



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	Gaelic (Learners)
Level	Higher & Advanced 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

Higher:

Candidate performance overall, while satisfactory, with some very good responses, was of a lower standard than that of more recent years. However, the examination, in relation to content and degree of 'difficulty,' was deemed to have reflected that of past papers.

There was a mixed reaction by candidates to the Listening section. Some misunderstandings of quite a basic nature were in evidence. Also, some responses did not reflect the number of marks which could have been awarded.

The Reading section was generally well done, but a number of candidates did not pay sufficient attention to detail.

Writing continued to produce mixed performances. Some responses were too brief and contained little material of substance. Orthography generally reached a reasonable standard.

The Literature section was generally well done, with much evidence of thorough preparation by centres and candidates. Choice of texts was appropriate, if somewhat narrow in nature. The use of quotations in many instances was good, and short stories and poetry featured as the choices of the majority of candidates.

Advanced Higher:

Seventeen candidates were anticipated to undertake this examination – the actual number was fourteen. Bearing in mind the small number of candidates, performances were worthy of expectations at this level. Some of the above comments made in relation to Higher are relevant also to Advanced Higher. It is appropriate to reiterate observations made about the Literature section – very thorough preparation was in evidence, with some very good responses.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Reading and Literature – see comments above.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Listening and Writing – see comments above.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Further preparation/practice is required for Writing. It is acknowledged that candidates are Learners, but Higher Level demands a greater degree of ability to deal more successfully with the submission of Writing responses.

While responses to the Literature section have been more than satisfactory, the range of literature studied seems to be limited. Candidates should be exposed to a wider appreciation of the richness of Gaelic literature, both for their own enjoyment and for the satisfaction which the literary tradition is able to bestow on them.

In some instances (especially in Listening and Reading), candidates require to be aware of the fact that marks offered for questions reflect the number of points (or breadth of area) sought in responses, which are needed for the award of full marks.

Higher

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	120
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	118
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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 - 220				
A	22.9%	22.9%	27	154
B	16.9%	39.8%	20	132
C	31.4%	71.2%	37	110
D	14.4%	85.6%	17	99
No award	14.4%	100.0%	17	-

Advanced Higher

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	17
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	15
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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 - 240				
A	53.3%	53.3%	8	168
B	26.7%	80.0%	4	144
C	6.7%	86.7%	1	120
D	0.0%	86.7%	0	108
No award	13.3%	100.0%	2	-

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.