



## External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Gaelic (learners)
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It 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 question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

# Comments on candidate performance

## General comments

There was a very small increase in the number of candidates this year, although overall the numbers of entries are still very small. It was pleasing to see four new centres offering the qualification.

85.7% of the candidates had no previous qualifications in Gaelic (Learners) but 50% of candidates gained a grade A–C. They did not perform well in all three externally-assessed elements of the course, and especially in the writing element.

In general, the data suggests that many candidates had not been prepared adequately for the demands of Intermediate 1.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

The average mark for candidates' performance in the internally assessed Speaking element was 39.3/60.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

The performance of candidates in the Writing paper, despite its predictable nature, was weak. This is extremely disappointing and is an area that centres should seek to address urgently, as Writing is compulsory in the new National qualifications. Some candidates' responses in Writing were very limited, either through lack of preparation or poor time management, and did not allow them to demonstrate an appropriate range of language structures. This year, there were some candidates who did not attempt to write anything in the writing paper.

The performance of candidates in both the Reading and Listening papers was also disappointing this year. Many candidates failed to translate accurately basic vocabulary such as numbers and place names.

The following vocabulary was found to be demanding:

### Listening

- ◆ Question 1: A common greeting, which very few managed to answer correctly.
- ◆ Question 2a): Italy — place names were poorly answered.
- ◆ Question 6: the weather, was poorly answered.
- ◆ Question 8b): detail was missing in answers. Candidates should listen for phrases like 'close to'.
- ◆ Question 10a): names were incorrectly translated and should always be answered in English.
- ◆ Question 12b): no candidates gave the correct answer of 'ice-cream'.

## Reading

- ◆ Question 1b): detail was missing in answers. Candidates should listen for phrases like 'about'.
- ◆ Question 2c): many candidates wrote 'to see' instead of 'to climb'.
- ◆ Question 3a): very few translated 'Castle Road' correctly.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

### General

Centres should encourage candidates to ensure that handwriting is legible and to distinguish clearly between rough notes and what they wish to be considered as final answers.

The continuing number of weak performances in writing and the high number of estimated 'no awards' suggests that some centres should consider presenting candidates at the correct level relative to their ability. Centres are encouraged to make effective use of the all the guidance issued by the SQA.

### Reading/Listening

In answering questions in the Reading and Listening papers, candidates should be guided by the number of points awarded for each question. The question itself usually indicates the amount of information the candidate is required to give by stating in bold eg 'Give a **detailed** answer'.

In preparation for the Reading Paper, centres should ensure candidates are familiar with the common areas of vocabulary topics for Intermediate 1. Common vocabulary topics that arise most years are: time, months, days, money, numbers, place-names, countries, weather, common adjectives, comparatives etc. Many candidates would also benefit from more focused practice of dictionary skills to avoid common errors.

Centres should ensure that candidates have enough time to refine their exam technique by working through past papers, particularly for the Listening Paper, and attention should be drawn to the availability of past papers on the SQA website. Candidates hear everything three times, and should be encouraged to make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers.

### Writing

Centres need to give further guidance to candidates on what constitutes an adequate amount of writing, with sufficient variety in vocabulary and language structures, appropriate to this level. Candidates should be given guidance to avoid unnecessary repetition and the use of excessive English in their writing pieces.

Candidates need to be trained to write in different formats eg a letter, a report and a diary extract. They must ensure that they answer the question accurately, eg if the question asks for a letter it should be set out in the correct format with an address.



## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2012	10
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	14
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## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 180				
A	7.1%	7.1%	1	126
B	21.4%	28.6%	3	108
C	21.4%	50.0%	3	90
D	14.3%	64.3%	2	81
No award	35.7%	100.0%	5	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.