



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Gàidhlig
Level(s)	Higher

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 number of candidates, at 117, was the highest in recent years by a small margin, with one new centre (an FE college) and six returning centres.

The proportion of candidates achieving A-C was 91.5%. The spread of marks was broadly in line with recent years, with slightly more candidates at A and at D/No award.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section A (Listening); Most candidates tackled this section adequately or well.

Section B(ii): Many of the writing pieces, both discursive and imaginative, were good, although some were short, presumably due to time pressures.

Section B(iii): Answers to the literature questions were good to very good. Most candidates had clearly learned a lot about the texts they had chosen.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Section A (Listening): Some candidates had difficulty with the formal register used in the passage, and especially the current affairs vocabulary, eg 'dìon', 'crìonadh', 'gnìomhachasan', 'trioblaidean ionmhais', 'bun-stèidh nas seasmhaiche', 'tuarastal' and 'teothachd'.

Section B(i): The reading questions involving interpretation of imagery (eg questions 6, 9b and 10) proved difficult for a number of candidates. Identifying nuances of character also proved difficult for some. The final question, requiring an overall response to the text, produced some good answers but some candidates failed to provide evidence, as required, to back up their response.

Section B(iii): Some candidates tended to tell the story of their selected text or to write all that they had learned about it rather than answering the question as set. Sometimes selecting a different question or passage would have provided a better match.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The register used in the listening passage is similar to that of BBC Alba's news and current affairs broadcasts. The fact that some candidates had difficulty with it suggests a lack of familiarity with this useful resource. Listening to more material of this kind would be beneficial, both in terms of the exam and of attaining useful life/work skills.

Continued attention needs to be given to extending candidates' range of vocabulary and expression, and to accuracy of language usage.

If candidates are given opportunities to analyse literary texts for themselves, as well as having them explained to them, this will help them with the reading section of the exam and should produce a more personal response in their literature essays.

It would also help if centres stressed the importance of matching texts and questions, and of relating answers consistently to the question as set.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	95
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	117
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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 200				
A	31.6%	31.6%	37	127
B	31.6%	63.2%	37	105
C	28.2%	91.5%	33	90
D	4.3%	95.7%	5	75
No award	4.3%	100.0%	5	67

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.