



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Gaelic (Learners)</b>
Level	<b>Higher, Advanced Higher</b>

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

There were some good responses, although not over all areas of the examination. Generally, responses were not as satisfactory as those of previous years. In the Literature section, it was gratifying to read responses on a wider variety of texts in 2010.

### Advanced Higher

The number of candidates was small. Performances were very satisfactory — the majority of candidates were awarded Grades A–B. Although there were no outstanding performances, some were very good.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Higher

The Literature section was well done by most candidates, with evidence of very thorough preparation. However, candidates from some centres appeared to reproduce notes and/or prepared material which they had committed to memory. Please see the section on 'Advice to centres'.

### Advanced Higher

Candidates performed well in the Literature section, showing evidence of thorough preparation. All candidates were familiar with the areas of literature chosen, attempted to answer the questions asked, and responded constructively. Most candidates used quotations effectively. As expected, there were some very good Learner candidates at this level.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Higher

#### Listening

Listening needs to be addressed. The passage was not considered to have been too demanding, and a replaying of the CD confirmed the clarity and accuracy of the recording. The question arises as to whether many candidates obtain sufficient exposure to the language in centres; also, it would appear that grammar needs to be addressed in order to help candidates' understanding of the spoken language. Many candidates were impaired by inadequate and inaccurate responses to the Listening paper. Some were unable to identify common proper names, eg 'James Gillies'.

## Reading

Many candidates need to be more specific in their responses, and to pay attention to the value of questions in terms of the number of marks offered. For example, Question 16 was clearly in two parts, but a number of candidates wrote that the writer enjoyed without saying **how much** he enjoyed it. Items of basic vocabulary were confused, eg *bhuainn* and *buain*, *duine* and *daoine*, *luath* (ash) and *luath* (fast). Such confusion is not expected to occur at Higher.

## Writing

There were mixed performances in the Writing section. In general, candidates tended to answer questions on the themes of holidays and careers, but it is important that candidates clearly identify their choice of question. While many candidates attempted to write a meaningful and constructive discourse, basic errors included misuse of the dative case and of the past tense of verbs, changes after *mo* and *glè*, incorrect use of prepositional pronouns (*aig mi* is a basic error), confusion between *sin* and *sinn*, confusion between the verbal noun and the infinitive.

## Literature

Most candidates attempted the poetry question; none responded to the novel or drama questions. The wider variety of texts this year should be commended and encouraged, although *Ar Cànan 's ar Clò* was again the preferred option for many. Many candidates used quotations, but frequently the quotes did not relate to the points they were making. Literature responses should not be regurgitations of prepared responses, but should relate to the questions asked.

## Advanced Higher

### Listening

This section was the least well done, not necessarily due to paper content, as the passage and questions were considered to have been entirely appropriate, but challenging, at this level. However, attention to detail needs to be improved.

### Reading

This was generally satisfactory, with some candidates performing very well. However, attention to detail is again important in order to maximise marks gained by candidates.

### Writing

Given the small number of candidates, this was generally satisfactory, despite some basic grammatical and idiomatic errors which should not occur at this level. Most candidates attempted to write constructively, but accuracy in writing requires attention.

### Literature

There was evidence of thorough preparation here, and most candidates showed an awareness of the questions asked while responding. Quotations were generally used effectively, but there should not be too much reliance on 'learnt' notes.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

### **Higher and Advanced Higher**

Many candidates require greater exposure to the spoken language. Centres might wish to guide candidates to the many radio programmes being broadcast, to television programmes and to CDs, and also to use Gaelic as frequently as possible and practicable in class.

Greater stress should be put on grammar, in order to improve performance in all areas of the examination.

It should be stressed that in the examination, candidates number their responses correctly in accordance with question numbers. Choosing a question about a poem and proceeding to write about a short story is not acceptable.

Candidates should pay particular attention to the wording of questions, especially in Literature, and should not regurgitate prepared responses, as frequently such responses do not fulfil question requirements.

Quotations should be used effectively. There is no need to translate quotes into English — such time would be better spent on analysis and appreciation of the text.

Both Listening and Writing require improvement.

Generally, many candidates are to be commended for their performances under examination conditions.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Advanced Higher

Number of resulted entries in 2009	15
Number of resulted entries in 2010	15

## 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	46.7%	46.7%	7	168
B	46.7%	93.3%	7	144
C	0.0%	93.3%	0	120
D	0.0%	93.3%	0	108
No award	6.7%	100.0%	1	—

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Higher

Number of resulted entries in 2009	118
Number of resulted entries in 2010	131

## 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	26.7%	26.7%	35	154
B	20.6%	47.3%	27	132
C	28.2%	75.6%	37	110
D	13.0%	88.5%	17	99
No award	11.5%	100.0%	15	—

### 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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.