shops, are blocked so they need to use phones and some don't have data! Use iPads which are not connected to printers so I am emailed all of them to then open, save and print and sometimes no colour printers so I print at home. I absolutely dread teaching this tick box exercise and it needs to go!

Other common comments were about the level of difficulty of the assignment, with difficulties ranging from IT issues to student ability:

Again the very specific requirements needed to be successful in an assignment can make this course extremely challenging for some learners and adds another layer of assessment to the course.

The research is contrived and difficult for candidates at this level to complete — the number of respondents required for N5 is too high for S4 students to accomplish and the requirements for the investigations are way too detailed for the time and ability of this course

I think pupils will find it very challenging to research some of the briefs because they are not always relevant to the pupil's age group or any type of setting the pupil may be in, for example the Met Gala. I think too much time is spent on this research project and the time could be used doing more practical activities. I also find it really strange that the assignment and the project are not linked. Pupils find it difficult to evaluate an item they have not made.

Other negative comments about the assignment were that it is:

- Unfair, due to variations in learner resources and educator or school input
- Too workload heavy, taking too much time to teach and learn
- Stressful for both learners and educators
- Purposeless, due to the lack of connection to making something
- Lacks creativity, due to how 'prescriptive' the assignment is
- Repetitive
- Hard to understand
- Has problems with the evaluation
- Problems with the electronic element, due to insufficient IT equipment
- Boring or irrelevant

Positive comments

A much smaller number of participants left positive comments about the assignment. Positive comments about the assignment were that the assignment was valued due to its ability to assess relevant skills:

The assignment allows the candidates to effectively demonstrate their skills and abilities linked to obtaining information from research, simplifying this and using the information in a manner to create a suitable solution. They can demonstrate their evaluation skills through section 2 within the assignment when they have to analyses/evaluate the effectiveness of their solution. This uses higher order skills and ensures that candidates are challenged effectively.

I feel the assignment is a very valuable part of the course and works well within class time. It allows them to showcase skills they have gained across the school in various subjects. Research skills and evaluating work / practices are key skills needed within industry if they choose a career in fashion and textiles or marketing etc.

The assignment is essential for allowing learners to apply their knowledge and skills in a creative, practical context. It supports the development of problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking — core skills valued in both further education and the fashion and textiles industry. The assignment ensures learners can demonstrate their ability to plan, create, and evaluate a finished item, making it a vital component of a balanced and meaningful assessment. It could however be revised to in places as the evaluation and evaluation of the testing is similar and hard to differentiate between what is expected in their answer.

However, other positive comments about the assignment suggest that the assignment itself isn't bad, however there are external issues such as resources, educator understanding of the assignment, and how the evaluation part of the assignment is assessed with pictures:

The assignment works well in theory and I like it. However, as a marker I feel that many centres do not understand what is being asked of them and pupils do not understand how to complete the assignment without a lot of input from teachers. This means that the SQA is mainly assessing how well teachers have understood the assignment and not pupils. It should be worded in a more pupils friendly way so pupils can understand what they are meant to do.

The assignment assesses the above skills well, however at National 5 level the assignment booklet is not user friendly, the guidelines are not clear and the candidates have quite a lot of repetition.

The three investigations in the different areas allows students the opportunity to all come up with different solutions. The evaluation skills is maybe not so good now that it is just a picture that the students get to evaluate from but it works.

Suggestions for change

Participants left a number of suggestions for change. The most common of these suggestions was to link the assignment to the practical activity:

I do not believe that the assignment gives pupils real life knowledge/experience. The assignment would be better suited as a research project based on their practical activity. A smaller, more concise assignment would be beneficial.

A smaller more concise activity related to their practical work. I think more time need to be on building high quality practical skills. It would be better a 50-50 split practical and question paper.

I think pupils will find it very challenging to research some of the briefs because they are not always relevant to the pupil's age group or any type of setting the pupil may be in, for example the met gala. I think too much time is spent on this research project and the

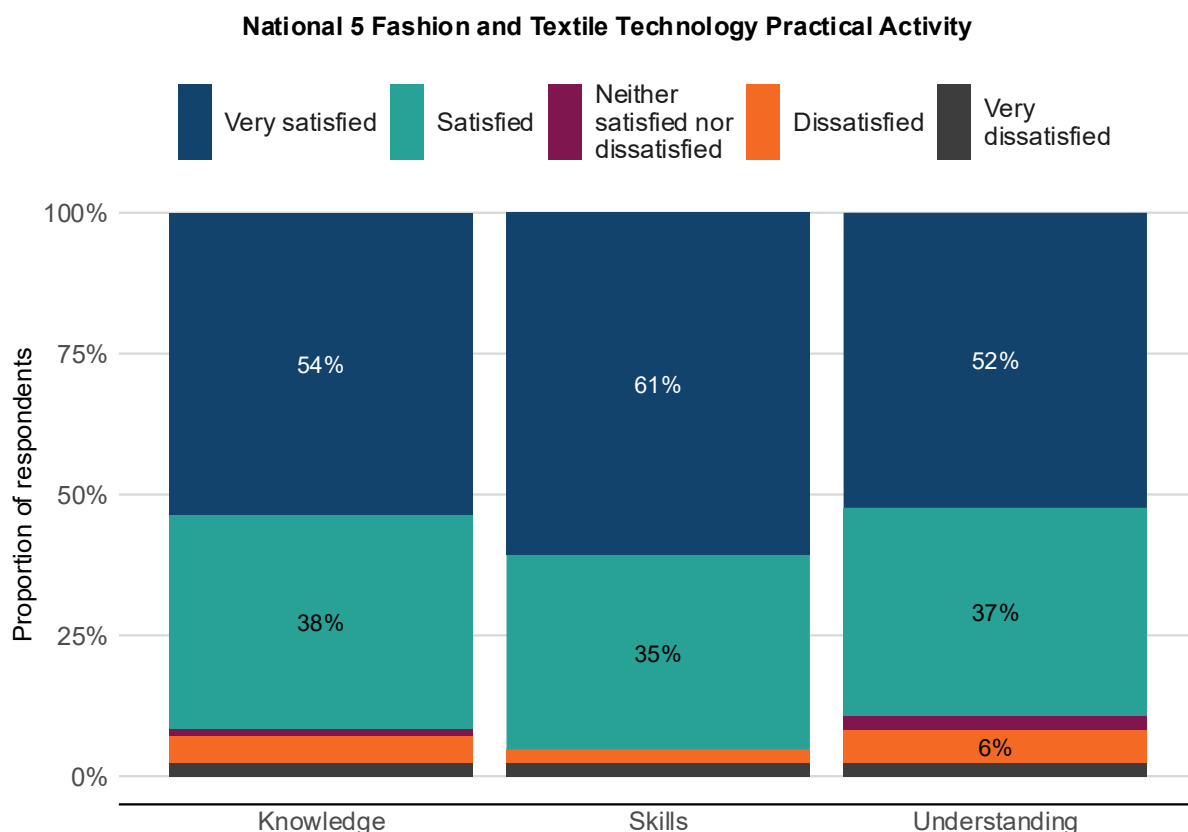
time could be used doing more practical activities. I also find it really strange that the assignment and the project are not linked. Pupils find it difficult to evaluate an item they have not made.

Other suggestions for change were:

- Make the assignment smaller
- Provide more resources so the assignment is more understandable
- Replace the assignment with another assessment
- Reduce the weighting of the assignment
- Create more standardisation by having the assignment completed under exam conditions
- Increase the marks available for design development skills to better reflect how a designer would work

Practical Activity

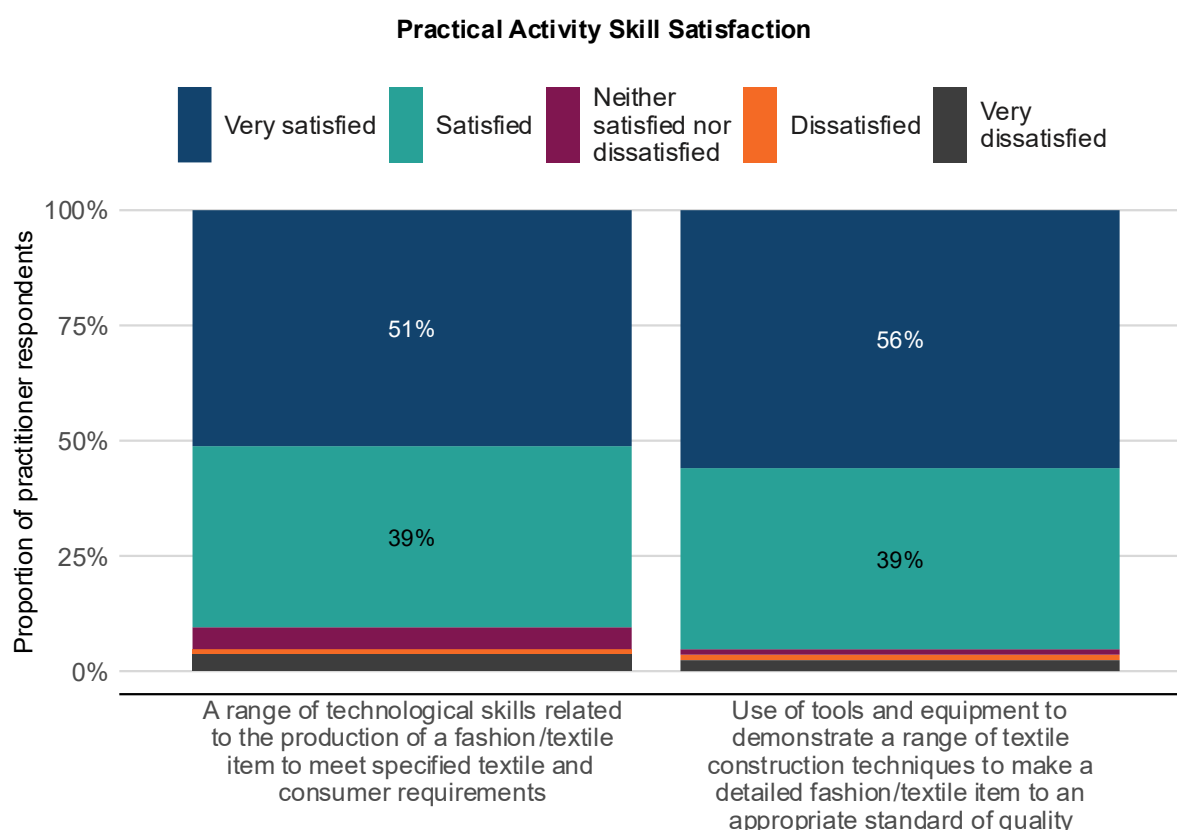
Figure 4 – Practical Activity Satisfaction in National 5 Fashion and Textiles - Practitioners



- Educators are far more satisfied or very satisfied with how the practical activity allows learners to demonstrate knowledge (92%), skills (96%) and understanding (89%) than the question paper or assignment.

Educators who teach National 5 Fashion and Textiles Technology were asked how satisfied they were that the practical activity gave learners the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding shown in Figure 5. 83 educators responded.

Fig 5 – Educator Satisfaction with Practical Activity Skills – National 5 Fashion and Textiles



- Educators are overwhelmingly satisfied or very satisfied with how the practical activity allows learners to demonstrate a range of technological skills (90%) and the use of tool and equipment (95%).

24 participants (29%) left comments. Fewer comments about the practical activity are likely because of the high ratings that practitioners gave the practical activity, because positive views elicit fewer comments. Some educators left comments that were generally positive:

Much better now that the practical activity and the assignment are no longer linked.

Candidates are given the opportunity to develop appropriate level of skills that allows them to manufacture their fashion/textile item. these skills are beneficial in relation to the assignment and the question paper as it enhances their knowledge and understanding.

The candidates enjoy this part of the course and it helps develop their knowledge of construction techniques and fabric properties through using them in sewing.

Notably, negative comments about the practical activity weren't due to this assessment itself, but actually due to other factors placing limitations on the practical activity:

- there isn't enough time to cover it as much as hoped
- there is too much content to cover with the assignment and question paper

- there aren't always school resources to do the practical activity to a full extent

A few negative comments about the practical activity were about how the assessment is somewhat 'old fashioned', about marking issues, and saying that sometimes the amount of freedom that learners have to complete the assessment make it needlessly difficult. However, these comments do not suggest removing the practical activity:

The marking of the skills is totally unacceptable. The standard and range of skills expected especially at N5 is not in line with other practical subjects at this level. There are multiple layers of double penalising, eg can't be awarded a skill if it is done along with another skill, which means candidates have to do more to gain the same marks as candidates attempting other skills.

Maybe give some different set ideas that are more modern and relevant it is all a bit old fashioned, should be more environmentally sound, upcycling something rather than old fashioned techniques for the sake of it. Less prescriptive [...]

[...] As a teacher I would like all my students to make the item which will be their design solution from their assignment, but as it stands just now I might be letting them down by doing this as whatever they make might not have as high construction techniques marks as the bag. This is preventing students to have more personalisation and choice when making their item. Although you could argue they have more personalisation and choice designing their solution if they do not have to make it. Or could the practical activity be a set different pattern sent out by SQA each year, like Practical Cookery have different 3 dishes, which students have to make over a period of time. So all students are the same and the item they make has the same marking scheme and construction technique marks. SQA provides a webinar on the expectations and standards required to mark the specific item and it can be marked by the school.

Suggestions for change

The most common comment about the practical activity were suggestions for change. These participants indicated that they highly valued the practical activity, and left suggestions to further enhance it. Of these suggestions, the most common was that the practical activity should have higher weighting in the course:

The practical activity should be worth more, more time needs to be given to pupils to develop and show their sewing skills.

No I like the practical activity and think it should be worth more than 35% of their final grade.

Other common suggestions related to SQA providing more resources to aid the practical activity:

There are a lot of skills to cover and maybe these could be whittled down as it is hard to cover them all adequately so learners can achieve good marks with varying tariff points. A lot has been removed from Understanding standards and SQA Secure so it is difficult to find help and resources if you need them for official purposes.

I believe further resources and support is required for Fashion and Textiles for new teachers.

Participants also left comments suggesting ways that SQA could improve the standardisation of the marking:

I feel the practical item should be set by the SQA such as the Practical Cookery practical element in order to ensure equity across the country.

I would like pupils to complete more constructions techniques that they don't know what it is until the morning of the exam that is sent to SQA for marking. SQA provide a possible list techniques ie collar, cuff, sleeve, welted pocket

Other suggestions for change were:

- Include ways for learners to practice self-evaluation
- Include more content in the practical activity, namely more construction techniques, and more environmental aspects such as upcycling

Comparison of assessments

Educators were asked to state their agreement with positive statements about the assessments of National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. 82 individual educators responded.

Table 3: Positive statements and Assessment Type National 5 Fashion and Textiles - Educators

	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity	This statement applies to no assessments	Not sure
Learners know how to prepare for and complete this type of assessment from experience in other courses	61%	26%	44%	12%	12%
Learner performance in this assessment tends to align with their performance on the coursework	45%	21%	73%	11%	13%

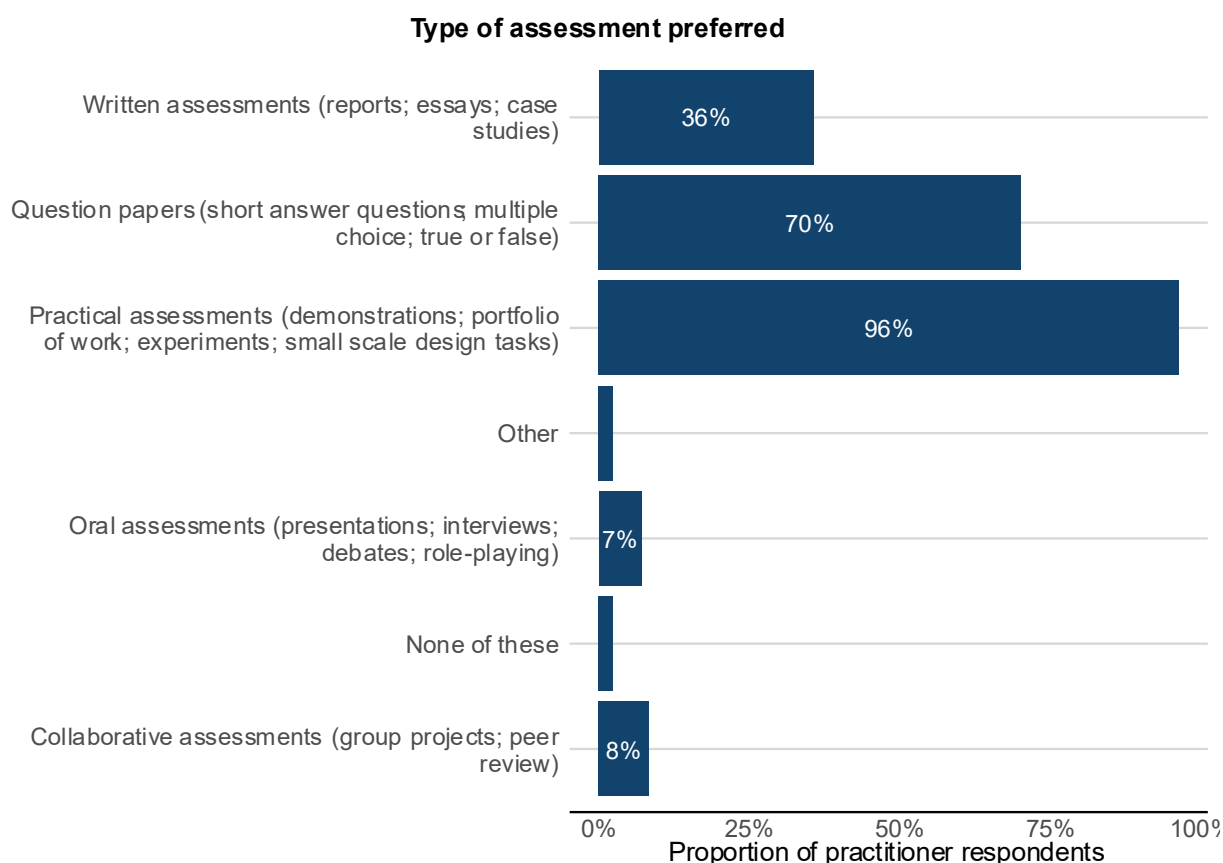
	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity	This statement applies to no assessments	Not sure
This type of assessment will help learners in their pathway to further learning or employment	57%	34%	84%	7%	6%
This type of assessment is fair to all learners	52%	32%	83%	7%	4%
Learners should feel a sense of achievement from completing this type of assessment	59%	39.0%	92%	5%	2%
This type of assessment has manageable workloads for learners	60%	26%	83%	10%	2%

- Educators' opinions on the question paper were mixed. Over half (61%) felt that learners knew how to prepare and complete this assessment, but just under half (45.1%) felt it aligns with their coursework. 52.4% felt that the question paper was fair to all learners.
- A high proportion of educators had favourable views of the practical activity. However, only 43.9% of educators felt that learners knew how to prepare for and complete this type of assessment.
- Educators did not agree that the assignment was applicable to any of the statements, with a low score across all statements. 20.5% of educators felt that the assignment aligns with learners' performance on their coursework, and 25.6% felt that the assignment has a manageable workload for learners.

