Course report 2022

Subject	Gaelic (Learners)
Level	Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	70

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	35.7	Cumulative percentage	35.7	Number of candidates	25	Minimum mark required	74
B	Percentage	24.3	Cumulative percentage	60.0	Number of candidates	15	Minimum mark required	61
C	Percentage	18.6	Cumulative percentage	78.6	Number of candidates	15	Minimum mark required	48
D	Percentage	14.3	Cumulative percentage	92.9	Number of candidates	10	Minimum mark required	35
No award	Percentage	7.1	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	5	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

♦ 'most' means greater than 70%
♦ 'many' means 50% to 69%
♦ 'some' means 25% to 49%
♦ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

The content of the course assessment covered all four contexts of society, learning, employability and culture across all four components, which offered flexibility, personalisation and elements of choice to candidates. The question papers and marking instructions offered an appropriate level of challenge at Higher, although the listening aspect of the paper proved challenging for many candidates. The assignment–writing was removed from the course assessment this year, which affected the overall performance as this is an area where candidates perform well. However, the grade boundary decision compensated for the challenging aspects of the listening question paper and not having the assignment–writing mark.

Question paper 1: Reading

The question paper was suitable for this level. The subject was topical, on the impact of plastic in the environment. The questions provided balance in terms of high, low and average demand. Candidates performed particularly well in the translation element and some candidates achieved high marks, especially those who translated in comprehensible English rather than in a literal translation.

The overall purpose question proved challenging for several candidates and a few candidates did not attempt this question. In general, there was a good response to the comprehension questions and many candidates understood most of the main points.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

In this question paper, candidates were given the choice of two stimuli from the contexts of culture and learning. Most candidates chose scenario 2. It was pleasing to note that most candidates addressed all the bullet points, although the quality of grammar and syntax was varied. This also discriminated between A and C candidates. The paper performed in line with expectations.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper consisted of a monologue and a dialogue. The monologue entailed listening to a radio programme about work placements, and the dialogue was a radio presenter interviewing a person regarding the career choices she had made. The monologue proved challenging for candidates and a wide range of marks were evident in candidates' performances. Candidates generally performed better with the dialogue.

The questions were both accessible and challenging and discriminated between A and C candidates, in line with expectation, although some candidates experienced significant difficulties with this element of the course assessment. The fact that some candidates have not had as much practice in the last few years in listening may have contributed to the wide range of marks.

Assignment–writing

The requirement to complete the assignment–writing was removed for session 2021–22.

Performance–talking

Most candidates performed well in this component, as is usually the case, although it is worth noting that a longer performance does not necessarily benefit candidates.

The pegged marking scheme worked well, allowing for more finesse in the awarding of marks for the performance.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates responded well and few poor performances were evident. Many candidates achieved more than half of the available marks, with some managing to achieve an excellent mark, even with challenging questions. Candidates' dictionary skills sometimes led to incomprehensible answers and candidates should always look over their answer once written to ensure it makes sense. A few candidates found questions 1 and 4(a) and (b) challenging. A few candidates found difficulty in areas that you would not expect at Higher, for example plurals and numbers.

The translation was generally of a high standard and some candidates achieved high marks; however, few received full marks, which can only be achieved if there is a very good translation of the text into English. It was good to note that many candidates had written the translation in fluent English rather than word-for-word translation.

Most candidates received marks for the overall purpose question although, with more practice in class, candidates could further improve their marks here. Candidates sometimes focused on minor details in the passage rather than considering the whole article. Many responses contained irrelevant information and lacked 'detail from the text'. Some of the answers for this question were too long and resulted in candidates not completing the paper.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Most candidates chose scenario 2 (culture) as their topic. Many candidates addressed all the bullet points. Some candidates achieved high marks for responses with a high degree of accuracy and a variety of structures.

However, some candidates found it difficult to sustain accuracy in their writing, and language deteriorated as the sentence became longer. There were, however, a few responses where candidates gave only brief coverage to the bullet point. Candidates should ensure that sentences are comprehensible throughout the task. The misuse of the dictionary is still evident albeit to a lesser extent. A few candidates were not writing at the level required for Higher, and basic grammar and tenses should be addressed.

Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates were familiar with the topic of work placements and career choices. Some candidates only attempted to answer one or two questions in the monologue, and others gained good marks and attempted most questions.

Candidates performed better in the dialogue about career choices, and some achieved very good marks. Many candidates were able to gain almost half of the available marks in this section. Most candidates attempted a response to the questions in this section rather than leave it blank.

In general, candidates found the dialogue more accessible than the monologue. It is in the candidates' interest to attempt to answer most of the set questions rather than leaving them blank, in order to gain higher marks.

Performance–talking

Candidates performed well in the discussion. They expressed ideas and opinions and used content that allowed them to achieve a good mark. Candidates had good pronunciation overall, as well having a good language resource.

However, a few conversations sounded more scripted than natural as candidates answered immediately, in an almost robotic fashion. Other candidates had a mixture of longer and shorter answers, and it was clear that it was not scripted. In some cases, candidates paused briefly during the conversation to think about their answers. This is a natural part of a conversation.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ carefully read and understand the requirements of the question – this is very helpful when answering questions

♦ focus on the main point of the question to ensure they are answering what is asked

♦ are aware they can only achieve full marks in the translation if there is a very good translating of the text into English. Many candidates performed well in the translation; however, few received full marks

♦ allow enough time to complete the translation

♦ develop their comprehension skills holistically: this will be helpful in answering the overall purpose question

♦ look over their answers at the end of the paper if time allows

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ are able to proofread and edit their work, and are advised to factor in time for this during the exam as this would further enhance their marks

♦ practise using basic forms of reported speech, dative case, conditional, plurals and verbs correctly

♦ practise word order, verbs and tenses, in order to further enhance their opportunity to gain higher marks

♦ ensure they address all bullet points

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ use the time allocated to study the questions in advance – this is helpful in anticipating the kind of information required

♦ are aware when the plural is used, and be well-practised with numbers, dates, months, days and years as many mistakes are made here

♦ practise listening exercises frequently and use Gaelic in class as often as possible to further develop their listening skills

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ practise talking on a weekly basis in class. This should include everyday routine language, while bringing in elements of vocabulary and grammar to help them when talking about their chosen contexts, and to deal naturally with the speaking task

♦ familiarise themselves with the productive grammar grid as well as the detailed marking instructions

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
♦ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
♦ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the National Qualifications 2022 Awarding — Methodology Report.