

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

Gaelic

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
included in this report**

Gaidhlig Standard Grade

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	134
Post appeal	

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	138
Post appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

There was a slight increase in the number of entries from the number of entries in 2001. There has been a gradual increase in the number of entries each year since 1999 when 95 candidates were presented. The 138 candidates this year were presented by 18 centres. The number of candidates presented by individual centres ranged from 37 to 1. The continuing increase in the number of entries is very much welcomed.

General comments

The performance of candidates was not significantly different from the performance of candidates in previous years. Evidence gleaned during the marking process suggested that papers were set at an appropriate level, although one or two centres suggested that the Reading papers were rather demanding.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

	Reading	Listening
Grade 1	62	80
2	46	58
3	68	70
4	50	50
5	70	70
6	50	50

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

There are no significant changes due to the fact that the level of difficulty of the question papers has not changed.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Listening

The performance of candidates was generally good. It was felt that candidates has been presented at the correct level with the exception of one centre which appeared to have presented many of its candidates at too high a level. It was found that a high proportion of candidates achieved sufficient marks in the higher paper they sat to make marking of their second paper not necessary.

Speaking

A slightly higher percentage than recent years achieved a Grade 1 in Speaking. The percentage achieving a Credit award was extremely close to the percentage achieving a Credit award in the previous three years. One or two candidates were awarded Grade 5 but there were no awards at Grade 6 or Grade 7. This is very similar to the pattern in recent years.

Reading

(a) Reading Examination Paper

It was felt that a number of candidates, particularly at Credit level, found these papers rather challenging. A higher proportion of candidates' second papers had to be marked than was the case with the Listening papers. Candidates had to think about the answers they were giving; it was difficult for candidates to gain marks by simply lifting chunks from the passage. Some candidates had insufficient time to complete the Credit paper. However, good candidates were able to cope well with the papers.

(b) Reading element of Folio

Responses were generally good, with a number of centres having a high number of Credit level candidates. There was evidence that a wide range of literature had been read, covering novels, short stories poetry and drama. There were, however, few responses on short stories or poetry written within the last twenty years. Most of the responses on short stories tended to be on stories written by Iain C. Smith and John Murray. Many candidates wrote about the poetry of Ruairidh MacThòmais, Donald Macaulay and Dòmhnall Ruadh Choruna. Anna Frater was one 'modern' poet who featured. 'Deireadh an t-Seusoin' and 'A' Bhideo' were popular plays. There was good evidence of constructive analysis of texts, particularly of poetry. Most responses were of an appropriate length and a large proportion of responses were typed or word-processed.

Writing

(a) Writing Examination Paper

Candidates' responses were generally of a high standard, with the better candidates showing sound knowledge of structure and idiom. The two questions answered by the highest number of candidates were questions 4 and 7. Questions 1, 13 and 15 were also quite popular with candidates. The least popular questions were questions 5, 10 and 12.

(b) Writing element of Folio

Responses were generally of an equivalent standard to the Reading element. There was evidence that candidates in most centres had been offered a range of stimulating topics. In some centres, however, most candidates' responses were on the same topics, suggesting that the work had been produced specifically for the Folio. There was not a great deal of evidence of good quality creative writing, although there were a few good responses in that area at Credit level. Responses on a number of topics, eg 'Eòlas Obrach' could have been more interesting.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Candidates performed very well in the Listening examination at all levels. There were very few areas of difficulty. It was considered that the papers were set at an appropriate level and that the quality of the listening tapes was good. Candidates had obviously been prepared well for the Listening examinations and were presented at the correct level.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

A number of candidates found aspects of the Reading papers somewhat challenging. At Credit level a number of candidates failed to complete the paper and a number of candidates failed to find the answers to some of the questions towards the end of the paper. One letter was received from a presenting centre making representations about the level of difficulty of this paper. Candidates did not encounter the same level of difficulty at General level or at Foundation level. Candidates who attempted these papers did not run out of time although they may not have been able to find the answers to all the questions.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

General comments

The slight increase in the number of presentations was welcomed. It was noted that a number of centres outwith the area which is generally as the 'Gaelic-speaking area' presented a number of candidates with good communicative ability in Gaelic. It is no longer the case that the best candidates are presented by schools in the Western Isles. Staff in schools in towns and cities throughout Scotland are to be applauded for their success in developing pupils' competence in Gaelic.

A few Folios were incomplete either because they did not have the required number of items in them or because all the items did not accord with the GRC. The main problem with the latter was that a few candidates submitted two responses on literature from the same genre.

Coursework

The quality of submitted coursework was generally good. Folio items were usually typed or word-processed and their presentation was good. There were few items which were excessively long. However, a number of items which were written with accuracy in spelling, grammar and sentence construction would have secured a better grade if the content was more substantial.

Reading

Many candidates produced work which gave in-depth analysis of the texts selected. Candidates had obviously been given appropriate support and direction. Judicious use of relevant quotations to support deductions made is to be encouraged.

It is, of course, important that quotations are quoted accurately! A wide range of literature had been read, although most candidates in one or two centres responded on the same texts. There were few responses on short stories or poetry which was written within the last twenty years. Iain C Smith, Ruairidh MacThòmais, John Murray and Donald Macaulay features quite regularly.

Writing

All the pieces of writing were appropriate. There was strong evidence that candidates had been given opportunities to engage in a range of writing tasks. There was, however, a dearth of good quality pieces of creative writing. Many items were in the form of a report or a diary. Perhaps creative writing is to be encouraged more in our schools.

Reading

The reading paper at credit level was considered to be rather more challenging than in recent years. A number of candidates failed to complete the paper. It was difficult for candidates to 'lift' answers from the passage. It was, however, found that the better candidates were able to cope well with the demands of the paper.

Candidates were able to cope well with the papers at General and Foundation level.

Listening

The standard of the papers was comparable to recent years. Candidate were well prepared for the Listening exams and they were able to cope with the papers at all levels. Most candidates were able to achieve a 'pass' in the higher of the two levels they sat.

Writing

A number of responses were of a high standard, with candidates demonstrating a good command of vocabulary and idiom, good sentence construction and a good grasp of grammar. Questions 4 and 7 were the two most popular questions, followed by questions 1, 13 and 15. Questions 5, 10 and 12 were the least popular.

Feedback to centres from Senior Moderator, on Talk

Candidates' performance was generally very good.

It is recommended that the following feedback be relayed to centres:

- Interviews/talks should not exceed the times specified
- Teachers should not intervene except when necessary
- On some tapes there was evidence of reading
- Teachers should identify candidates, and, if possible submit a separate tape for each candidate – if this is not possible, a gap should be left between candidates' performances.

The attention of centres should be drawn to the rule regarding the reading of scripts and the use of notes.