Future methods of assessment

Educators were asked what type of assessment they would prefer for National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. 83 educators responded.

Fig 6 – Types of assessment preferred by educators for National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology



- Practical assessments were the most popular choice, with 96% of educators choosing this, followed by question papers at 70%. Written reports were preferred by 36% of educator participants.
- Collaborative assessments and Oral assessments were less popular, with 8% and 7% of educators choosing these options respectively.

This indicates that keeping the question paper would be a popular choice with this group of participants.

18 participants (21%) left comments about their ideal assessment types for National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. There were a few comments about how the course is over-assessed, or which reiterated points made in earlier comments about current assessment methods, or reducing assessment overall:

Please stop over-assessing things and bring the course up to date to allow flair and creativity.

Both assessments are valid, but only when relevant to the world of work which they are not.

I would like to see a much more practical element to the course with a skimmed down version of the QP and Assignment or, just no QP and have 50% practical and 50% Assignment

In terms of other types of assessment, some practitioners commented that portfolios could be included to showcase relevant skills:

The quantity of assessment for Nation 5 Fashion & Textile Technology is excessive and difficult to achieve in the time. Pupils are not engaged in the assignment, which they find repetitive and do not see the value in it. Time would be better spent building practical skills and a portfolio of work.

Design development is missing completely from the course — lacking in creative aspects. I think the course would benefit from making a design portfolio.

This is Fashion and Textiles — include a portfolio of skills and techniques, designs which interpret a brief, research into various topics.

A few participants commented about case studies as a potential written assessments, echoing to earlier points about how some of the assessment should be more connected to the reality of working in the industry:

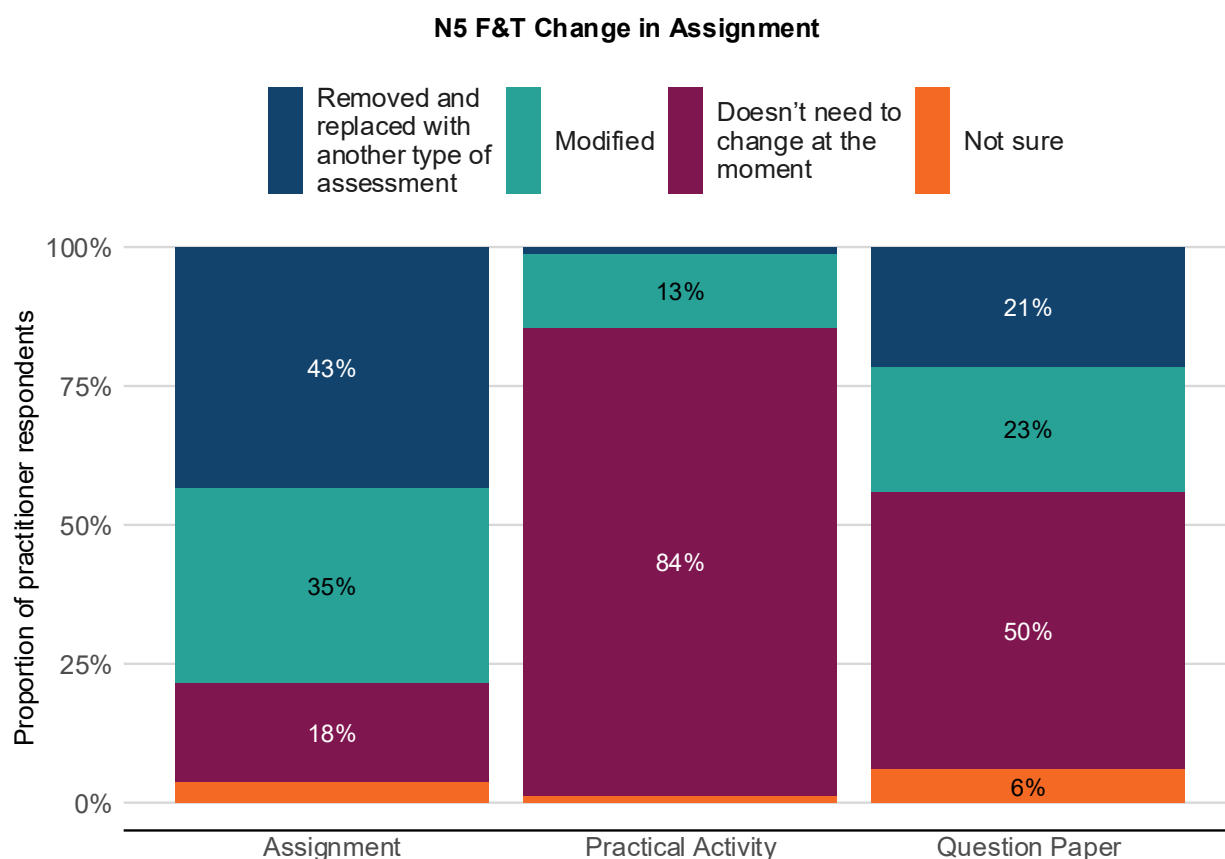
I think mostly the current QP is good for prep in advance of Higher. I think the current assignment is too onerous, takes up too much valuable teaching and learning time. This would give us more time to cover more skills, techniques and styles which would probably help with solutions to a brief question. Could the assignment be more of a project investigating the work of specific designers — looking at the trends, style features and then suggesting what fabrics, construction techniques, embellishments could be incorporated into the designs

Perhaps a unit assessment approach where learners are able to conduct research on consumer choices and enquiries/case studies on current markets / retailers / trends etc

Written assessments — case studies would be the best option. The course content expectations did not align with HOW they would then be assessed. The assessments required currently, especially the PA, are too paperwork orientated and it demotivated the pupils. The linking between each section they found confusing and I always thought it was a contrived piece of work and could not really see what it was really being assessed that showed of their skills and knowledge. Pupils spoke to each other, and word got out about the lack of practical in the course, and numbers dropped, resulting in this not being offered any more. Thankfully, this is being looked at again and in time, this could be re-instated as a course option. It could be a FANTASTIC course, that pupils thrive in, but not the way it is currently designed and assessed

A few participants had mixed views about the essays or reports. Some participants said that essay or reports could be a good assessment method if they were externally assessed under exam conditions. However, this is in contrast to participants who commented that written assignments should be reduced in favour of a more practically assessed course. Another participant commented that group projects, similarly, are not appropriate for the course, but gave no reason why.

Fig 7 – Desired Changes in Assessment National 5 Fashion and Textiles – Educators



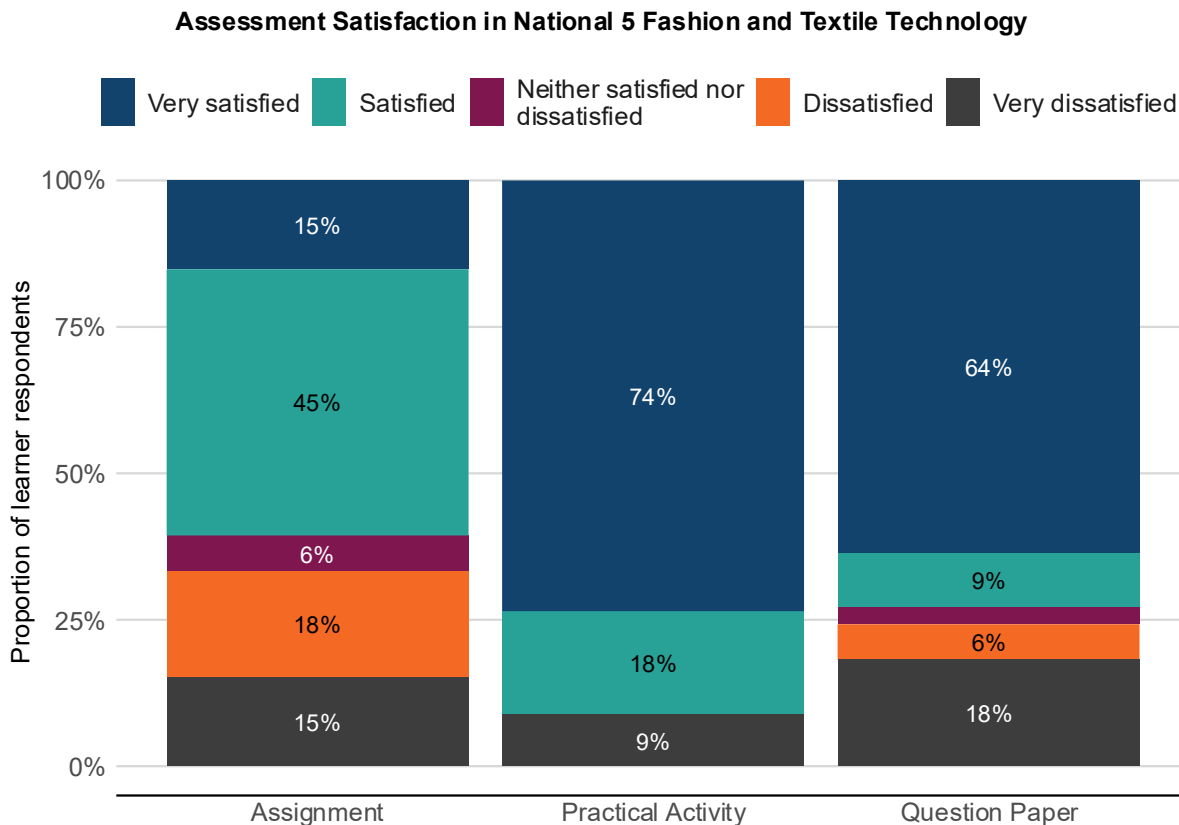
- 43% of educators want the assignment to be removed and replaced with another type of assessment. 35% of respondents want the assignment to be modified, and 18% think the assignment doesn't need to change at the moment.
- In contrast, 84% of educators don't want the practical activity to change at the moment, with 13% wanting it to be modified and less than 5% wanting it replaced.
- For the question paper, 50% of educators think it does not need to change at the moment. 21% of participants want the question paper to be removed, with 23% expressing they want the question paper to be modified.

Exactly half of respondents to this question stated they do not want the question paper to be changed at the moment.

Learner views on assessment

When participants were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way the course assessments let them demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and understanding, 34 learners provided a response. Almost all (88%) stated that they intended to continue studying Fashion and Textile Technology, suggesting high engagement with the course.

Figure 8 – Assessment Satisfaction in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology



- Overall, learner participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with the assessments used in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. Most stated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the practical activity (91%).
- 71% were satisfied or very satisfied with the question paper; 24% said they were dissatisfied.
- Over half of learner participants (59%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the assignment. This was the assessment which had the most dissatisfaction amongst participants (32%).
- A high proportion of participants answered that they were very satisfied with the practical activity (74%) and the question paper (64%). This contrasts with the assignment as only 15% of participants stated that they were very satisfied with the assessment.

Few learners left comments about National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. Learners who left comments about their answers made a mixture of positive and negative comments about the question paper, assignment, and practical activity.

Positive comments about the practical activity, assignment, and question paper were from learners who described how these assessments helped them develop in Fashion and Textile Technology:

Overall the National 5 course allowed me to get the hang of the basics in sewing and fashion related activities, and the assignment allowed me to think about areas of fashion I wouldn't even consider. The question paper was nicely written to the point it was challenging but answerable .

I think that I got most of my marks in the practical activity because I spent a long time making my dress so I had time to practice and make sure all the features and techniques that I got marked on were really good [...] I enjoyed the assignment, but I would have liked to have done more research.

Negative comments from learners were only about the question paper and assignment; this reflects the data where these assessments had a higher dissatisfaction rate than the practical activity. Participants described the question paper and assignment as having similar problems; that it was too long, too difficult, and required too much writing:

[...] There was too much to learn for the written paper, although I learnt how to answer the questions, I just couldn't explain my answers properly when it came to the exam.

The assignment was really long and we had to use our free time because even though we tried to advance as fast as we could the assignment was really long and hard.

Assignment was too long and hard to juggle with having to study for my exam and finishing my practice activity at the same time.

Too much written work and feedback on the exam and assignment

Additionally, learners also questioned the validity (or how accurately they are measuring the intended learning outcomes) of both the question paper and the assignment. They described feelings that these assessments did not actually allow them to demonstrate skills, knowledge, or understanding of Fashion and Textile Technology:

I didn't like the question paper because it's a test of memory, all of it could've been completed 10 x easier and faster if we could take the fabric fibre chart. This means the question paper mostly focuses on how much of the chart we have memorised. I don't think the question paper helps demonstrate skills.

The assignment is very repetitive and does not allow presentation of your own knowledge

Learners also commented on removing the question paper from the course:

I would love for the SQA to take away the exam for Higher as well as N5 for the 2026/2027 session and instead just make 2 garments.

Take away the national 5 and higher papers.

Learner participants were asked to state their agreement with various statements about the assessments of National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. 65 individuals provided responses.

Table 4: Agreement with positive statements about Question Papers for National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology

	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity	This statement applies to no assessments	Not sure
I knew how to prepare for and complete this type of assessment from experience in other courses	79%	65%	82%	0%	[c]
I felt comfortable taking this type of assessment	74%	76%	88%	0%	0%
I believe this type of assessment will help me in my pathway to further learning or employment	65%	68%	88%	0%	[c]
I believe this type of assessment was fair to all learners	68%	74%	88%	[c]	0%
I felt a sense of achievement from completing this type of assessment	62%	71%	94%	0%	0%
I felt this type of assessment had manageable workloads	68%	68%	88%	0%	0%

- A high proportion of learners answered felt capable of preparing and completing the practical activity (82%) and the question paper (79%).
- Similarly participants were asked whether they felt comfortable taking each assessment. The greatest proportion of participants (88%) stated that they felt comfortable undertaking the practical assessment
- Learner participants were asked whether they believed that the assessment would help them on their journey into further education or employment. 88% of participants stated that they felt the practical activity would be particularly useful. There were lower levels of belief for the question paper and assignment.

- 88% of participants stated that they believed the practical activity was fair to all learners. This was slightly lower for assignments (74%) and question papers (68%)
- Almost all participants expressed that they felt a sense of achievement following the completion of their practical activity (94%).
- The practical activity was believed to have the most manageable workload with 88% of participants stating that they felt this way. This was 20% less for the assessment and the question paper (68%).

Of all the assessments, the practical activity was associated the most consistently with positive statements. The question paper and assignment were both associated with less positive statements by participants, and in particular were least associated with a sense of achievement compared to the practical activity.

Future methods of assessment

Learner participants were asked to state which types of assessments they would prefer to use to demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and understanding in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. 34 individuals provided a response.

Table 5: Assessment Type Preference in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology

Preferred types of assessments in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology	Proportion of learner respondents
Written assessments (reports; essays; case studies)	62%
Question papers (short answer questions; multiple choice; true or false)	65%
Oral assessments (presentations; interviews; debates; role-playing)	9%
Practical assessments (demonstrations; portfolio of work; experiments; small scale design tasks)	94%
Collaborative assessments (group projects; peer review)	15%
Other (please specify):	[c]

- The greatest proportion of participants (94%) stated that they wanted to see practical assessments included in the National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology course. Other frequently chosen types of assessment were question papers (65%) and written assessments (62%).
- Collaborative projects and oral assessments were not frequently chosen as a preferred method of assessment.

Two learners left responses. One learner expressed that they want to keep the exam; another learner expressed recorded practical assessments that could be marked externally:

Video me making the item, or video me doing the marked elements and it could get sent off to the SQA as evidence

Learners expressed problems with the question paper, expressing how they only wanted the assignment and practical activity in the course, or how the question paper has a lack of validity:

The paper questions don't really make sense because you have to think more about the context rather than how much we actually know about fashion and textiles

Although fewer learners said that they would prefer collaborative assessments (15%), another learner expressed how they would like the course to teach more soft skills that imitate what it might be like working in industry:

I think that a group project would be a good component to add because I think it would teach us how to work in a shared environment which is quite present in the fashion industry, and will prepare us for future if we go into that industry

Assessment arrangements and fairness

Learner participants were asked which assignments, if any, they used assessment arrangements for in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. 34 of the participants provided answers.

Table 6: Use of Assessment Arrangements in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology by Assessment Type

Assessment arrangements used in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology	Proportion of learner respondents
Question Paper	32%
Assignment	[c]
Practical Activity	[c]
I did not use any assessment arrangements in my course this year	68%

- Of the learners who responded to this question, the majority did not use any assessment arrangements for National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. However, 41% of learner participants in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology did use assessment arrangements in either this course, or another course.
- The greatest proportion of learner participants who did use assessment arrangements used them for the question paper (32%).

Learners who took part in the survey may have used assessment arrangements in other courses. Learners in this course who used any assessment arrangements, whether in National 5 Higher Fashion and Textile Technology or another course, associated the question paper and assignment with less positive statements than the National 5 Higher Fashion and Textile Technology learner group as a whole:

Table 7: Comparison of learner with assessment arrangements (AAs) and learners without assessment arrangements responses to positive statements

	QP: Learners with any AAs	QP: All Learners	A: Learners with any AAs	A: All Learners	PA: Learners with any AAs	PA: All Learners
I knew how to prepare for and complete this type of assessment from experience in other courses	71%	79%	43%	65%	71%	82%
I felt comfortable taking this type of assessment	71%	74%	64%	76%	86%	88%
I believe this type of assessment will help me in my pathway to further learning or employment	57%	65%	43%	68%	86%	88%
I believe this type of assessment was fair to all learners	64%	68%	57%	74%	93%	88%
I felt a sense of achievement from completing this type of assessment	43%	62%	50%	71%	93%	94%
I felt this type of assessment had manageable workloads	57%	68%	50%	68%	86%	88%

- Learners with experience of assessment arrangements felt much less achievement on completing the question paper than all learners; less than half of learners who used assessment arrangements felt a sense of achievement from the question paper.

- Experience with assessment arrangements had little impact on the sense of achievement participants felt on completing the practical activity.
- The assignment was associated with less positive statements for learners who used assessment arrangements compared to all learners; on average, 51% of learners associated the assignment with positive statements, compared to 70% of all learners.
- Under half (43%) of learners with assessment arrangements believe that the assignment will help them in their personal pathways, or, knew how to complete this type of assessment from other courses.

Conclusion and recommendations

The practical activity is the most valued and effective assessment component across both learners and educators, with high satisfaction, perceived fairness, and relevance for learners' futures. The practical activity may also be valued as much by learners who used assessment arrangements as by those who did not.

The question paper is generally well-regarded but could be improved in assessing skills relevant to practical subjects.

The assignment is potentially the weakest element, with both educators and learners calling for revision or replacement due to dissatisfaction with its effectiveness, and workload.

Additionally, positivity about the question paper was somewhat impacted by learners who have used assessment arrangements in any course. However, the sample of learners is too small to be certain about widespread impact.

