

NQ Practical Cookery Verification Summary 2025–26

Verification information

Subject	Practical Cookery
Verification activity	Visit
Round	2
Date published	July 2026

National Course components verified

Course code	Course level	Component title
C877 75	National 5	Practical Cookery: Practical Activity

Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

All centres visited used the recipes provided by Qualifications Scotland to carry out the practical activity. Some centres used version 1 and had missed the update on our secure site. It is essential that the most up-to-date version is always used.

The marking grid included in this year's marking instructions was used by all centres visited, however some did make modifications. Making modifications is not recommended as it can often disadvantage candidates due to over assessment. You should not change the content of the grid but instead use it in its entirety. Marking

instructions are provided by Qualifications Scotland. To ensure the national standard is met you should not deviate from the marking instructions.

Assessors should ensure they are familiar with the assessment conditions before the Practical Activity assessment begins. During the assessment, teachers and lecturers can give time prompts every 30 minutes and five minutes before each service time. Additional time prompts are not permitted.

Assessors are not permitted to leave the assessment room during the practical activity, nor are other centre staff permitted to enter the assessment room. This is outlined in the centre marking instructions.

It is important to make sure that if your centre is selected for visiting verification, the first assessment to take place should be with the visiting verifier. You should not conduct additional sessions at the same time as the visiting verification.

The assignment is marked by Qualifications Scotland. The original, unaltered assignment (planning stage) must be submitted to Qualifications Scotland for marking. Centres should keep a copy of the assignment.

The copies should always be returned to candidates before their practical activity, to give them the opportunity and adequate time to amend their time plan and service details. This was not carried out in a number of centres, or candidates were not given adequate time to do this, resulting in some candidates using unworkable time plans and incorrect service details that had not been amended and therefore disadvantaged them.

This was the last year of the assignment being a component of Practical Cookery and for session 2026-2027 centres will no longer be required to carry out this stage.

Practical activity

Centre-devised time plans that were used by some candidates this year were typed and colour coded for ease of use, which was good practice. Moving forward, Qualifications Scotland will publish a time plan for candidates to use.

All candidates must work under exam conditions. They are not permitted to chat among themselves. It is the assessor's responsibility to enforce 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 there is adequate time for feedback and discussion.

A 10am start also provides adequate time for candidates to get organised and set up for their assessment. There is no time limit set for this preparation time, but well-organised centres seemed to find a time allocation of one hour or one hour and thirty minutes was adequate.

Assessment judgements

Implementing stage

Centres reported the recipes to be fair and achievable, but timings were difficult near the end, which resulted in some candidates being unable to serve all three dishes in the time permitted.

There was some confusion around awarding marks for weighing and measuring of ingredients and awarding marks 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 on the recipe, during the practical assessment. You must not award marks for all, if only some have been witnessed. If candidates serve their dishes more than five minutes late, no marks can be awarded under the heading 'Service'. See the Instructions for Centres for more details.

Some assessors struggled to assess the standards required for the different cuts of vegetables. Each year we publish a PowerPoint presentation on our secure site, which includes photographs and shows the standards required for the recipes. There are also a range of videos available on our [Understanding Standards website](#) that show several vegetable cuts, which 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.

General comments

Visiting verification

When a centre is verified they cannot stipulate when this visit will take place. It is important for centre staff to realise that visiting verifiers are also practitioners and assessors in their own centres. Please be as flexible as possible to agree on a suitable date for both the centre and visiting verifier.

It is good practice for centre staff not to assess their own candidates, and, if possible, to plan with colleagues to assess each other's candidates.

Most centres had an effective internal verification policy and more centres used the Qualifications Scotland [internal verification toolkit](#). However, some centres had whole-centre policies with limited evidence of practical cookery-specific activities.

Centre staff should avoid using social media to seek clarification on the practical activity and marking criteria. All questions regarding assessment materials should be directed to Qualifications Scotland staff.

National 5 — course assessment

In preparation for the assignment, candidates are permitted to practise the skills used in their assessment, however they are not permitted to use very similar recipes with only minor amendments. Each dish can also only be practiced once in its entirety, as detailed in the Instructions for Centres.

All candidates visited this year were suitably prepared for this level, but many candidates struggled with the various vegetable cuts, and how to tell the difference between a chop and a dice.

This year saw a considerable amount of food waste in some centres, as candidates squared off the vegetables for dicing and then discarded the off-cuts. At this level, a candidate is only required to demonstrate normal process, square off the vegetable

and cut into even dice for the majority of the vegetable. It is expected that the off-cuts would also be diced to make up the prepared weight of the vegetable, without the candidate being penalised. This would help to reduce centre costs and food waste.

When portioning a dough for example, there is not a requirement for candidates to measure each portion on a scale to ensure they are exactly the same, a rough estimate is acceptable.

Most centres 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 and for most a designated area for the service of dishes.

Centres also made good use of digital clocks and individual timers to support candidates during the practical assessment. This year also saw many candidates tick off or highlight steps on their time plans to keep track of progress which proved highly effective.

Most centres appeared confident in their allocation of marks for service, however in some centres there was confusion around the service of the rotis. As the rotis were a component of the main course all four had to be served for candidates to be awarded service marks. Some assessors felt this was unclear in the marking instructions, and this feedback will be taken into consideration for future assessments.

We publish practical activity guidance for assessors on our secure site to help support assessors to mark the practical activity. This presentation must only be used by centre staff and must not be shared with candidates.

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 Qualifications Scotland.