



NQ Practical Cookery Qualification

Verification Summary Report 2024–25

Section 1: verification group information

Verification group name:	Practical Cookery
Verification activity:	Visit
Round	Round 2
Date published:	June 2025

National Course components verified

Course code	Course level	Component title
C877 75	National 5	Practical Cookery — assignment and practical activity

Section 2: comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

All centres visited used the recipes provided by SQA to carry out the practical activity.

The marking grid included in this year's marking instructions was used by most centres, however some centres made modifications which at times disadvantaged candidates

due to over assessment. Centres should not change the content of the grid but should use it in its entirety. Holistic marking instructions are provided by SQA. Centre staff are reminded not to deviate from the holistic marking instructions to ensure the national standard is met.

Assessors should ensure they are familiar with the assessment arrangements before marking starts. The use of time prompts throughout the assessment are recommended, details of which are included in the centre marking instructions. Additional time prompts are not permitted.

The assessor should not leave the assessment room during the practical activity. Other centre staff should not enter the assessment room. This is detailed in the centre marking instructions.

If a centre is selected for visiting verification, the first assessment to take place should be with the visiting verifier. This is to ensure that the centre is marking to standard. No additional sessions can be conducted at the same time as the visiting verification is taking place.

The planning stage of the assessment (the assignment) should be copied by centres. Centre staff must not mark the assignments. The unaltered original must be submitted to SQA for marking.

A copy of the assignment must be returned to candidates, for amending if needed, before they undertake their practical activity. This was not carried out in all centres. Some candidates used unworkable time plans and incorrect service details in their assignment. Had these time plans been used in the practical activity, candidates would have been considerably disadvantaged.

Once the assignments have been photocopied, centre staff must support candidates to ensure they have a workable plan, which should include all essential tasks and appropriate timings. If support has been given and the time plans are still not to an appropriate standard, it is only then that a candidate should be issued with a centre-devised time plan and/or service details to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

Candidates should have their time plan visible throughout the practical activity. Under no circumstances should candidates be given a centre time plan because it is deemed to be better than their own. If a candidate does need to use a centre-devised time plan, they should be given adequate time to familiarise themselves with this. Centre-devised time plans that were used by some candidates this year were typed and colour coded for ease of use.

Candidates are not permitted to talk to each other during the practical activity. It is the assessor's responsibility to apply this requirement.

There is no set time stated for the visiting verification to start, but the optimum time to allow all processes and procedures to take place would be between 10am and 11.30am. This would ensure adequate time is available for feedback and discussion.

It is important that centres arrange adequate time for candidates to get organised and set up for their assessment. There is no time limit set for this preparation time, but for centres who were well organised, a time allocation of between an hour and an hour and thirty minutes seemed adequate.

Assessment judgements

Implementing stage

Centres reported the recipes to be fair and achievable in the time permitted.

Each year a practical activity PowerPoint presentation is published on SQA's secure site to help support assessors with their marking of the practical activity. This presentation is for use by centre staff only and should not be shared with candidates.

This year there was some confusion around awarding marks for weighing and measuring of ingredients, and for dishes that were not served on time. For candidates to be awarded any marks for weighing and measuring, the assessor must observe the weighing and measuring of some, most or all of those ingredients identified as prepared weight or volume in the recipe, during the two and half hours of the practical assessment. It is not appropriate to award marks for all, if only some have been

witnessed. In accordance with the assignment and practical activity instructions for centres, if candidates serve their dishes more than five minutes late, no marks must be awarded under the heading 'service'.

Some assessors this year struggled to assess the standards required for the different cuts of vegetables. Centre staff should view the PowerPoint presentation published on SQA's secure site, which includes photographs and indicates the standards required for the exam recipes each year. There are also a range of videos available on SQA's Understanding Standards website that show several vegetable cuts, that can also support the marking of this section of the practical activity.

For the preparation of root vegetables, candidates should be using a Chef's knife for safety reasons as opposed to a vegetable knife. If this is not the case, then the marks should reflect this.

Marks for garnishing cannot be awarded if the garnish is applied after the dish has been served. Candidates are not permitted to carry out any step within the recipe, during the preparation time.

Section 3: general comments

Visiting verification

When a centre is undergoing verification, it is essential to maintain a degree of flexibility in arranging a mutually convenient date for both the centre and the visiting verifier. Many centres require visits within a limited and often high-demand time frame. It is important for centre staff to understand that visiting verifiers are also active practitioners and assessors and may not be available precisely when requested. Therefore, some flexibility is necessary to accommodate both parties.

Good practice would be for centre staff not to assess their own candidates, and, if possible, to plan with colleagues to assess each other's candidates.

This year most centres had an effective Internal Verification policy and there was greater use of SQA's Internal Verification Toolkit, available on [SQA's website](#).

Centre staff are reminded that there is no requirement to internally verify candidates' assignments, or mark them, as these are submitted to SQA for marking. This activity should therefore not form part of your internal verification policy.

Practical activity coursework

Candidates are allowed to practise the skills required for their assessment in preparation for the practical activity. However, they must not use recipes that are very similar to their final assessment dishes with only minor modifications. Each dish may only be practised once in full, as outlined in the assessment guidelines.

All candidates visited this year were suitably prepared for this level, but many struggled with the various vegetable cuts, and how to distinguish between chopping and dicing, as well as what is deemed to be a suitable size baton for the main course.

When flour is stipulated in a recipe, this is referring to plain flour. If self-raising flour was meant to be used then the recipe would state self-raising flour. UHT cream is not permitted for use during the assessment as it is impossible for candidates to over whisk it.

Most centres visited had developed a centre-devised time plan for use in exceptional circumstances. Centres were also well prepared for candidates in the provision of sufficient ingredients, appropriate equipment. Most centres had prepared a designated area for the service of dishes.

Centres this year also made good use of digital clocks and individual timers to support candidates during the practical activity assessment. Disposable spoons also proved popular for the promotion of tasting and seasoning.

Finally, centres are reminded that visiting verification is in place to support centres in the assessment of candidates, and to ensure national standards are understood by all who deliver the course. If centre staff are ever in doubt about what is or is not acceptable, they should contact SQA.