



## External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Gaelic (learners)
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

The level of demand of the examination has been stable over the years. Accordingly, the examination was again appropriate in terms of content, which related clearly to the prescribed topics for this level.

There was a very small decrease in the number of candidates this year, although overall the numbers are still small. It was pleasing to see one new centre and two returning centres offering the qualification.

Candidates performed poorly in all three externally-assessed elements of the course, but especially in the writing element. 68.4% of candidates gained a grade A–C. 34.2% of the candidates had no previous qualifications in Gaelic (learners).

In general, the evidence highlights that many candidates had not been well prepared for the demands of Intermediate 2. Such candidates might have been more suitably presented for Intermediate 1, or have concentrated solely on the unit awards at Intermediate 2 level.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates performed better in the Reading paper than in the Listening paper. A few candidates achieved close to full marks in the Reading paper, demonstrating good knowledge of vocabulary and good exam skills.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

The performance of candidates in the Writing paper, despite its predictable nature, was on the whole exceedingly poor. This is very disappointing and is an area that centres should seek to address urgently, as writing becomes compulsory in the new National Qualifications. Some candidates' writing responses 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 or vocabulary.

The performance of candidates in both the Reading and Listening papers was also weak. This year the average mark had dropped to 57.8. Many candidates did not demonstrate an understanding of basic vocabulary (time, money, names, and weather), which is very concerning.

The following vocabulary was found to be demanding:

### Listening

- ◆ Question 1: very few managed to answer '*teenagers*' correctly.
- ◆ Question 2a): *a week* on Wednesday — detail was missing in answers.
- ◆ Question 7b): the topics of money and clothes were poorly answered.

- ◆ Question 8: detail was missing in answers. Candidates should listen for phrases like 'about'.
- ◆ Question 9a): detail was missing in answers, and few got all three marks.
- ◆ Question 15: very few candidates gave the correct answer of 'media'.

## Reading

- ◆ Question 1a): 'Sweden' — countries were poorly answered.
- ◆ Question 1c): detail was missing in answers, candidates should listen for phrases like 'more than'.
- ◆ Question 3b): detail was missing in answers and few got all 3 marks.
- ◆ Question 3d): 'magazines' — very few answered correctly.
- ◆ Question 3f): detail was missing in answers. Candidates should listen for phrases like 'about'.
- ◆ Question 4b)i): 'India' — countries were poorly answered.

## 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 poor performances in writing and high number of estimated fails suggests that some centres may still be having difficulty in 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 2. 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 mistakes.

Particularly for the Listening Paper, centres should ensure that candidates have enough time to refine their exam technique by working through past papers. Their 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 excessive repetition and the use of excessive English in their writing pieces.

Candidates need to be able to write in different formats, eg a letter, a report and a diary extract. Candidates must also make sure that they answer the question that is before them, eg if the question asks for a letter, it should be set out in the correct format with address, etc.

## 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	13.2%	13.2%	5	126
B	26.3%	39.5%	10	108
C	28.9%	68.4%	11	90
D	15.8%	84.2%	6	81
No award	15.8%	100.0%	6	-

## 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.