Higher Fashion and Textile Technology

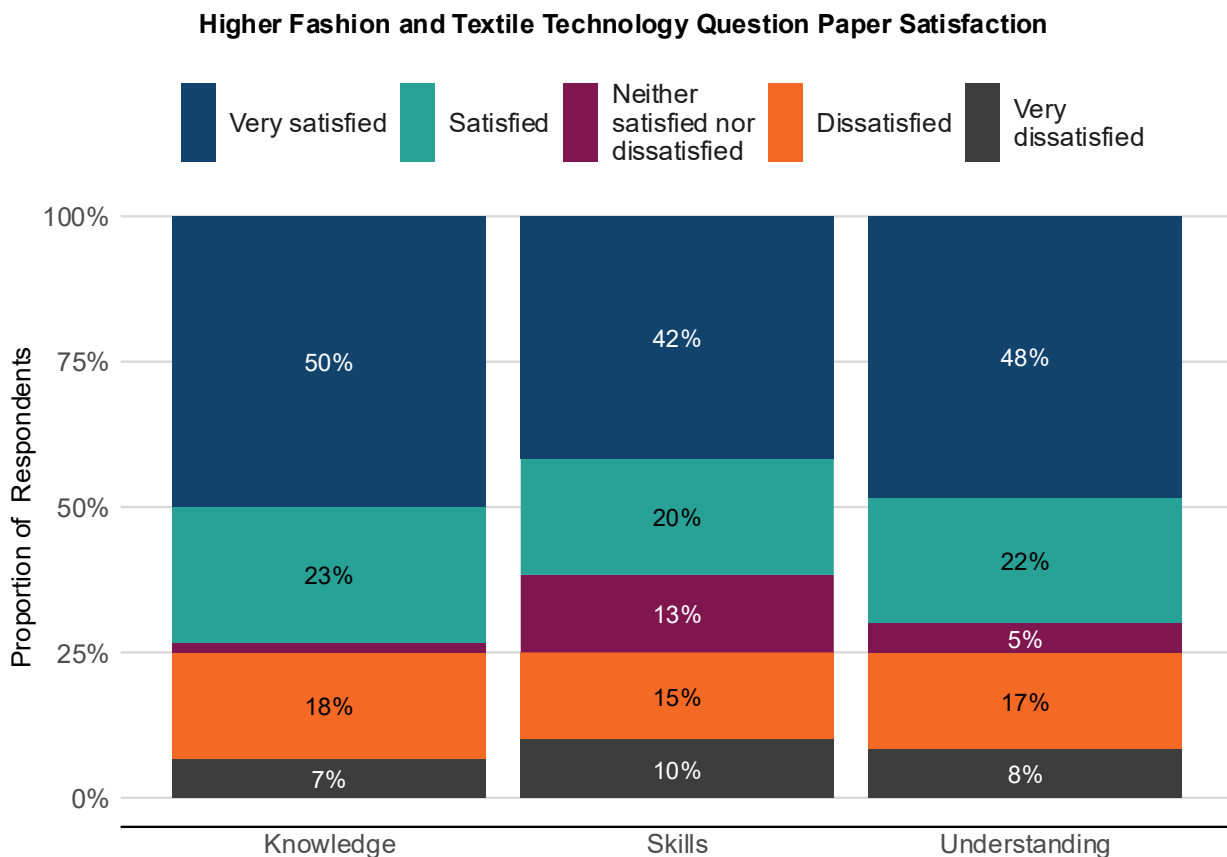
Educator views on assessment

It must be noted that only 61 respondents stated that they had taught Higher Fashion and Textile Technology. Whilst their responses may give an indication of the way educators feel, this is an unknown percentage of the total number of educators that teach this subject.

Question paper

Participants were asked about how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way the different types of assessment in Higher Fashion and Textile Technology let learners demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. 59 educators responded to this question.

Figure 9 – Educator Satisfaction with Question Paper in Higher Fashion and Textile Technology



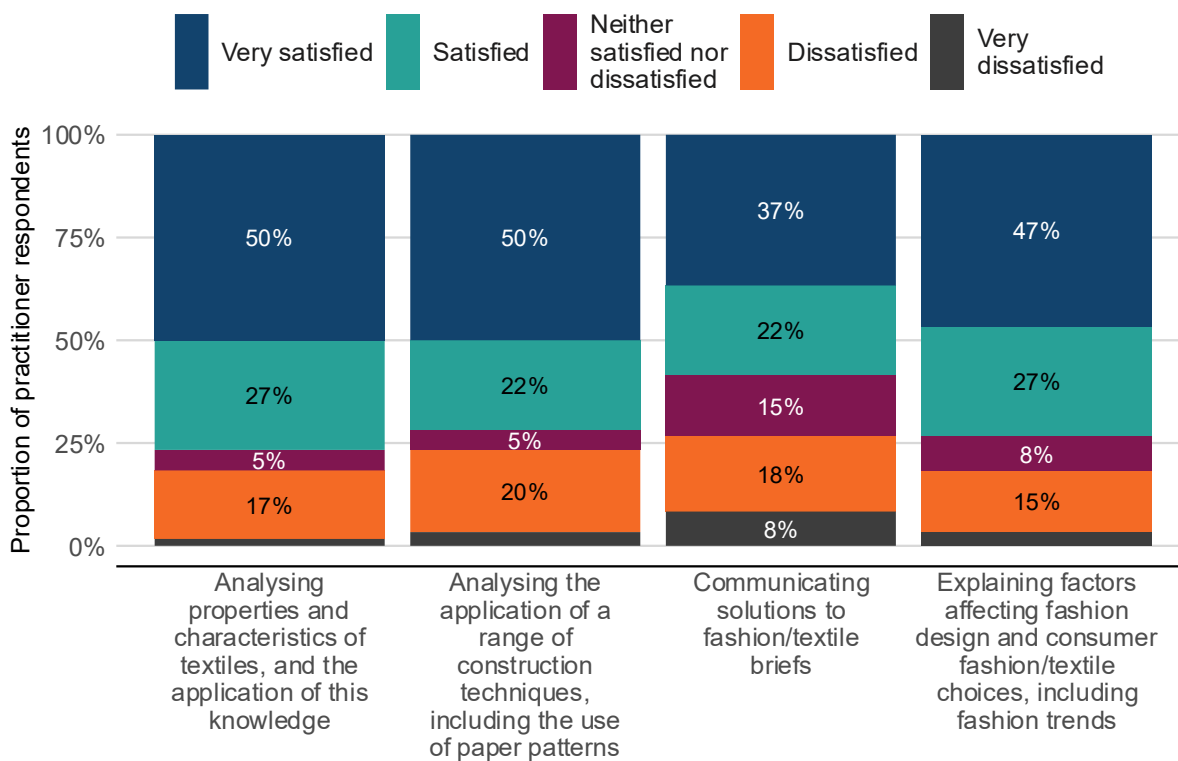
- The majority of educators (73%) are very satisfied or satisfied with how the question paper allows learners to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject. Slightly fewer educators (68%) are very satisfied or satisfied with how the question paper allows learners to demonstrate their understanding of the subject, with 62% stating they are very satisfied or satisfied with how the question paper allows learners to demonstrate their skills in the subject.

- 25% of educators were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the question paper's ability to allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding

Educators were asked to rate how satisfied or not they were that the question paper gave the opportunity to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding in Figure 10. 59 educators responded.

Figure 10 – Educator satisfaction with elements of question paper

Higher Fashion and Textiles Technology Question Paper Satisfaction - Practitioners



- Across all statements, over 50% of participants are satisfied or very satisfied that the question paper gave the opportunity to learners the above skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The lowest level of satisfaction was given to 'communicating solutions to fashion/textile briefs', with 59% being satisfied or very satisfied.

These levels of satisfaction with the question paper show that it is successful in what it sets out to achieve and adds to evidence to the case for keeping the question paper as part of the assessment for Higher Fashion and Textiles.

20 participants (29%) left comments elaborating on their answers. Comments about the question paper in Higher Fashion and Textile Technology were an even mixture of positive and negative comments.

Positive comments

Aspects of the question paper that were strongly backed included the idea that the question paper should be kept because it will help learners progress to university:

[...] The question paper is an integral part of the course at higher level. It enables the candidates to relay their knowledge and understanding learned throughout the year. The QP prepares the candidates well for the future by allowing them to analyse, evaluate and explain key areas of the course to a specific theme. these skills are required at higher education institutes. If we do not have a QP then we are not comparable as a Higher subject against others [...]

The question paper at Higher level is a critical component of the Fashion and Textiles course, ensuring learners demonstrate depth of understanding in subject knowledge. This academic rigour is essential for preparing students for progression to further and higher education. Removing the question paper would significantly weaken the course's integrity and balance, diminishing its status as a credible academic qualification. Without this element, the course risks losing recognition and value in the eyes of universities and colleges, potentially limiting learners' opportunities for entry into competitive fashion, textiles, and design-related courses. Learners will not engage fully with subject knowledge if they realise they are not being formally assessed on it, making it less manageable to teach. Furthermore, such a move would undermine the professionalism of teachers delivering the subject, making them feel that their course is being devalued compared to other academic disciplines. To ensure equity, recognition, and continued respect for the subject, the question paper must be retained.

Participants also highlighted that the question paper was fair, demonstrated validity, and maintained the courses credibility:

The papers usually fair and doable by candidates.

The question paper increases the status of the subject , especially in an academic school.

The question paper makes this a credible Higher, removal of the question paper may impact how universities see this course and could make it not count as a Higher which they would accept. The question paper is a good way to test pupils knowledge and understanding.

One practitioner said that the Higher question paper was better than National 5:

I do like the higher paper and find it so much better than the National 5 paper. However, it could maybe be skimmed down slightly to allow more allocation of marks to the practical element of the course.

Negative comments

Negative comments about the question paper were that it was too difficult, required learners learn 'too much', and potentially presented some accessibility issues. Participants also cited problems with the marking, particularly that the marking was too focused on assessing writing skills over fashion and textile technology. This indicates that some practitioners question the validity of the question paper, and whether it is really testing learners on knowledge, skills, and understanding learned in Higher Fashion and Textile Technology:

The Higher question paper has questions which pupils find difficult to answer correctly, even if their knowledge is good. If they don't word an answer in a certain way then they get marks off. It is not always a true reflection of pupils' knowledge. There is far too much for them to learn in a short time. Particularly the properties and construction techniques.

I think the question paper content at Higher is fair but again sometimes the answers are difficult and pupils don't often word things correctly so lose marks even though they have good knowledge. It could be simplified to allow more pupils to access marks. It is also very time consuming preparing pupils for the exam as well as doing a practical activity and an assignment. HFT only has 2 elements and although the exam is longer it still takes time to prepare for the exam in fashion. This means it is difficult for pupils to complete all elements as well as teaching and learning time.

I think there is too much of a focus on written structures rather than a factually correct answer, which can negatively impact pupils marks.

In particular, participants cited question 1 in the question paper as causing issues. These participants wanted the question paper modified rather than removed:

Q1 mood board is a ridiculous question and does not help candidates apply knowledge or skills learned and does not help them if they were to continue in industry. [. . .]how they need to answer this question makes it inaccessible for candidates who cannot rote remember question answers.

Communicating solutions to fashion / textiles briefs does not reflect the way designers work in industry or how fashion courses work to the design process. Q1A is very confusing for candidates and does not reflect how designers would be influenced, candidates are being assessed more on how they can memorise a format and it unfairly disadvantages pupils who are not as secure in literacy

Not satisfied with Question 1 in the Higher paper. Does a student need any knowledge to answer this question or just need to be shown a technique to answer? The trend questions are usually difficult to answer or mark as the answer can be quite open ended.

If there [were] specific designers [that] SQA state students have to study in the course, that might be easier to answer and mark.

The criteria for question 1A are too confusing and do not allow candidates to take inspiration and apply it creatively.

Suggestions for modification

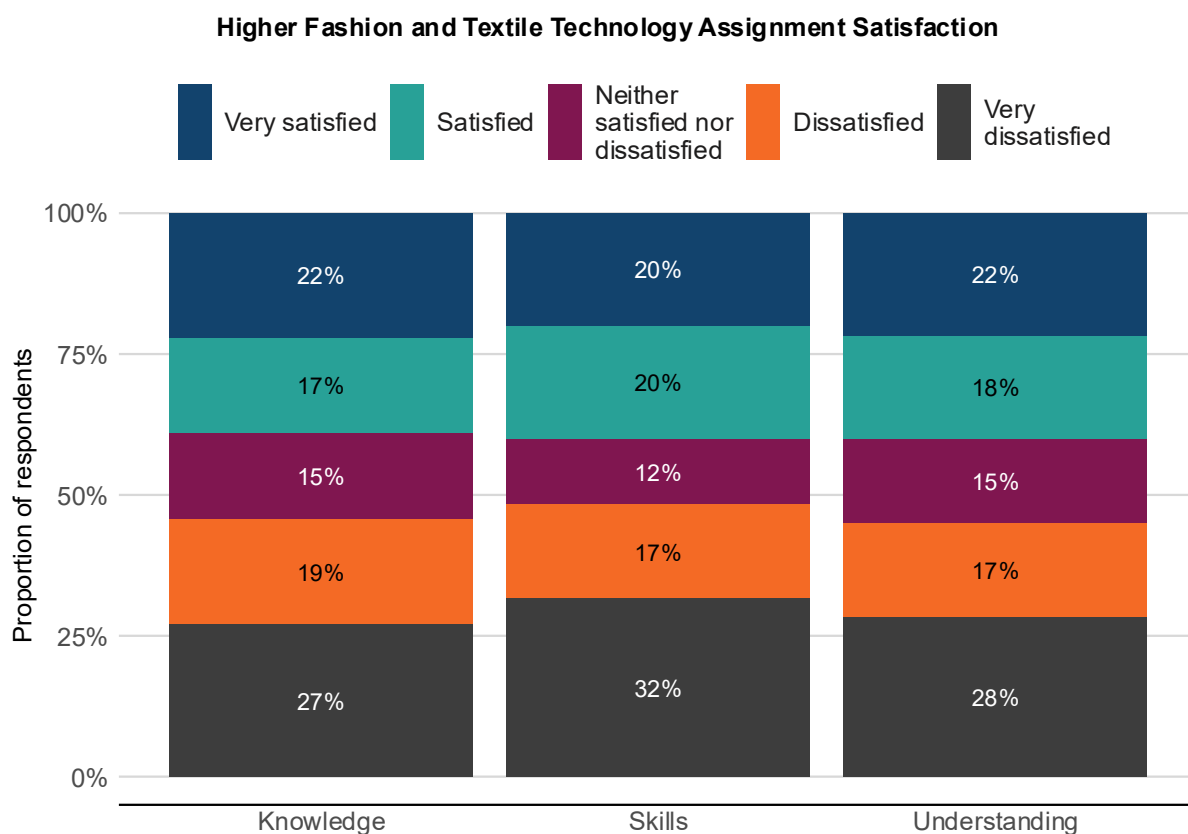
Suggestions made by practitioners to improve the question paper were to:

- SQA standardise which designers learners study to make the question paper easier.
- Trim the weighting of the question paper to allow for the practical element of the course to have more weighting.
- Make the question paper multiple choice to increase the validity of assessment rather than assessing learners on writing and memory skills.

Assignment

Participants were asked about how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way the different types of assessment in Higher Fashion and Textile Technology let learners demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. 59 educators responded to this question.

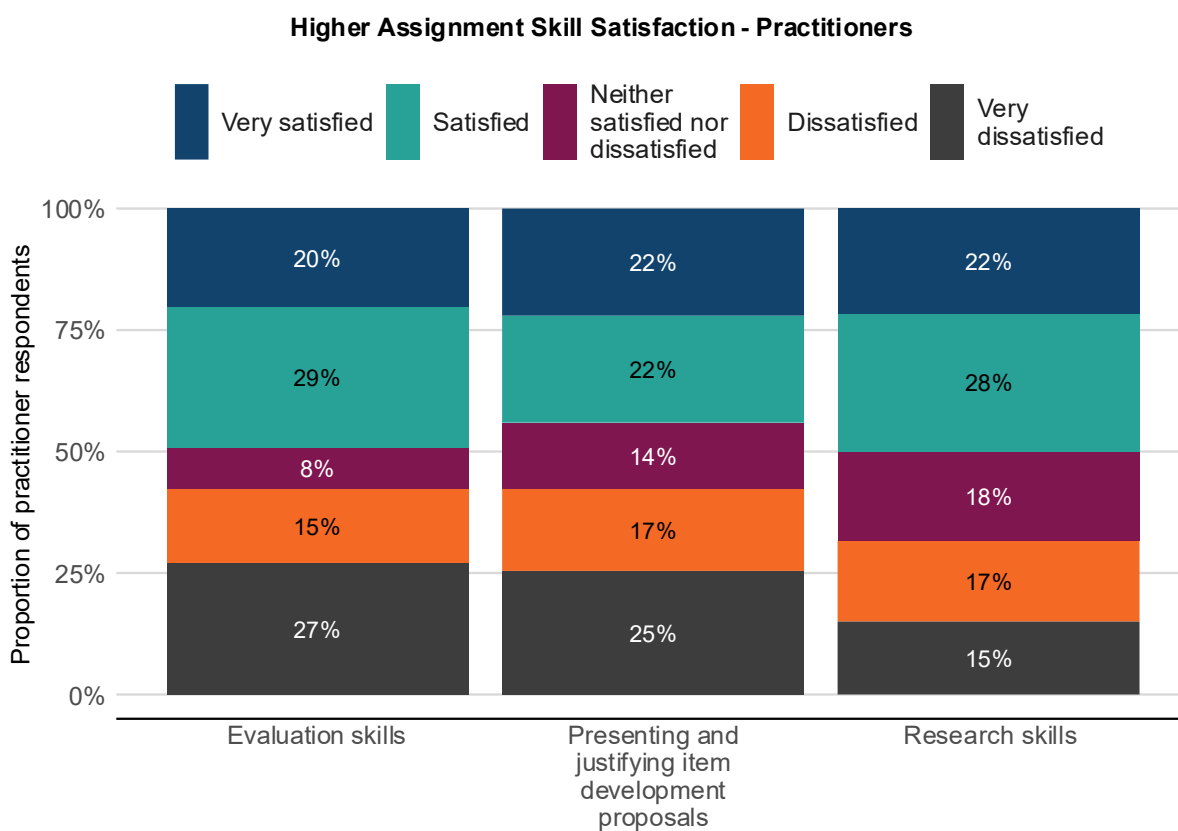
Figure 11 – Educator satisfaction with assignment in Higher Fashion and Textile Technology



- Considerable numbers of educators feel dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with how the assignment allows learners to demonstrate knowledge (46%), skills (49%) and understanding (45%).
- On the other hand, similar numbers of educators were satisfied or very satisfied with how the assignment allows learners to demonstrate knowledge (39%), skills (40%) and understanding (40%).
- Educators view the assignment less positively than the question paper.

Educators were asked to rate how satisfied or not they were that the assignment gave the opportunity to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding in Figure 12. 59 educators responded.

Figure 12 – Educator satisfaction with elements of assignment



- Approximately half of participants (49%) were very satisfied or satisfied with how the assignment allows learners to demonstrate evaluation skills. However, 42% of educators were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- Educators were also split on their satisfaction with how well the assignment allows learners to demonstrate their presenting and justifying item development skills, with 44% being satisfied or very satisfied, and 42% being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- Educators thought that the assignment was better at allowing learners to demonstrate research skills, with exactly half of respondents stating they were satisfied or very satisfied, as opposed to 32% stating they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

19 participants (31%) left comments elaborating on their answers. Comments about the assignment were generally more negative than positive. Additionally, positive comments on the assignment from some educators often were in direct conflict with negative comments from other educators; this suggests some conflicting experiences of the assignment in the course.

Relevance

For example, some participants said that the assignment was essential, had real world applications, and developed skills relevant to industry:

The assignment allow candidates to use research well to generate suitable ideas. Data that they can use in a progress manner to create a suitable solution. The assignment enables the candidates to develop their digital literacy skills and use higher order thinking skills in research, analysing, evaluating.

The assignment at Higher level is a vital component of the course, enabling learners to apply their knowledge, creativity, and problem-solving skills in a realistic and meaningful context. It allows candidates to demonstrate independent planning, decision-making, and critical evaluation — key skills expected at Higher level and valued by further and higher education providers. It gives learners the opportunity to showcase their ability to integrate theory with practical application. It is therefore a vital component of the course.

This will help the students if they enter into industry linked to the subject.

However, other participants said the opposite, and questioned whether any skills or knowledge learned as a result of the assignment were relevant to Fashion and Textile Technology:

There is no skill, knowledge or true understanding required for assignment. It is a tick box cookie cutter part of the course that should be taken out completely.

As per N5 get rid of this tick box exercise — it's not relevant to industry and nothing is learned

The assignment is extremely repetitive and formulaic. Candidates are not given the chance to be creative, eg a mood board could be introduced to allow access to marks rather than the justifications. The justifications become repetitive as they are similar to the research investigation conclusions. Candidates are not learning much from giving these points over and over. It does not link to real-world or industry briefs or the product manufacture stages that we teach, eg concept generation and creating a prototype with a technical drawing.

This reflects the conflicting feelings about the assignment from the data, where educators were split on their satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the assignment across knowledge, skills, and understanding.

Positive comments

Other positive comments were that students at Higher level felt comfortable taking this type of assessment from their experience with the assignment at National 5:

Higher pupils cope with the Higher assignment far better than Nat 5 candidates, mainly due to the fact that it is a bit of a repeat from before and they are more mature to handle it. They are far more confident at carrying out their research and they know what they are doing with it this time. Similar to the QP, I would like to see slightly less value on this and more emphasis on the practical element.

Negative comments

Other negative comments were that learners have difficulty completing this assignment due to understanding issues; in addition to workload issues, and time management issues:

Similar to N5 the assignment is good but not very pupil friendly and some pupils do not understand what they are meant to do. It could be worded better.

The assignment has more relevance at higher level but is still too long and involved and it is a struggle to keep pupils motivated to go through all the different stages.

The assignment is time consuming, could it be modified?

One participant also said the assignment could decrease uptake:

Fewer pupils are choosing Higher Fashion because of the assignment. The workload and repetitive nature of the assignment is putting off pupils who are keen to take Fashion to develop their practical skills.

Another participant indicated that there is a lack of standardisation on the approach to the assignment across schools:

Although I said that I am happy that the assignment covers the above skills in the question above here, I do not agree with the way the assignment is carried out. All schools give differing amounts of input, which is unfair to pupils. I am not against the assignment, just the inconsistencies in the ways schools implement it. There needs to be much clearer guidance on what is appropriate or not for teacher input and feedback.

Suggestions for modification

Suggestions made by participants to improve the question paper were to:

- Modify the assignment to be less time consuming

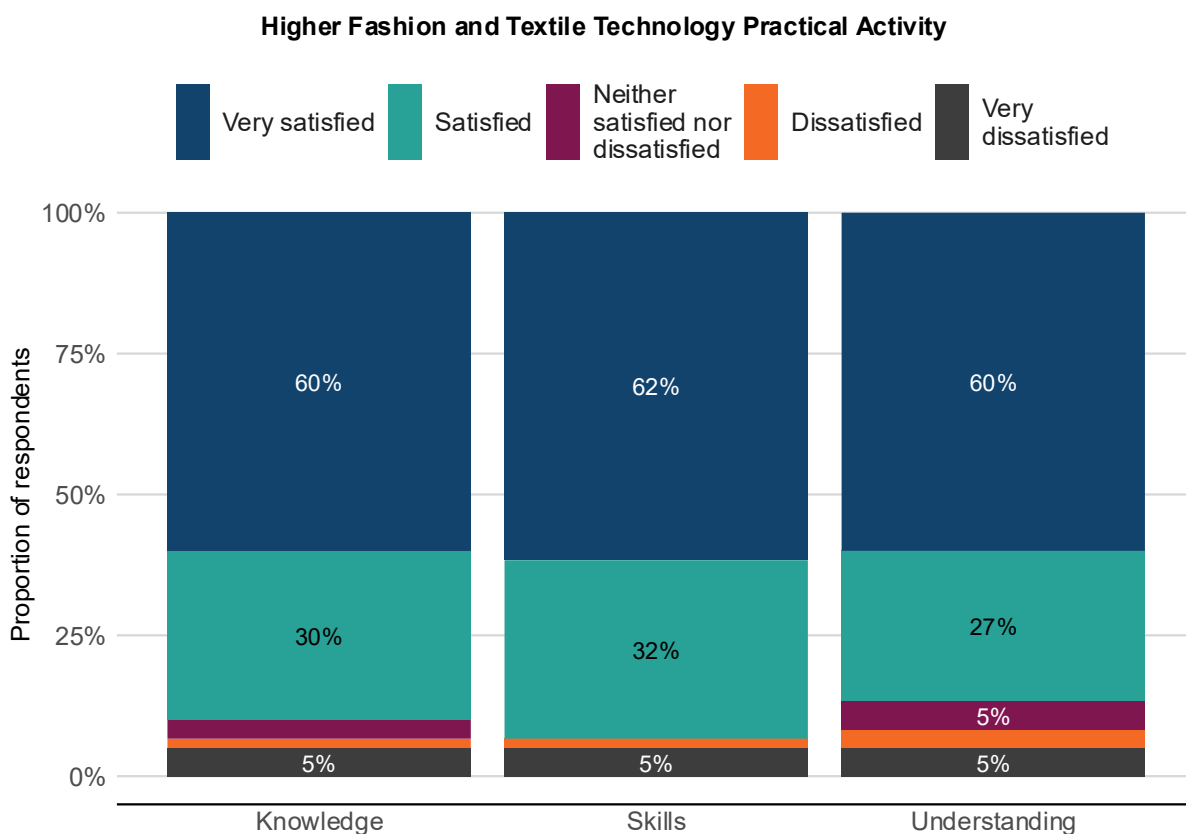
- Decrease the weighting of the assignment so that there is more emphasis on the practical activity
- Provide clearer guidance on the assignment to increase standardisation in schools
- Word the assignment better so that it's clearer for pupils to know what to do

Together, these suggestions for change indicate that the assignment takes up too much time, and is unclear in its aims, objectives, or instructions.

Practical Activity

Educators were asked about how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way the different types of assessment in Higher Fashion and Textile Technology let learners demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. 59 educators responded to this question.

Figure 13 – Educator satisfaction with assignment in Higher Fashion and Textile Technology

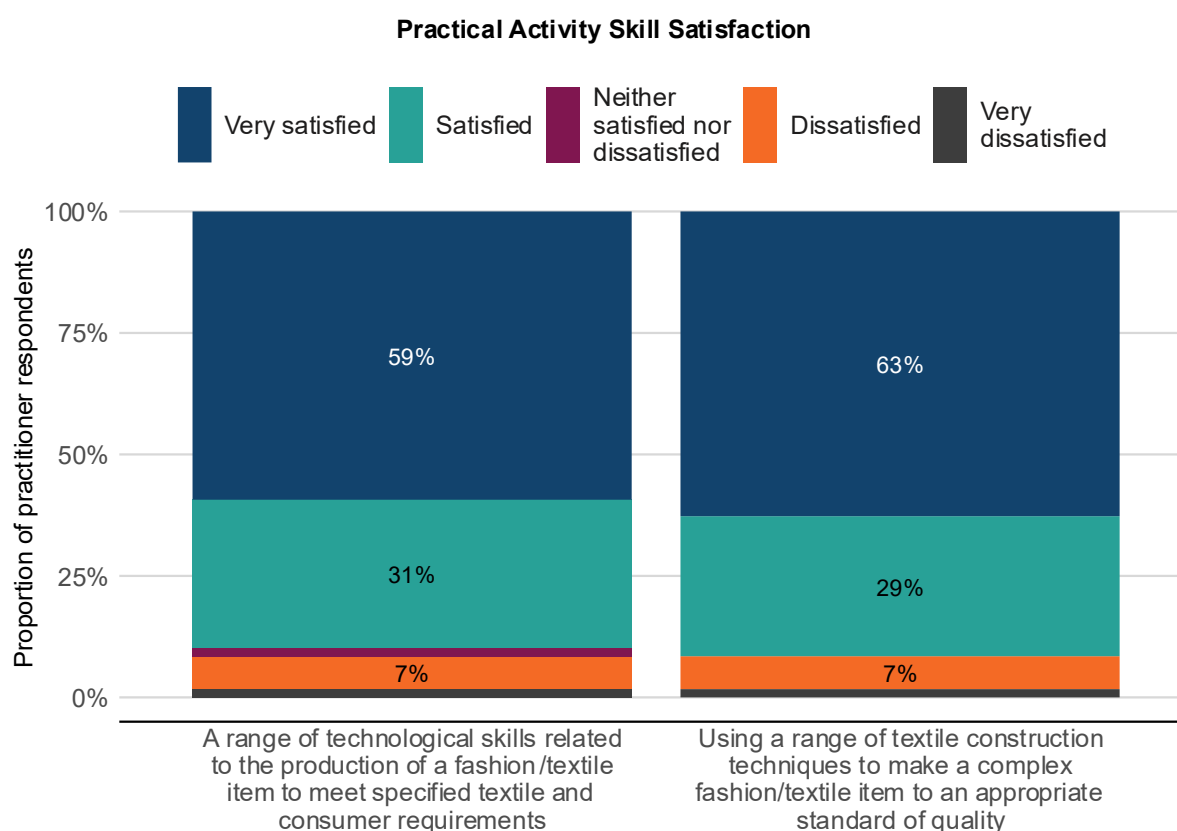


- Less than 10% of educators are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with how the practical activity allows learners to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Over half of all educator respondents are very satisfied with how the practical activity allows learners to demonstrate knowledge (60%), skills (62%) and understanding (60%).

Educators are most satisfied with the practical activity assessment in Higher Fashion and Textiles Technology.

Educators who teach Higher Fashion and Textiles Technology were asked how satisfied they were that the practical activity gave learners the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding shown in Figure 14. 58 educators responded.

Figure 14 – Educator satisfaction with elements of Practical Activity



A large majority of participants were very satisfied or satisfied with how the practical activity allowed learners to demonstrate a range technological skills (90%) and a range of textile techniques (92%).

- Less than 10% of educators were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way the practical activity allowed learners to demonstrate these skills.

16 participants (26%) left comments about the practical activity.

Positive comments

Most comments about the practical activity were positive; this is reflective of the overall responses to the practical activity, which were very positive. Reasons for positivity about the practical activity were that it is generally a good assessment, it is fair to learners, and is a good demonstration of skills:

The practical activity is a core component of the course, allowing learners to demonstrate advanced technical skills, creativity, precision, and the ability to follow complex construction processes to a high standard. It reflects real-world expectations in

the fashion and textiles industry and supports progression into further education, training, or employment.

Leave practical as is please.

Candidates enjoy the practical aspect of the course assessment. It allows them to put theory knowledge into a practical format. The practical activity is weighted well and means that they can make a fashion and textile item that is within the parameters of the course assessment structure, hours and budgets of departments.

Suggestions for change

The most common comment left by practitioners about the practical activity was the suggestion that it have a higher weighting in the course:

The practical is fair but should be more than 30% of their final grade, especially considering the work involved. Due to time constraints it is difficult to build up pupils' skill in this area as most teaching time is spent teaching the knowledge for the written assessment and completing the assignment. Paring down the theory would allow more time to be spent on practical skills, which I feel is valuable.

The practical activity is a good way to show pupils' skills and it would be good to be worth more. Pupils with a Higher in Fashion & Textile Technology should have excellent sewing skills and be able to demonstrate this as much as possible.

I appreciate that F&TT is a technology but pupils come with the expectation that the subject is a practical subject and they derive most enjoyment from making learning and applying skills to making practical items. I think that more weight should be given to the practical assessment / component.

Although overall participants indicated positivity about the practical activity, other suggestions for change were:

- Develop a way to mark the practical activity externally to decrease the role of teacher bias.
- Standardise the practical activity with a success criteria with options so that learners have some boundaries and guidance on what to make.
- Combine the assignment and the practical activity to create 'one continuous piece of coursework'.

Negative comments

Few participants left negative comments about the practical activity. Negative comments were that the practical activity was too difficult, and that there were some marking issues:

As per N5 the skills accepted here are unmanageable for pupils coming to this with little experience despite being good practically.

No marks for creativity as everything has to be completely technically perfect to score marks.

Comparison of assessments

Educators were asked to state their agreement with various statements about the assessments of Higher Fashion and Textile Technology. 59 individual educators responded.

Table 8: Statements and Assessment Type – Higher Fashion and Textiles

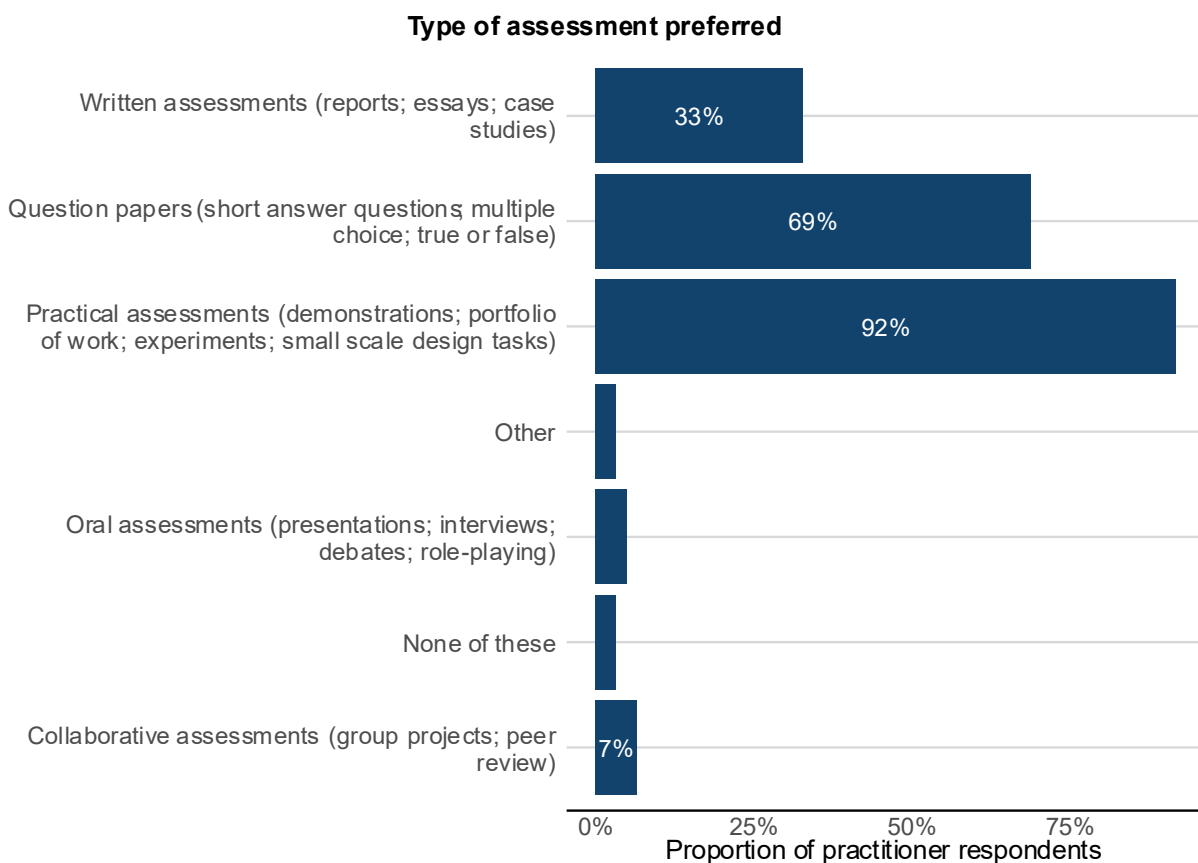
	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity	This statement applies to no assessments	Not sure
Learners know how to prepare for and complete this type of assessment from experience in other courses	68%	31%	59%	15%	3%
Learner performance in this assessment tends to align with their performance on the coursework	51%	29%	81%	9%	6.8%
This type of assessment will help learners in their pathway to further learning or employment	66%	34%	88%	5%	1.7%
This type of assessment is fair to all learners	56%	32%	86%	5%	3%
Learners should feel a sense of achievement from completing this type of assessment	70%	42%	97%	3%	0%
This type of assessment has manageable workloads for learners	66%	36%	92%	5%	0%

- Whilst educators state that learners know how to prepare and complete the question paper best (67.8%), the practical activity scores highest amongst the other positive statements, with over 80% of educators in agreement with them.
- The assignment consistently scored the lowest with only 28.8% of educators saying performance in the assignment aligns with performance on coursework, and only 32.2% stating that the assignment was fair to all learners.

Future methods of assessment

Educators were asked what type of assessment they would prefer for Higher Fashion and Textile Technology. 60 educators responded.

Fig 15 – Type of assessment preferred by educators for Higher Fashion and Textile



- Practical assessments are the most preferred by educators of Higher Fashion and Textiles Technology (92%), followed by question papers (69%).
- A third of educators (33%) preferred written assessments as part of the course.
- A minority (7%) preferred collaborative assessments.

Over two thirds of participants stated they prefer question papers as a mode of assessment. This is a strong endorsement of a question paper being part of the assessment for Higher Fashion and Textile Technology.

Educators who teach Higher Fashion and Textile Technology were asked how they would like to see the assessments in the qualification changed. 60 educators responded.

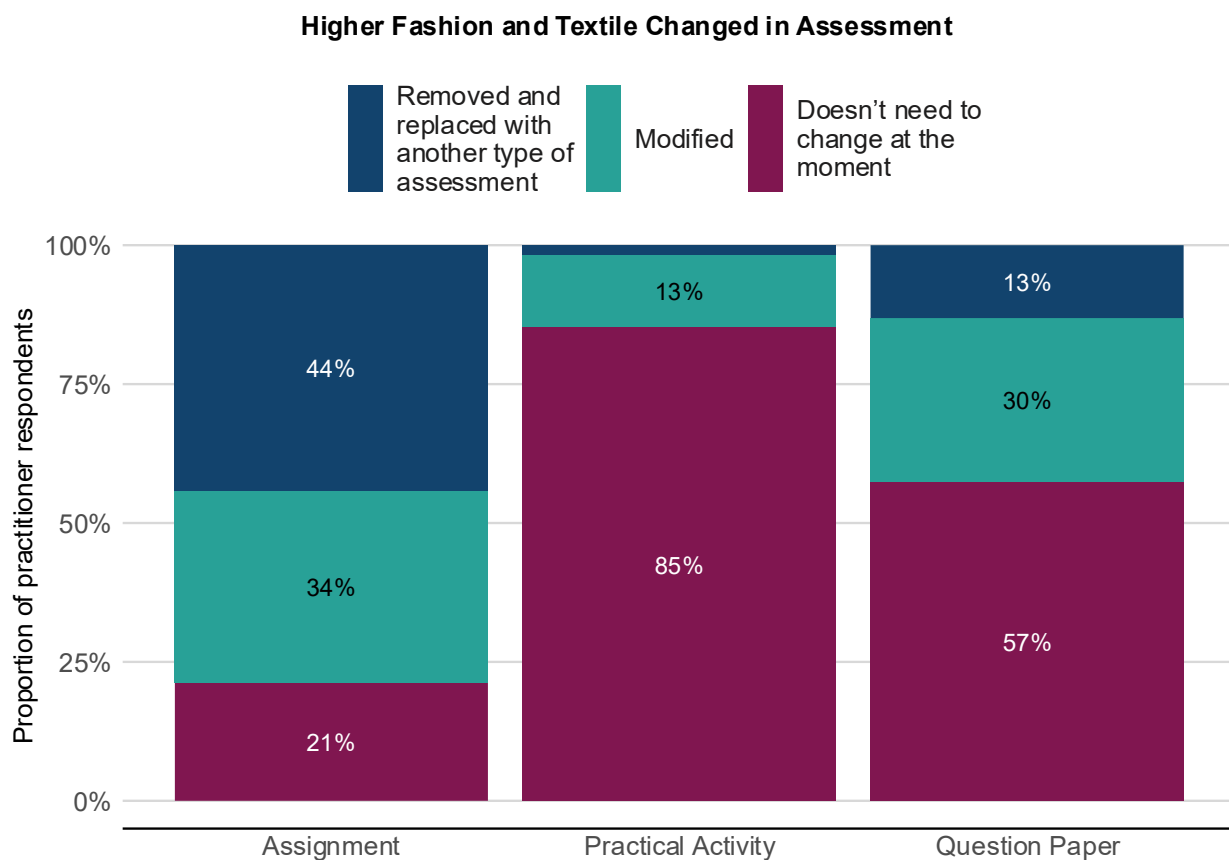
19 participants (31%) left comments about ideal assessments for the course. Comments about written assessments were suggestions for to make them suitable for the course; namely that whatever the assessments are, it is important that they have clear instructions. A couple participants suggested that case studies were a good form of written assessment:

Written assessments but only if done in a fair manner for all pupils , clear instructions on how much teacher input is allowed to be given, done under exam conditions.

Some participants left comments about the assignment, highlighting ways that it could change to be better; for example, a smaller assignment to support practical work.

One participant, who said that oral assessments could be suitable for Higher level, commented that an oral assessment could be about factors influencing the textile industry. Another participant noted that design development needed to be added into the course, as it is a 'core to fashion'.

Fig 16 – Desired Changes in Assessment Higher Fashion and Textiles – Educators



- 85% of educators don't want the practical activity to change at the moment, with less than 5% wanting it removed.

- There is also strong support for the question paper, with 57% of educator participants stating there does not need to be a change at the moment. Almost a third (30%) state they would like the question paper to be modified.
- Almost half (44%) of respondents, want the assignment to be removed and replaced, with a further 34% wanting this assessment modified. Only 21% of educators said the assignment doesn't need to change at the moment.

These results show relatively strong support for the question paper in Higher Fashion and Textile Technology. However, consideration must be given to the sample size of these results.

Learner views on assessment

Following the removal of ineligible learner participants, Higher Fashion and Textile Technology attracted only 11 learner participants. Due to the use of suppression for numbers under five, there are not enough respondents to report quantitatively. Tables for complete data, including those responses that were removed, can be found in the appendix, but these are to be considered unreliable. As a result, only qualitative findings from the data are reported here.

There were two unique comments about how skills, knowledge, and understanding are assessed in this course. One is about how the assignment is repetitive and 'doesn't demonstrate the full knowledge acquired in Higher and National 5', suggesting a perceived lack of validity. Another learner commented that that they liked the assignment, question paper, and practical activity.

There were three unique comments from participants about future methods of assessment. These were about the need for more content in the course, more practical assessments, and more sewing in the assignment:

More practical assessments

SEWING STUFF IN OUR ASSIGNMENT eg met gala dress

[...] maybe shorten or change the assignment as it doesn't allow you to present your own knowledge and can take ages. I like all the elements especially the mix of a question paper, practical and assignment. Important to have a question paper for university.

Conclusion and recommendations

From an educator perspective, the practical activity is overwhelmingly supported and seen as highly effective.

The question paper is generally well-regarded but has room for improvement, particularly in assessing skills relevant to practical subjects.

The assignment is consistently rated the lowest, with a clear message from educators for revision or removal.

There is not enough data to understand learner perspectives on the assessment of Higher FTT.

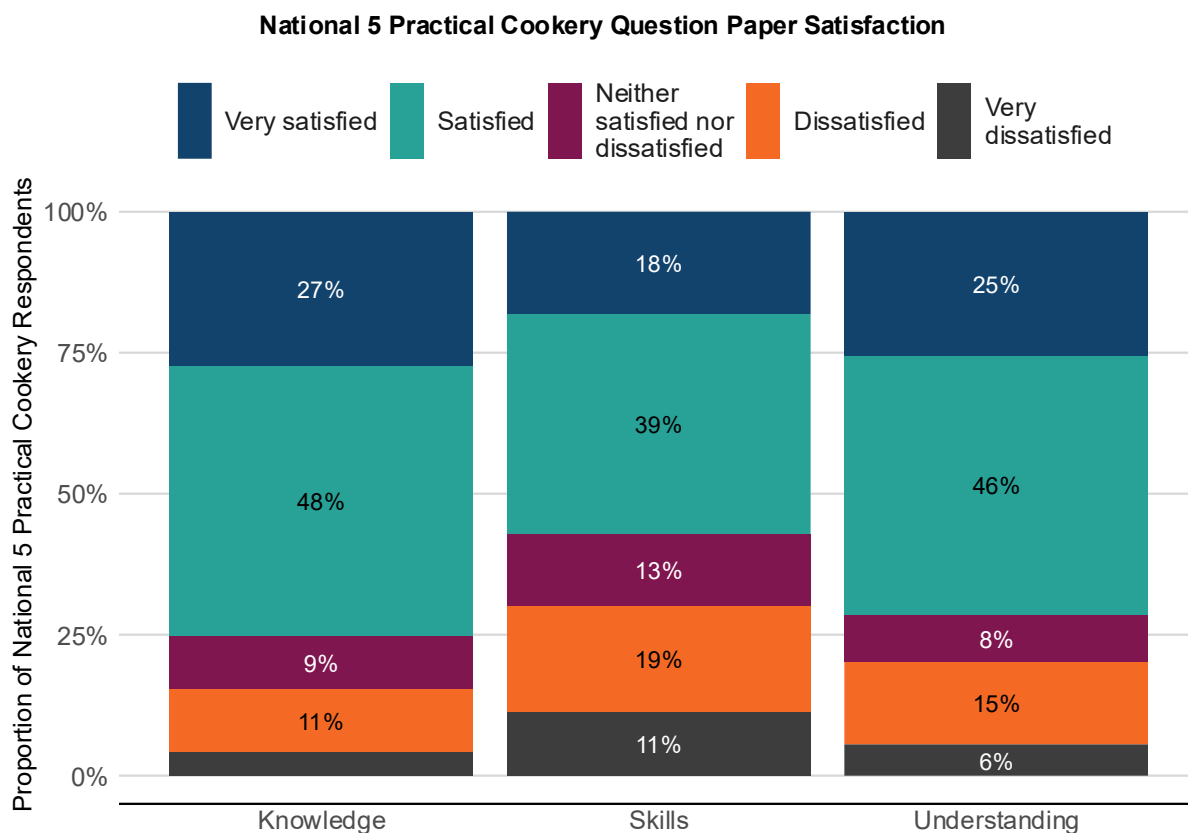
National 5 Practical Cookery

Educator views on assessment

Question paper

Participants were asked about how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way the different types of assessment in National 5 Practical Cookery let learners demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. 363 educators responded.

Fig 17 – Educator Satisfaction with Question Paper in National 5 Practical Cookery



- In general, the majority of educators were satisfied or very satisfied with how well the question paper allowed learners to demonstrate their knowledge (75%), skills (57%) and understanding (71%).
- Educators were least satisfied with how well the question paper allowed learners to demonstrate their skills, with 30% being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Overall, this is an endorsement of the question paper and its ability to allow learners to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding.

Educators who teach National 5 Practical Cookery were asked how satisfied they were that the question paper gave learners the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding shown in Figures 18 and 19. 362 educators responded.

Fig 18: Educator satisfaction with elements of question paper in Practical Cookery

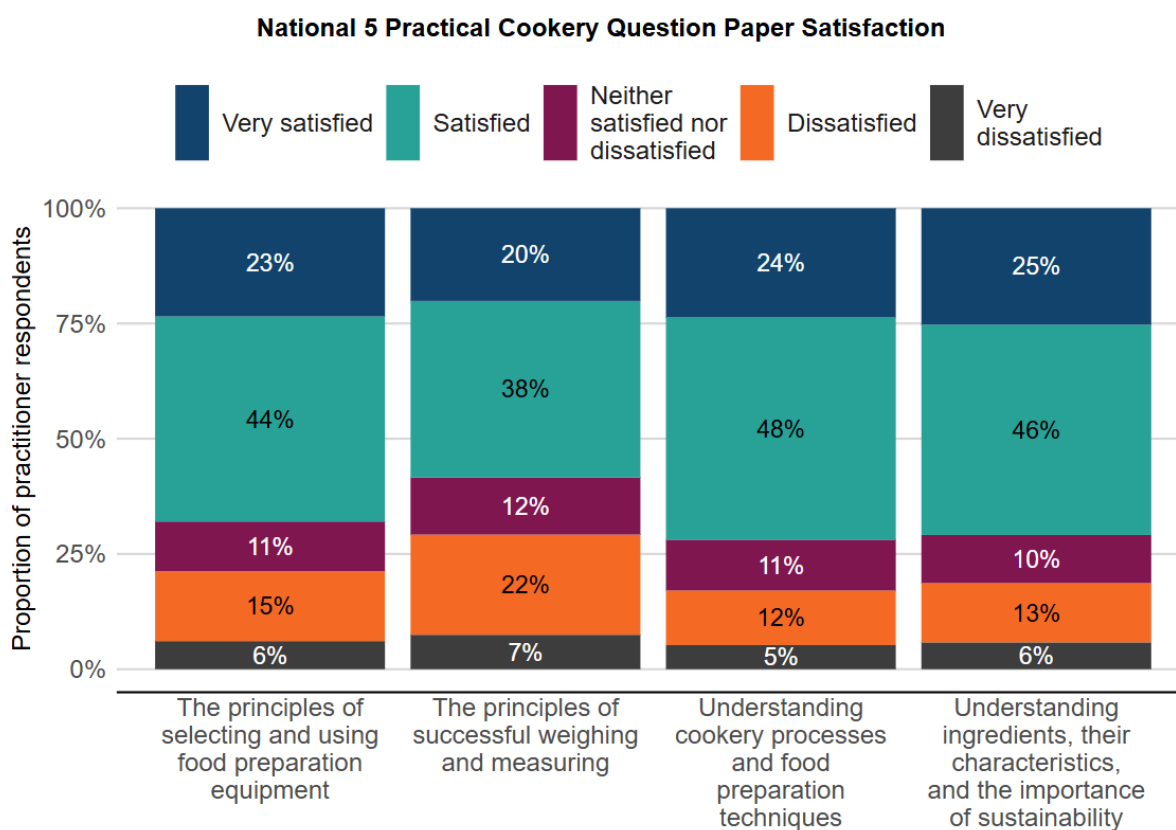
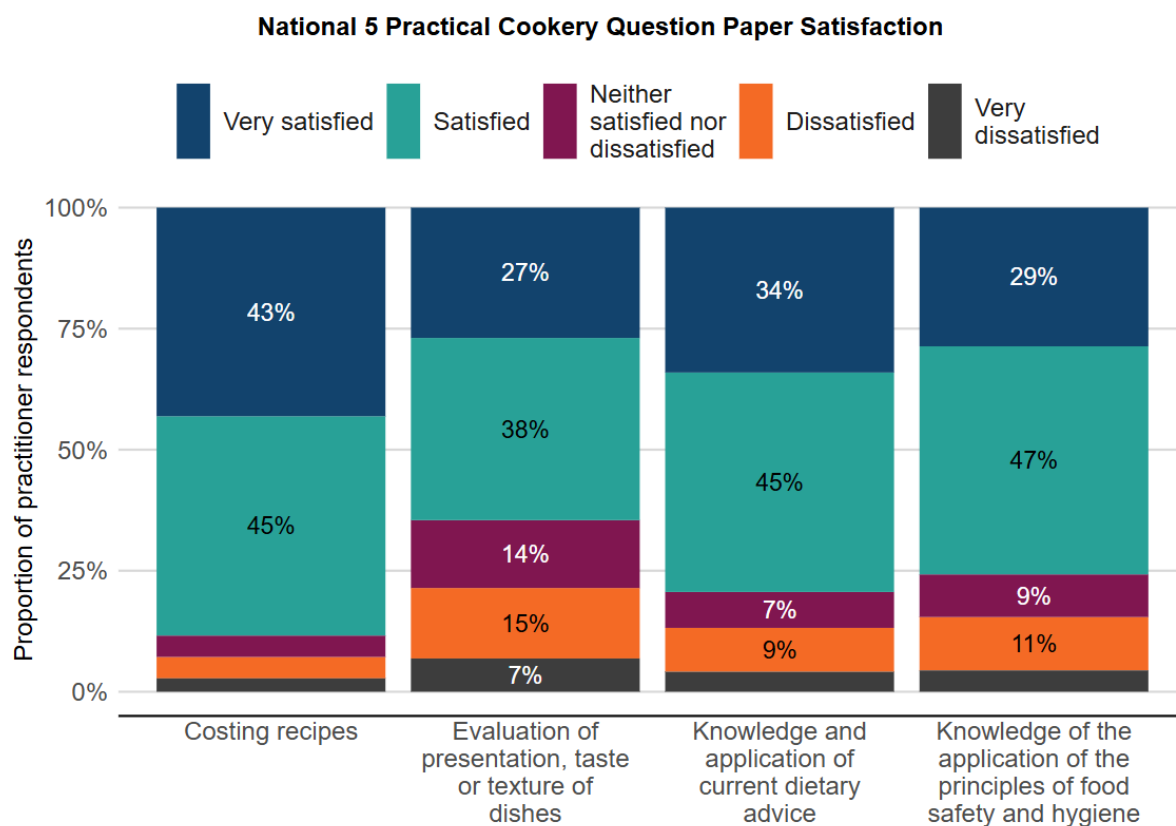


Fig 19: Educator satisfaction with elements of question paper in Practical Cookery



- For all of the skills, knowledge and understanding outline in Figures 18 and 19, the majority of educators were satisfied or very satisfied that the question paper allowed learners to demonstrate them effectively.
- The skill that educators felt the question paper was most effective at eliciting was 'costing recipes'. 88% of participants were satisfied (45%) or very satisfied (43%).
- The skill that educators were least satisfied that the question paper allowed learners to demonstrate was 'the principles of successful weighing and measuring'. However, 58% were still satisfied or very satisfied that the question paper allowed learners to demonstrate this skill.

Figures 18 and 19 highlight that a large majority educators think the question paper is good at allowing learners to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding in National 5 Practical Cookery.

121 participants (33%) left comments elaborating on their answers. Comments about the question paper in practical cookery were wide ranging. Overall, however, most comments from participants were negative, or suggested there were problems with the question paper. Importantly, though, negative comments about the question paper did not necessarily indicate that participants wanted it removed, but that they are not wholly satisfied with it as is.

Negative comments

Fairness

The most prominent negative comments about the question paper were about fairness, and disadvantaging learners. In particular, the most frequently occurring source of unfairness was about either students with additional support needs, or learners with strengths and abilities that aren't covered by the question paper:

It is difficult for students with ASN to understand and write down all the steps for the time plan. I feel we need more time to work on this. However, at the school where I am at the moment we start teaching how to write time plans during the last term of S3. I find this helps the new S4/5 students grasp how to plan and dovetail their recipe steps on the time plan.

The contrived way of command words disadvantages learners who do not have the literacy skills to write in the way that the SQA expects their answers to be constructed.

The question paper itself is fine. The issue is that some young people who have practical talents are being penalised as they can often not access the question paper due to literacy support needs or attainment gap. We are taking away their chance to succeed in a 'PRACTICAL' subject by adding additional pressure. Often learners are very talented in the kitchen but switch off due to the question paper and assignment. We

are showing our learners that you can't have practical talents without having the literacy capabilities too — which is not true. Learners should be able to achieve an N5 in a practical subject if they struggle with literacy — otherwise how else can these learners be successful?

Question paper is a barrier for a lot of students who perform well when doing practical activities, this reduces their overall grade and, as a result, the student receives a lower grade than they deserve.

Another source of unfairness cited by participants was the structure of the paper itself, or how the question paper is marked:

Please use recipes that are included in practical assignment for the question paper, at the start of each year you should provide a select list of ingredients we must use as you often pick ingredients we haven't used for the questions. It is impossible to cook with every possible ingredient so you are stating pupils up to fail . No other subject has this random factor in the exam paper

Evaluation of presentation taste or texture is a fair style of question. However, if a pupil does not know what the dish is they are unable to obtain any points. the subject does not allow us to make / discuss all dishes and not all young people are aware of the names of all dishes.

Participants also raised centre inequalities as a source of unfairness:

Q & A paper pupils from school of deprivation incredibly difficult to encourage the pupils to revise for this paper.

The use of answering technique. Some pupils really struggle with this aspect, and despite having the knowledge of the subject matter often lose the marks for not answering in the correct way. Also, availability of equipment and ingredients is different from school to school. Trying to describe the taste or use of something if it is not available in physical form is not substitute to having the real thing available. This then puts pupils at a disadvantage compared to other pupils in different schools.

Content issues

Participants were indicated some division in terms of content issues in the course. Despite the number of participants who commented about accessibility issues with the question paper, in contrast other participants were concerned that the question paper was too short, too easy, or needed more content:

The question paper is too short and should contain another one or two questions. The pupils are always finished within 30 minutes.

I feel the course is so narrow and doesn't explore food. I think we need to look at the question paper to introduce: more in depth hygiene, broader sustainability and better dietary advice. The dietary advice element is basic and is almost S1 level of remembering a basic dietary goal. Candidates also finish the paper in less than half an hour and still achieve good marks.

Some of the questions are very basic and do not challenge students enough. In all the years that there has been a question paper for National 5 almost all candidates have completed the question paper before the hour has finished.

More questions would be good, say a paper out of 50.

In particular, topical areas where participants said there should be more content in the question paper were:

- Equipment weighting and measuring, that isn't always assessed in the question paper
- More questions about dietary advice and nutritional knowledge
- Characteristics and types of ingredients (for example, types of flours, fats)
- Hygiene
- Sustainability
- Skills and techniques
- Equipment and safety
- Ingredients, and provenance of ingredients
- Professionalism in industry

By contrast, other participants said there should be less content in the question paper. A couple participants mentioned how costing has too much weighting the question paper. Other participants said that there were problems with the amount of ingredients that could be used in the question paper:

Without a list of ingredients, pupils and teachers are never sure we have covered everything that could come up. For example, the question on evaluate the effect of horseradish being added to mashed potato.

The range of ingredients is too large. It would be better when asking evaluative questions or questions on characteristics they are related to the practical activity. Previously ingredients that pupils have never used have come up on questions, for example Worcester sauce, which puts these pupils at a disadvantage.

There are too many ingredients that pupils could be asked about in relation to taste texture and evaluating these can be very tricky for candidates as there is not a list of ingredients that actually could be covered. The amount of ingredients that can be used in cooking is so vast.

Other issues with the content of the course were that the evaluation questions are ‘irrelevant’ and difficult to answer.

Marking issues and validity

Practitioners also cited marking issues particularly in regards to how the question paper is marked and how this has an impact on validity, especially if participants felt that the practical components of the course were more important:

The exam paper is very focused on the correct wording for the exam technique, subject knowledge should be more essential.

The structure of answers is too specific and allows for less expression and appreciation of the pupils’ understanding.

The question paper would have far more validity if there wasn’t such an emphasis on structure of the answering to gain marks.

The question paper does not reflect the hours of work our pupils spend developing their K&U.

As an SQA marker, I think that although the pupils can demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding, this is often not reflected in the marking of the paper. Pupils can often be given trick questions, or strict answering to inhibit them for achieving positive marks.

Question papers only test the ability of the candidate to remember things, not their actual knowledge. Plus the use of the correct command word can remove a mark when the underlying understanding is in place.

The questions are not realistic, they never relate to real life cooking scenarios.

The paper over the years has become very formulative, I don’t know why they are assessed in such a way — the costing question needs to be taken out as a lot of marks for maths!!

One practitioner had an issues with how some of the questions were marked, describing how a whisk as an acceptable utensil for folding should be an incorrect answer.

Other negative comments were:

- The question paper does not assess understanding well
- The question paper does not reflect the possibility of experimentation or creativity in food
- The recipes included in the question paper are older fashioned, or restrictive
- The course overall is ‘tight for teaching time’

- The question paper should be removed

Positive comments

Although there were fewer positive comments about the question paper overall, they were less varied than negative comments. The majority of positive comments about the question paper were that it was a valid form of assessment, and that it added credibility and rigour to the course, and that respondents do not want it removed:

The question paper gives the opportunity for the candidate to show the examiner what they have learned. It is a fair paper that most candidates can be prepared for. I would prefer the question paper to stay.

The question paper allows for the candidates to show their understanding of the knowledge from course content. I feel this is still necessary to be included within the course assessment, but does not necessarily need to be within the format of a question paper, within the exam diet.

I think question paper is very valuable. The theory provides knowledge not only for real-life work, but for everyday cooking. I feel it is important that learners know the background of what they are learning as this will help them better understand the skills, knowledge and processes of the practical activity. It also provides pupils another opportunity to gain marks if their practical exam does not go as well as they had hoped.

The question paper is a crucial component of the National 5 Practical Cookery course, ensuring learners engage fully with key theoretical concepts. Removing it would likely lead to disengagement with essential knowledge, reducing the course's overall educational value and rigour. Additionally, without the balance of the question paper, the course would become more heavily focused on practical work, increasing delivery costs and placing additional strain on school budgets. This could accelerate the loss of Practical Cookery from the curriculum, a trend already seen in some schools due to resource demands. To maintain the credibility, accessibility, increasing learner engagement as well as increasing knowledge and understanding and to maintain the future of the course, the question paper should remain as an integral part of assessment.

Other positive comments about the question paper were that:

- The question paper makes the course affordable to run
- It is a good way for learners to access marks
- It is a good way for learners to achieve progression to other courses
- It is fair
- It is generally better this year due to changes in questions and the layout

Suggestions for change

Practitioners suggested many different ways to improve the question paper. The most common of these suggestions were changing the format of the question paper, or linking it to the practical assessment:

It would be much more relevant if the question paper was linked to the actual recipes involved in the practical assignment. It would allow cohesion and show an understanding of 'why' a candidate had to poach an ingredient/ how to adapt the recipes to meet CDA, cost the actual dishes / dish, our assessments are bitty and out of date.

The QP could do with a case study section, possibly a multiple choice section as well as what is currently included, so that the PA can be modified. Please see comments in next few questions. Many pupils complete this paper in half the time allocated, and still do well, which shows that it does not have any depth to it, so to make it more robust changes need to be made.

The question paper could have added to it a multiple choice section to assess K & U of some areas such as safety and hygiene, food preparation equipment.

I feel the question paper is fit for purpose, but a hindrance. In the real working world, they wouldn't need to explain in such detail and they would have access to books / the internet when developing sustainable/healthy recipes.

Other suggestions for improving the question paper were:

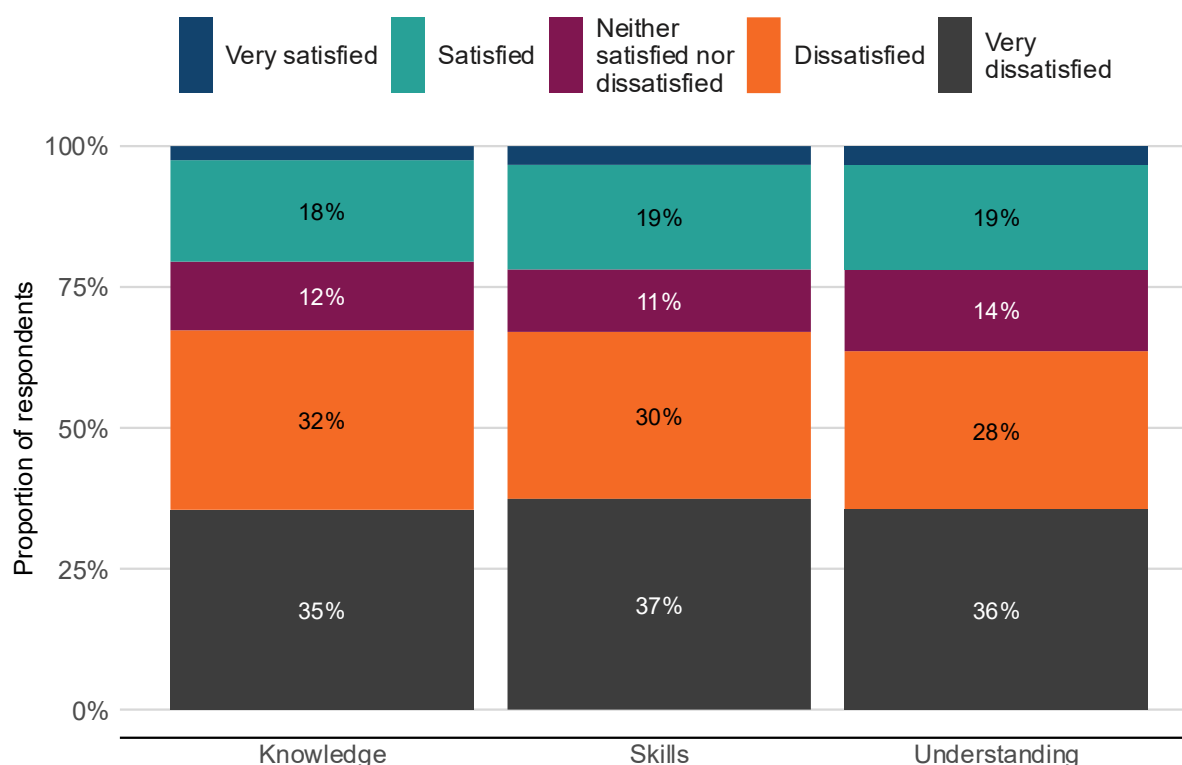
- Renaming the course if keeping the assessment structure as is, as 'practical cookery' could be 'misleading'
- Link the question paper more to industry
- Improve the marking instructions or resources to improve standardisation and understanding standards
- Decrease the focus on writing
- Include more content in the course
- Make the question paper more challenging
- Make the question paper for fair and accessible

Assignment and practical activity

Participants were asked about how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way the different types of assessment in National 5 Practical Cookery let learners demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. 363 educators responded.

Fig 20: Educator satisfaction with assignment and practical activity in National 5 Practical Cookery

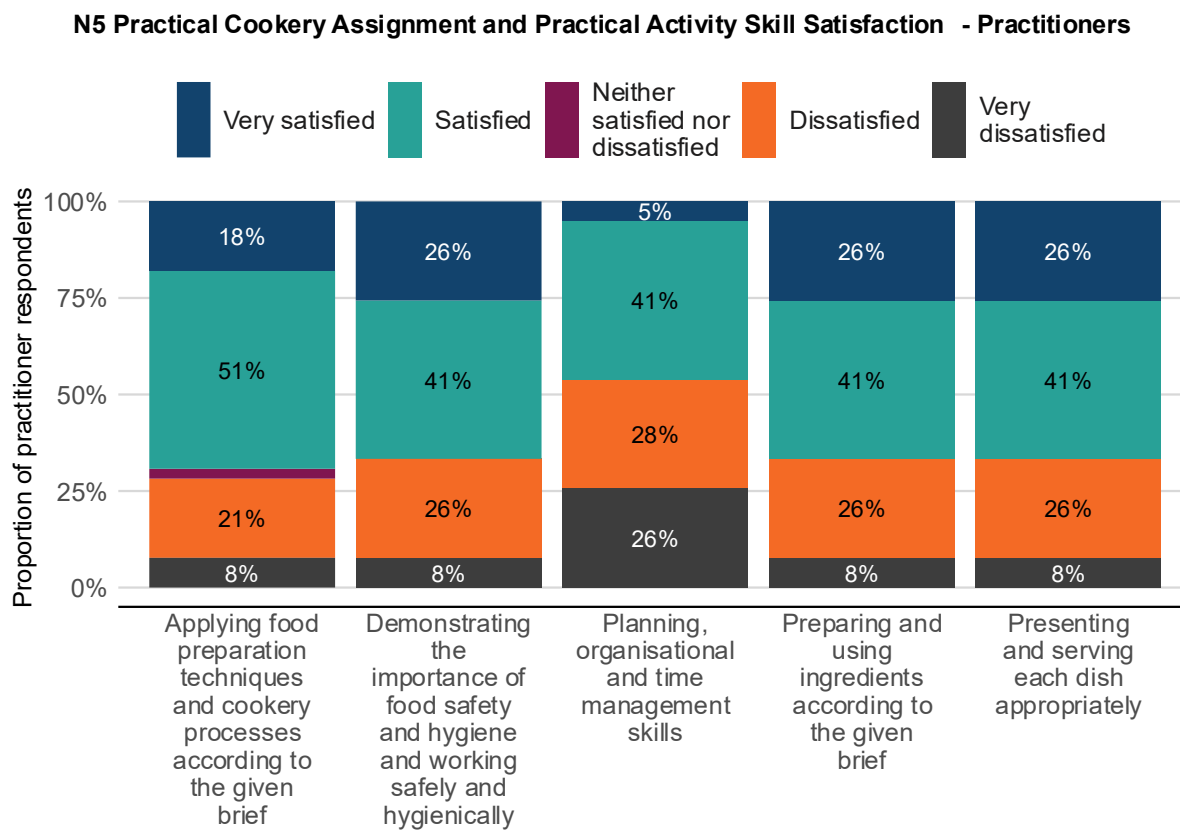
N5 Practical Cookery Assignment Satisfaction - Practitioners



- The majority of very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with how the assignment allows learners to demonstrate their knowledge (67%), skills (67%) and understanding (64%) of National 5 Practical Cookery.
- A minority of educators are still satisfied or very satisfied how knowledge (20%), skills (22%) and understanding (22%) are assessed in the assignment.

Educators who teach National 5 Practical Cookery were asked how satisfied they were that the assignment and practical activity gave learners the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding shown in Figure 21. 361 educators responded. Unlike other courses in this research, educators were asked about the assignment and practical activity together for this question because of how they are linked in the course specifications.

Fig 21: Educator satisfaction with elements of assignment and practical activity in N5 Practical Cookery



- In general, educator participants were satisfied or very satisfied with how the assignment and practical activity allowed learners to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding in National 5 Practical Cookery.
- The only skill where educators were majority dissatisfied (28%) or very dissatisfied (26%) was 'planning, organisational and time management skills'.
- Educators were majority satisfied or very satisfied with all the other skills outlined in Fig X (67-69%).

Overall, 188 participants (51%) left comments about either the assessment, practical activity, or both. However, comments about each type of assessment were in contrast to each other, with comments about the practical activity mainly positive, and comments about the assignment mainly negative. A small number of participants commented that they would have preferred to answer questions in the survey about the assignment and practical activity separately, which further reflects a large difference in feeling about each assessment.

Negative comments

Time plan

In comparing comments about the assignment and practical activity, there were far more comments about the assignment. This is likely to be because the assignment elicited a lot of

negative comments, compared to the practical activity, where comments were generally positive.

Out of all the comments about either assessment, the large majority were negative, and about the time plan. In particular, negative aspects of the time plan were about how difficult it is, with the word 'difficult' or 'struggle' appearing frequently in comments. Difficulties stemming from the time plan ranged from the time plan disadvantaging pupils who have more practical talents than academic talents, to difficulties that educators have teaching this element of the assignment:

The time plan can be hard to teach. The students are mostly S4. As a result they struggle with the assignment in particular the time plan, this causes a great amount of stress / anxiety for them. I teach the course in 4 x 50 min periods per week, there is a lot to get through in the time. If the assignment was removed and elements of it added into the QP to make it more robust this would free up time in the course to focus on building practical skills and theory work linked to the skills

The time planning aspect of the assignment provides a barrier to demonstrating skills, knowledge and understanding for some pupils.

The time plan is a sequencing task and if your literacy skills are poor then you find this a difficult task to complete. As do pupils who have processing problems. Yet I find a lot of these pupils have fantastic practical skills due to the fact they respond extremely well to the structures and routines of organised working so thrive in the practical. These pupils are disadvantaged by having a traditional element of sequencing which their brains cannot compute.

I feel the time plan element in the assignment puts learners at a disadvantage especially those pupils who have Dyslexia for example. It is very difficult for learners to access full marks and although we are told learners should not repeat the full recipe in their time plan but this is what they need to do to gain a good mark. I find this is the most challenging aspect. I feel the practical activity provides a good level of challenge for learners and assesses all of the above. I think the service details and equipment lists are a good way to assess pupils it just the time plan I don't feel is a good way to assess this.

Many pupils find the time plan part of the assignment really difficult and therefore spend a lot of time and energy by staff and pupils trying to get this right. But they never seem to get there. I do feel pupils would benefit from being given a time plan which means the assignment could be removed from the assessment process and then the equipment list and service details could be absorbed into the question paper as I do feel the question paper is an important part component of practical cookery.

Pupils struggle with this as its dry and they are left both bored and confused. No matter how we approach teaching this in the department, pupils disengage or get fed up quickly.

Restricting access to recipes and expecting learners to write a time plan based on just one practice session is excessively challenging. Many learners become discouraged and give up before even attempting the assignment, anticipating failure, which is unacceptable. While learners demonstrate their ability to plan and manage time in practical settings, they often struggle to articulate this on paper, leading to an unfair assessment of their true capabilities.

The time plan is very difficult for our pupils who have ASN, but are able to make practical dishes. There are more pupils who are good at cooking but not at writing and the N5 at PC level does not take account to this. Over the years we are dumbing down the ability of the pupils by getting them to write a time plan before they cook. A lot of pupils are frustrated with this, as they can cook.

The time plan also elicited comments questioning its relevance to industry or whether it was a realistic aspect of the course. It must be noted that in 2019 the course was renamed from 'Hospitality: Practical Cookery' to 'Practical Cookery' to emphasise that the course is about learning introductory cooking skills rather than providing industry-specific skills. Therefore, comments about relevance to industry may indicate either a want for the course to become more industry-focused, or that the course's aims as related only to practical cooking skills could be better communicated. This was sometimes tied to the amount of time learners have to complete the time plan, which was often brought up as insufficient for what's being asked:

The assignment needs to change. the candidates overwhelmingly do not like this element of the course. They cannot comprehend it and it has been clearly stated from industry that this is not appropriate and does not align to what a chef / commercial kitchen would use to plan. The practical activity is beneficial and demonstrates all the skill developed along with knowledge. The assignment does neither.

I feel the time plan is a pointless task which all pupils struggle with. I don't feel it is a valid skill to learn for going into the world of work. So much time is wasted practicing time plans and still pupils struggle on the day making sure to say the right buzz words and I feel as a teacher the boundaries are always moving making it an impossible job to teach.

The assignment time plan bears no resemblance to what is expected in industry and should be shortened and streamlined to reflect this. For example putting the recipe in the correct order of steps should be sufficient without having to just about re write the recipes. Bullet points and steps in the correct order clearly shows pupil understanding of the order of cooking without the need for a convoluted essay style piece of work.

The assignment time plan is totally irrelevant nowhere in industry would this be followed / completed. The service details and equipment list are a good way to assess candidates but should be much more transparency about essentials and desirables as marking of this is harsh. As part of this task we should give candidates a plan to follow, they have

too many pieces of paper on table and not supportive of dyslexic learners. They should then evaluate their work after the practical as part of the assignment and it should be internally assessed.

I feel the assignment is very unrealistic and pupils would never have to do anything like a time plan in a real hospitality working environment. High-end chefs don't do it. I feel equipment and service details are something pupils need to know and understand.

Notably, one participant indicated that the time plan itself as a reason for not running the course any longer:

[...] It is very prescriptive what is expected and not often clear. There is not much scope for artistic flair like a chef with no choice. It is too expensive to run and I have now had to remove this course. There were practical parts I loved teaching and pupils were able to show their talents but the time plan made it too tricky for many very practically able students to get a good grade. It takes too much time out of other subjects to effectively run the practical exam when only assessing 8 students at a time. They need the whole day for acceptable prep, cook and uninterrupted marking time then time for students to clean up and transfer dishes to boxes.

Other issues with the time plan were:

- It is prescriptive or inflexible
- It is unclear
- Inconsistency in the understanding of how to gain marks
- The amount of work required is not proportional to the marks awarded
- The marking is inconsistent
- The marking is too harsh
- It shouldn't happen under exam conditions
- It provides workload problems for educators
- It is a barrier to demonstrating skills, knowledge, and understanding

Although most comments about the time plan seemed to indicate its removal, some participants made suggestions to improve it. These were:

- provide a centre or SQA produced time plan to improve equity
- provide a 'skeleton' time plan that learners can fill out
- provide more time or less time constraints on the time plan
- do not require the time plan under exam conditions

Other negative areas

Aside from the time plan, participants also mentioned general areas where the assignment was too difficult, unfair, or unrealistic:

I think the whole assignment needs removed or re-thought. The plan of work is so difficult to teach and for the candidates to get their head round and succeed in. It bears no resemblance to anything a chef would do in a real-life setting and I don't really see a place for it to be honest. If candidates do not have a comprehensive writing/understanding level of English they do not succeed in this section, again showing no relevance to the industry. Candidates also cannot revise or practise for this as they are not allowed to see the recipes (I do agree that they shouldn't have the recipes) but this also means they have no way or idea how to revise and prepare for the assessment.

The assignment is a very complicated assessment process to get pupils to access efficiently especially in a school where numbers are very high. We have 8 practical cookery classes for next year, these numbers are enormous. To allow proper time for pupils to complete a time plan, mark them, ask pupils to make amendments is actually almost impossible. IT provision is tight at that time of the year and it's incredibly stressful. We would certainly prefer to see the assignment removed rather than the written paper.

Other areas of the assignment that were cited as being too difficult, unfair, or unrealistic were:

- it is too hard to name all pieces of equipment or service details in the time give
- it in general is too difficult and too much work for National 5 and may be more suited to Higher level
- it is difficult for learners due to lack of access to recipes
- the time scale of the assessment makes it difficult, or, there is not enough time to do it
- It doesn't prepare learners for further learning or work
- It is difficult to teach and increases staff workloads
- The equipment list is too strict in how it's marked
- Experiences of the equipment list can differ depending on school resources
- The amount of writing and information is too much
- The 'dovetailing' of 3 recipes is difficult
- The way language is marked is too harsh (for example 'tasting teaspoon' instead of 'teaspoon')
- IT provisions in some centres may make the assignment more difficult

Positives

There were far fewer positive comments than negative comments about the assignment. Positive comments were often expressed in passing; for example although some participants did mention some problems with the equipment list and service details, a majority of participants citing either of these parts of the assessment said they were useful or worthwhile.

The equipment requisition and the service details seem useful in this part of the assessments for acknowledging pupils knowledge and understanding. However, the

time plan seems to be not as helpful in this course. Pupils often get confused and don't understand or see the purpose of the time plan.

I am happy with the equipment and garnish details part of the assignment. However, I feel that the time plan is not an appropriate assessment for planning and organisation. This is very difficult for the pupils and I feel the marks for this part have always been really low. Over the years I have been teaching this the goalposts have changed a lot in terms of what is required and not required to gain marks and the communication of these changes have been poor resulting in it being very difficult to teach the pupils the correct things to include.

The assignment does not help pupils. It is a guessing game. Whilst the equipment list and service details are worthwhile. The time plan is simply too hard with extremely little guidance. It is not doable for many. The practicals are often good, however they aren't usually foods the pupils would know about.

A few participants left generally positive comments about the assignment, but these were in the minority. This is reflected in the data, where the majority of participants reported dissatisfaction with this assessment.

I think the assignment and practical activity are excellent measures of this course. The assignment should absolutely not be timed. The short timescale given for this activity is what renders it a huge hindrance to a lot of candidates and why a lot of teachers hate it. During COVID it was open-ended and candidates were able to chip away at it and had time to check and amend their work.

The assignment is useful as it really helps the students get organised and ready for the practical. They do struggle creating one though

Pupils find time planning difficult but I feel it's a necessary part of cooking and the course.

Suggested changes

Participants left some comments about improving the assignment. The most common suggestion made was to improve the resources available to help making the assignment clearer to teach, and easier to prepare for:

The Time plan is the hardest element of the assessment. I would like some more examples of a good Time plan and a list of what needs to be included.

SQA do not readily share guidelines for practitioners that support them to teach the assignment effectively. There are numerous examples of changes and key information that is not shared with practitioners, and yet we expect our candidates to learn and

understand this and apply it in their final assignment. It would be helpful if SQA shared criteria for assignment at the start of the academic year. This would allow practitioners to incorporate it into the course plan and would give the best possible outcome for candidates.

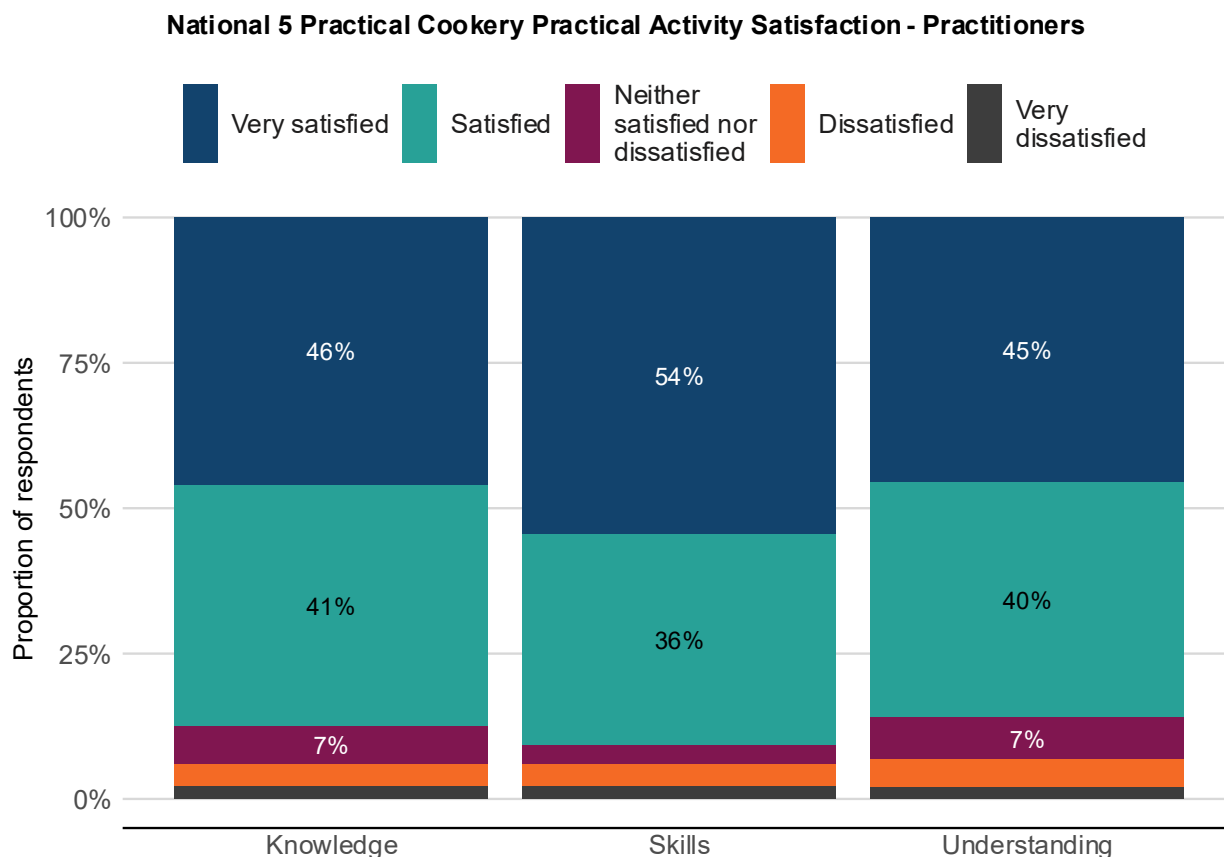
Other suggestions for change were:

- Provide a Higher in practical cookery, where some of the National 5 course is better suited for that level
- Remove timed exam conditions on the assignment
- Replace the time plan with a plan of work
- Provide a national time plan for the exam
- Return to a tick box grid

Practical activity

Participants were asked about how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way the different types of assessment in National 5 Practical Cookery let learners demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. 363 educators responded.

Fig 22 - Educator satisfaction with practical activity in National 5 Practical Cookery



- Overall, a large majority of educators were very satisfied or satisfied with how the practical activity allows learners to demonstrate knowledge (87%), skills (90%) and understanding (85%).
- Less than 10% of practitioners were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with how the practical activity allows learners to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding in National 5 Practical Cookery.

Fewer participants commented about the practical activity than the assignment. Positive comments about the practical activity were very general, where participants mainly wrote about the assignment and mentioned in passing that the practical activity is fine as is. A lack of detailed positive comments aren't necessarily an indication that the practical activity is not a well-liked assessment, but rather that educators were generally more likely to comment if there is a negative aspect or room for improvement.

Although there were few negative comments about the practical activity overall, there were some negative comments. A common negative comment was that the task of cooking a recipe after seeing and practicing it only once raised questions of fairness, or lack of connection to industry. As with the assignment, it must be noted that the course was not designed to build industry-relevant skills. In addition, learners used to be able to practice recipes more than once, however this was removed when the course changed to increase fairness where learners with more practice time or resources at home were at an advantage:

The students see each recipe demonstrated once and can cook it once. In a realistic situation if a student was entering a competition such as Future Chef they would practice until perfect. Only then do they truly understand the ingredients and processes to enable them to create a time plan which in its current format is not fit for purpose. Who in industry creates theses? I certainly didn't. The focus needs to be on the actual practical skills and outcome. If students addressed a brief/scenario there would be better buy in and a genuine application of knowledge and understanding. The recipes they chosen could include skills based on their abilities and recipes suitable for the brief and them. We have a growing number of students with special dietary needs and values which cannot be addressed currently without SQA clearance. Please look at the English Hospitality qualifications.

I find it extremely demoralising that the bulk of candidate marks are awarded to one final practical activity, when they could demonstrate high levels of skills, knowledge and understanding ALL year; and to be judged solely on their performance in one day is not an accurate overall of their abilities. Nerves, anxiety and pressure play a huge role in how a young person performs on that given day.

No opportunity for choice, using the same recipes means that some centres are at a disadvantage. Many centres with candidates in lower SIMD cannot practice recipes at home, assessments are not kept secure or centres are producing very similar recipes

which can be practices multiple times, standards are not consistent across the marking, I think it is too much of a significant weighting on the internally assessed elements which mean time plan is marked incredible harshly and is not fit for the purpose.

I feel students should be given the opportunity to show their artistic flair which for the students that are particularly interested have a chance to have their skills recognised. I also feel they should have access to the recipes as a form of 'revision' like other subjects have access to notes prior to assessments.

Some participants also noted that the recipes could be updated to be more relevant to learners, and industry:

Recipes are always awful, not like 21st century real restaurant recipes at all.

The preset, dated and frankly bizarre recipes used for the assignment and practical activity mean that students are making food they'll never make again for the sake of skills. It is a huge waste and does not allow for the opportunity for students to genuinely show skill. Especially not when they are denied access to recipes.

As above. Not all recipes provided by the SQA would really be served in a restaurant either — so making dishes more appealing and relevant to the industry would be better.

Other negative comments were that:

- The marking might be too harsh
- Holistic marking can be difficult to understand
- It can be a costly assessment to run, with some participants citing this as a reason for having had to remove the course
- Measuring requirements too time consuming
- Baking conditions such as variations in room temperatures that can cause a lack of parity in assessment

Suggestions for change

Some suggestions for changing the practical activity were:

- Updating the marking criteria to be easier to understand
- Give learners more time with recipes
- Provide greater opportunities to learn hygiene and safety
- Provide opportunity to learn and demonstrate raw meat cross contamination

Comparison of assessments

Educators were asked to state their agreement with positive statements about the assessments of National 5 Practical Cookery. 361 individual educators responded.

Table 9: Educator agreement with positive statements as related to type of assessment

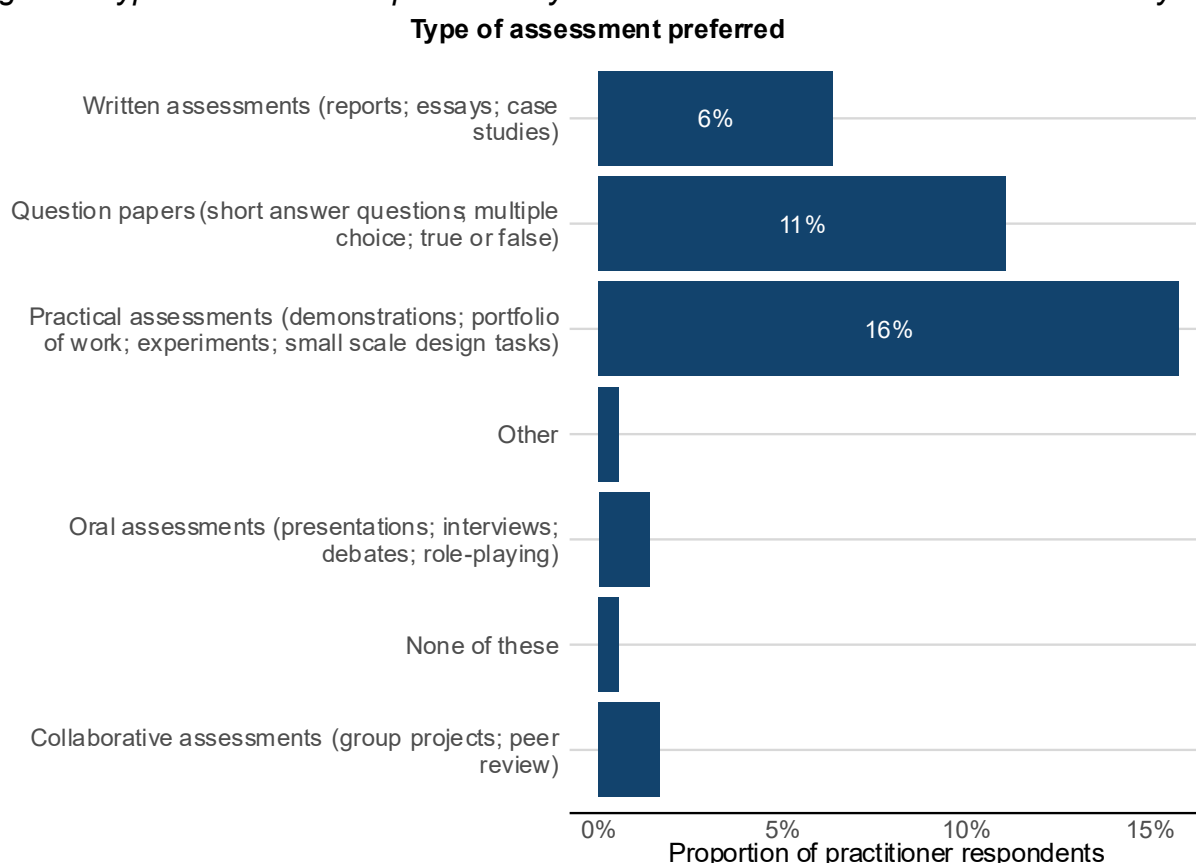
	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity	This statement applies to no assessments	Not sure
Learners know how to prepare for and complete this type of assessment from experience in other courses	69%	9%	37%	17%	7%
This assessment tests learners on what they learned in the course	81%	31%	92%	2%	0%
This type of assessment will help learners in their pathway to further learning or employment	51%	22%	91%	4%	2%
This type of assessment is fair to all learners	58%	13%	78%	14%	4%
Learners should feel a sense of achievement from completing this type of assessment	49%	20%	96%	3%	0%
This type of assessment has manageable workloads for learners	72%	19%	80%	7%	5%

- Educator participants felt that learners know how to prepare for and complete the question paper best out of all the modes of assessment in National 5 Practical Cookery.
- The practical activity scores the highest with educators across the other statements in Table X. Educators feel the practical activity is the best assessment across these areas.
- Educators gave the assignment the lowest score across all of the statements.

Future methods of assessment

Educators were asked what type of assessments they would prefer for National 5 Practical Cookery. 361 educators responded.

Fig 23 – Type of assessment preferred by educators for National 5 Practical Cookery



- None of the assessment options given scored particularly highly. Practical assessments received the biggest preference vote, with 16% of educators choosing these.
- 11% of educators chose question papers as one of their preferred modes of assessment
- Even though there was not a strong preference for any of the modes of assessment provided as an answer, there were very few suggestions when participants chose the 'Other' option.

Rather than comment on potential alternative assessments that could be suitable for National 5 Practical Cookery, most comments were suggestions about the current assessments in the course and what to do with them. Some participants recommended keeping the assessments in the course as is, but they were a minority. The majority of comments were about removing one of the assessments, or parts of the assessments:

I think practical cookery is an excellent National 5 and I feel proud to teach it within my school. I think the question paper and the practical cookery exam are spot on and I think the recipe recipes are well researched. The assignment needs slim lining, but please keep the written paper.

I think the N5 Practical Cookery would be better with the assignment and practical exam only.

Assignment and exam combination.

Individual projects on real world examples. A combined question paper with equipment lists and service details with simplified time plan.

I feel the question paper should continue to allow pupils to demonstrate their understanding through explain and describe questions as having multiple choice or true or false questions would take away the credibility of the qualification.

In general, the number of comments about either removing one of the assessments in this course, to narrowing the scope of the assessments in this course, may point to a general problem with over-assessment:

I believe the total exam time of 5 hours and 15 minutes, which includes 2 hours and 45 minutes of written work, is excessively long. This extended duration can lead to learner fatigue, increased stress, and diminished performance, which ultimately does not reflect their true capabilities. Over-assessment places unnecessary pressure on students, potentially impacting their motivation and overall learning experience. It would be beneficial to consider a more balanced assessment approach that fairly evaluates practical skills without overwhelming learners with prolonged examination periods.

In terms of other types of assessment that could be suitable in the course, several participants mentioned the possibility of portfolio:

I like the idea of a holistic overview of work, a portfolio of what they have achieved; assessing the practical elements and the final quality of dishes.

In place of the time plan assessment, could there be Portfolio of research on an individuals selected country's cuisine, or an investigation into the food industry or the manufacturing process of food, or food celebrations, or sustainability.

Collaborative learning can work wonderfully but often pupils will not work with one another and this could greatly penalise them. I would love to see portfolio approach and also get pupils to be assessed on meal planning, costing and impact on the environment in a given brief. Similar to HFT but more in-depth on the practical element of food.

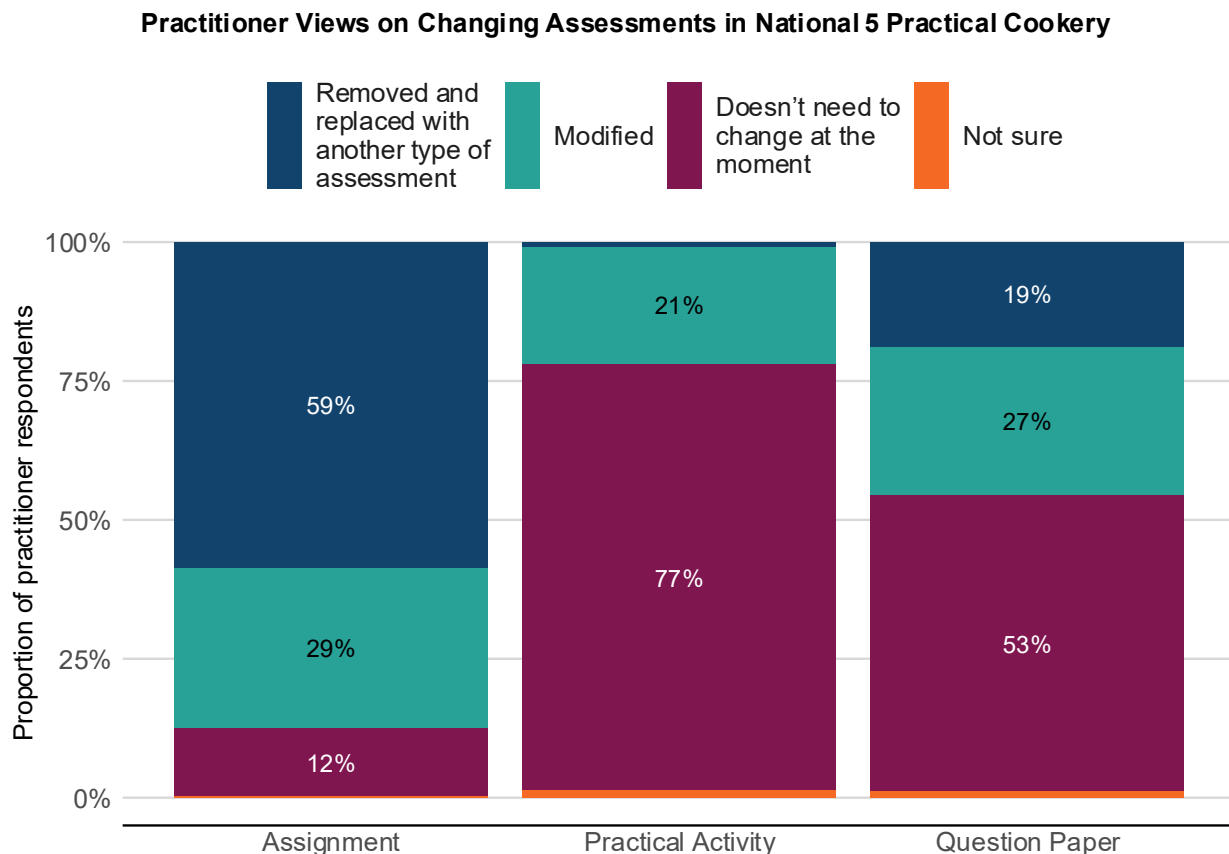
Other suggestions were:

- Assessments that allow learners to be more creative, flexible, or show individual personality, for example planning and preparing a dish of their own choosing
- Assessments that focus more on industry needs
- Assessments that connect more to real life, or developing transferable 'life skills'
- Food preparation techniques and cookery processes
- Use of suitable ingredients
- Seasonality and sustainability
- Plating, service and suitable garnishes
- Hygiene, safety and organisation

- Costing
- Portion control
- Recipe creation

Educators who teach National 5 Practical Cookery were asked how they would like to see the assessments in the qualification changed. 363 educators responded.

Fig 24: Desired changes in assessment National 5 Practical Cookery — educators



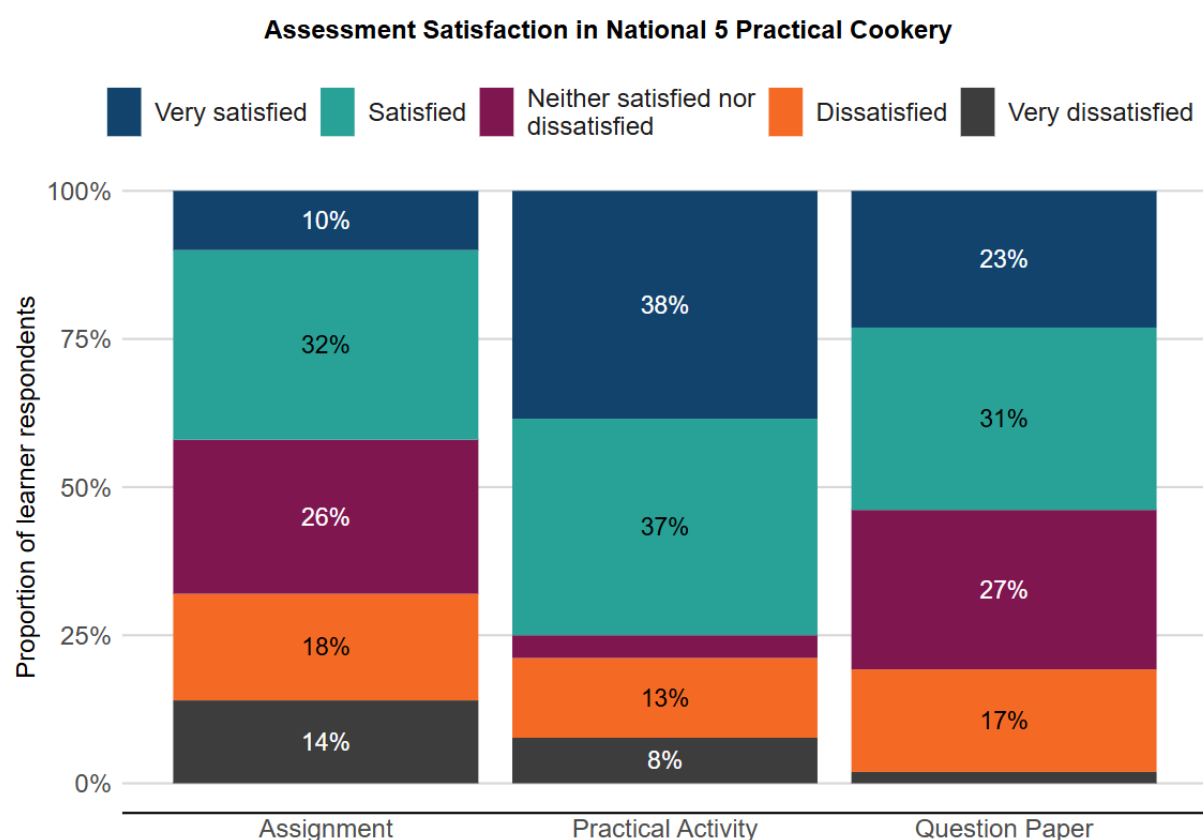
- The majority of educator participants (59%) want the assignment of National 5 Practical Cookery to be removed and replaced, with a further 29% wanting the assignment modified. Only 12% of educators think the assignment doesn't need to change at the moment.
- Educators are most pleased with the practical activity, with 77% stating that it doesn't need to change at the moment. A minority (21%) did feel that it needed to be moderated in some way.
- A minority (19%) of educators want the question paper to be removed, with a further 27% wanting it to be modified. However, just over half (53%) think the question paper doesn't need to change at the moment.

Learner views on assessment

Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the assessment types used in National 5 Practical Cookery based on the degree to which they let them demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and understanding. Most participants (40%) were uncertain

about whether they would continue studies related to Practical Cookery and more than a third more (37%) stated that they would not continue. However, it is likely this is because there is no Higher for this course. 53 provided a response.

Figure 25: Assessment satisfaction in Practical Cookery



- When asked about their satisfaction with the assessment methods, the learner participants had a mixed response.
- A high proportion of respondents (76%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the practical activity and more than half of participants (55%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the question paper.
- However, only 41% of participants stated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the assignment. A high proportion of participants (34%) expressed that they were dissatisfied with the assignment assessment.

Comments were a mixture of positive and negative. Participants left positive comments about the practical activity, assignment, and question paper, where learners showed preference for one type of assessment over another:

I did not like the assignment, never again. It was the worst out of all my subjects, but I did enjoy the practical.

I hated the assignment but loved the practical and question paper.

The assignment was a very important part of the course, since it was very helpful for the final exam. However some of the questions on the question paper were less useful (like explain grilling).

There were also negative comments about the practical activity, assignment and question paper. Negative comments about the practical activity were about not having enough time or practice, and feeling stress:

Dissatisfied because I believe the time given isn't enough to complete the practical activity at the best of your ability.

The practical activity was the opposite and I felt it was too short. There was a lot of rushing around during the practical exam and I feel this wouldn't be the case in a kitchen in real life (well unless you are on master chef or something).

The practical activity was very difficult, and I felt like we could've used more practice as the only real practice we had was the prelim.

The practical activity was very stressful and nerve wracking and most pupils went into the course unaware of that fact.

Negative comments about the question paper were varied: that it was too long, involved too much writing, was too easy, was laid out badly, and had a lack of validity.

I don't we should have an exam on written stuff as we can show it in cooking.

The question paper went on for far too long, the paper lasted about 20 minutes and most of the people around me were finished at 30 minutes. 1 hour is too long for the paper, if I had the option I would decrease it to 45 minutes.

The question paper was laid out very bad, the space to write your answers was very small which lead me to believe that the answer should be small however that was not the case and that led me to make mistakes.

The question paper is very easy which made it more of a chore then a challenge, there was no revision involved and we barely even got taught anything because the teaching staff knew the exam was purely common knowledge. It is just pointless and not representative of your cooking ability but rather what common knowledge you do and don't have. (With exception to the including mathematics question, which is a guaranteed 6+ marks for anybody who takes 5 minutes to learn it before the exam.)

Negative comments about the assignment were that it was too hard, involved too much writing, and was generally disliked:

I did not like the assignment, never again. It was the worst out of all my subjects, but I did enjoy the practical.

I hated the assignment but loved the practical and question paper.

The assignment is marked too harshly and should be more lenient as the Scottish average is around 5/18.

Learner participants were asked to state their agreement with various statements about the assessments of National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology. 53 individuals provided responses.

Table 10: Agreement with statements about question papers for National 5 Practical Cookery.

	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity	This statement applies to no assessments	Not sure
I knew how to prepare for and complete this type of assessment from experience in other courses	68%	36%	49%	[c]	15%
I felt comfortable taking this type of assessment	66%	32%	72%	[c]	[c]
I believe this type of assessment will help me in my pathway to further learning or employment	34%	30%	62%	11%	17%
I believe this type of assessment was fair to all learners	62%	40%	60%	[c]	9%
I felt a sense of achievement from completing this type of assessment	49%	28%	74%	[c]	9%
I felt this type of assessment had manageable workloads	64%	38%	55%	[c]	6%

- The highest proportion of participants reported that they felt the most capable of preparing for and completing the question paper (68%). They expressed the lowest level of belief with the assignment (36%).
- When asked whether they felt comfortable taking various forms of assessment, participants asserted that they were most comfortable with the practical activity (72%) and question paper (66%).

- Almost two thirds of participants (62%) stated that they believed the practical activity would help them with their future destination. This figure dropped to under a third of participants for the question paper (34%) and for the assignment (30%).
- Almost two thirds of participants felt that the question paper (62%) and the practical activity (60%) were fair to all learners.
- A high proportion of participants (74%) stated that they felt a sense of achievement from completing the practical activity. This is a great deal higher than the perceived sense of achievement for assignment from learners, which was 28%.
- When asked about the workload of assessments, 64% of participants stated that they found the question paper had a manageable workload. The lowest level of agreement (38%) with this statement was for the assignment.

Learner participants were asked to state which types of assessments they would prefer to use to demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and understanding in National Practical Cookery. 53 individuals provided a response. The options provided were:

- Written assessments (reports; essays; case studies)
- Question papers (short answer questions; multiple choice; true or false)
- Oral assessments (presentations; interviews; debates; role-playing)
- Practical assessments (demonstrations; portfolio of work; experiments; small scale design tasks)
- Collaborative assessments (group projects; peer review)

The learners were also provided an 'Other' option to provide any other forms of assessment that they would like to see utilised in the course.

Future methods of assessment

Table 11: Assessment type preference in National 5 Practical Cookery

Preferred types of assessments in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology	Proportion of learner respondents
Written assessments (reports; essays; case studies)	13%
Question papers (short answer questions; multiple choice; true or false)	45%
Oral assessments (presentations; interviews; debates; role-playing)	[c]
Practical assessments (demonstrations; portfolio of work; experiments; small scale design tasks)	62%
Collaborative assessments (group projects; peer review)	28%

Preferred types of assessments in National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology	Proportion of learner respondents
Other (please specify):	[c]

- Practical assessments were favoured, with 62% of learners preferring this type of assessment.
- Just under half of participants (45%) of participants preferred question papers.
- Over a quarter of participants (28%) indicated openness to collaborative assessments.

Comments from participants were a mixture of positive and negative. Positive comments indicated interest in more content, especially practical content, suggesting a positive interest in the course:

Baking practical exam as well as the cooking practical exam.

I would like a baking practical class.

More cooking.

I think the course should have you marked on how well you can write a recipe. Which would show understanding in how cookery works.

Negative comments were about the question paper, assignment, and practical activity more specifically. Negative comments about the question paper indicated strong preference for the assignment and practical activity over the question paper due to viewing the question paper as less valid than the other assessments:

Either making the paper something that is actually taught more rigidly to learners or focusing purely on practical assessment and skills, with more content in the 'Assignment' section to fill the gap left by the paper. It is useless as of now as getting an A+ or equivalent from the non-practical question paper is as simple as less than 15 minutes work before.

Negative comments about the practical activity and assignment were that there wasn't enough time to prepare for these assignments; there wasn't enough preparation for these assessments in general; or feelings that these assessments lacked applicability:

I think the assignment was kind of useless.

I feel like I didn't get enough notes or information on the time plan including the structure of it and how difficult it is.

I think some schools need to give practical cookery students more periods or at least more double periods as it was difficult to learn all the skills and prepare for the assessments especially the practical one.

More monthly tests, or tests which assess certain aspects of the course which you receive marks for in the exam. Such as a test focused on time management and a test focused on hygiene and a test focused on cookery processes and skills.

More resources need to be made for students to study especially for the assignment and practical activity as it was extremely difficult to find clear and concise resources to prepare for these assessments.

Assessment arrangements and fairness

Learner participants were asked which assessments, if any, they used assessment arrangements for. 51 participants provided an answer to this question.

- Overall, a high proportion of learner participants reported that they had used assessment arrangements for National 5 Practical Cookery. 53% of learners participants in National 5 Practical Cookery used assessment arrangements in Practical Cookery, or another course.
- 36% of participants answered that they had used assessment arrangements for the question paper; 32% stated that they had used assessment arrangements for the assignment, and 26% in the practical activity.

Learner participants who have used assessment arrangements in any course compared to all learners in National 5 Practical Cookery were broadly similar to one another in their association with positive statements to different assessment types.

Table 12: Comparison of learner participants with assessment arrangements (AAs) and all learners

	QP: learners with any AAs	QP: all learners	A: learners with any AAs	A: all Learners	PA: learners with any AAs	PA: all learners
I knew how to prepare for and complete this type of assessment from experience in other courses	74%	68%	43%	36%	70%	49%
I felt comfortable taking this type of assessment	78%	66%	39%	32%		72%
I believe this type of assessment will help me in my pathway to further learning or employment	39%	34%	26%	30%	74%	62%
I believe this type of assessment was fair to all learners	78%	62%	52%	40%	70%	60%
I felt a sense of achievement from completing this type of assessment	61%	68%	39%	28%		74%
I felt this type of assessment had manageable workloads	74%	64%	35%	38%	61%	55%

QP: question paper

A: assignment

PA: practical activity

- The assignment was the assessment which had the lowest number of positive statements associated with it in both groups. However, learners who used assessment arrangements thought the assignment was fairer to all learners.
- Learners who used assessment arrangements thought that all assessments were fairer than did all learners.
- Although over half of learners who used assessment arrangements felt a sense of achievement completing the question paper (61%), this was 7% lower than for all learners.
- A higher proportion of learners with assessment arrangements associated the practical activity with more positive statements than all learners.

Satisfaction levels with the question paper, assignment, and practical activity were also broadly similar between both learners who have used assessment arrangements, as well as all learners in N5 Practical Cookery:

Table 13: Satisfaction levels of learner participants who used assessment arrangements (AAs) about types of assessments

	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity
Very satisfied	30%	9%	43%
Satisfied	22%	30%	30%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	26%	39%	[c]
Dissatisfied	22%	[c]	[c]
Very dissatisfied	0%	0%	[c]

- Learners who used assessment arrangements reported similar levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction about the question paper and the practical activity as did all learners.
- Although only 39% of learners who used assessment arrangements were satisfied or very satisfied with the assignment, few learners with assessment arrangements were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the assignment (17%) compared to all learners (31%).

Conclusion and recommendations

The practical activity is the most effective and well-received assessment by both educators and learners, and is generally regarded as fair and manageable.

The question paper is moderately successful from an educator perspective, especially in assessing knowledge, but could improve in skills coverage. However, learners are more mixed on their views on the question paper, with only around half of learners indicating satisfaction with this assessment.

The assignment is consistently rated the lowest by both groups, with widespread dissatisfaction and strong support for removal or revision.

Appendices

Appendix A: Learner data with excluded responses

National 5 Fashion and Textile Technology tables, learners

Table 14: Levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with how assessments allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding

	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity
Very satisfied	80%	18%	86%
Satisfied	[c]	58%	9%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	[c]	[c]	[c]
Dissatisfied	[c]	9%	[c]
Very dissatisfied	9%	8%	[c]
Grand Total	100%	100%	[c]

Table 15: Associations of positive statements with types of assessments

	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity
I knew how to prepare for and complete this type of assessment from experience in other courses	89%	82%	91%
I felt comfortable taking this type of assessment	86%	88%	94%
I believe this type of assessment will help me in my pathway to further learning or employment	82%	82%	94%
I believe this type of assessment was fair to all learners	83%	86%	94%
I felt a sense of achievement from completing this type of assessment	80%	85%	97%

	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity
I felt this type of assessment had manageable workloads	83%	82%	94%

Table 16: Preferred methods of assessment

Preferred methods of assessment	%
Written assessments (reports; essays; case studies)	78%
Question papers (short answer questions; multiple choice; true or false)	80%
Oral assessments (presentations; interviews; debates; role-playing)	[c]
Practical assessments (demonstrations; portfolio of work; experiments; small scale design tasks)	97%
Collaborative assessments (group projects; peer review)	11%
Other (please specify):	[c]

Higher Fashion and Textile Technology tables, learners

Table 17: Levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with how assessments allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding

	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity
Very satisfied	83%	26%	88%
Satisfied	[c]	64%	[c]
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	[c]	0%	0%
Dissatisfied	[c]	[c]	0%
Very dissatisfied	[c]	[c]	[c]
Grand total			

The majority of comments about how satisfied or dissatisfied participants were with how the assessments in this course allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge, skill, and understanding, were repetitive and identical. These comments were about keeping the question paper, or, keeping the question paper because it helps with progression to university:

Please keep the question paper

I would like to go to university, so I would like a question paper to make the course valid

Table 18: Associations of positive statements with types of assessments

	Question paper	Assignment	Practical activity
I knew how to prepare for and complete this type of assessment from experience in other courses	93%	93%	95%
I felt comfortable taking this type of assessment	90%	90%	95%
I believe this type of assessment will help me in my pathway to further learning or employment	88%	86%	93%
I believe this type of assessment was fair to all learners	88%	90%	95%
I felt a sense of achievement from completing this type of assessment	95%	90%	95%
I felt this type of assessment had manageable workloads	88%	88%	95%

Table 19: Preferred methods of assessment

Preferred methods of assessment	Number of learners	%
Written assessments (reports; essays; case studies)	32	76%
Question papers (short answer questions; multiple choice; true or false)	36	86%
Oral assessments (presentations; interviews; debates; role-playing)	[c]	[c]
Practical assessments (demonstrations; portfolio of work; experiments; small scale design tasks)	40	95%
Collaborative assessments (group projects; peer review)	[c]	[c]
Other (please specify):	[c]	[c]

Participants were also asked if there was anything they would like to add about preferred methods of assessment in this course. Similar to the previous open-text question, the majority of comments were repetitive and identical. These comments were about keeping the question paper, or, keeping the question paper because it helps with progression to university. Similar to previous open questions in this sample of learners, answers were identical, or close to identical:

Keep the question paper to ensure course is valid when applying for university.

Please keep the question paper.

Appendix B: References

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