



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Gaelic (Learners)
Level	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

Candidate numbers have fallen from 2009 and quite significantly from 2008. Candidates' performance was generally very high quality.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Reading was particularly strong. Candidates who had thoroughly prepared performed very well in Writing, partially due to the predictable nature of questions.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Performance in Listening was not as good as in Reading. Some candidates did not write anything or nearly enough in the Writing section. This could be due to lack of preparation, surprising given the relatively predictable nature of the questions, or poor time management.

Areas of difficulty were:

Listening

- ◆ Question 13: *Seòras* — a number of candidates were unfamiliar with this name or where to find it in dictionary
- ◆ Question 15 (b): *spòrsail*
- ◆ Question 18: *àrd*

Reading

- ◆ Question 1 (g): difficulty with assigning appropriate English names to *Seumas*, *Iain*
- ◆ Question 2 (c): despite being a multiple choice question, some candidates struggled with *seasgad*
- ◆ Question 2 (e): *seallaidhean àlainn*

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Ensure candidates have access to a range of Listening materials, including a variety of voices and accents. Candidates' difficulties with Listening may partially be due to the paucity of Course Listening resources, and it is apparent that this shortage is having a detrimental effect on performance in this element of the examination.

Centres should continue to emphasise all skills but should pay particular attention to the thorough preparation of candidates for Writing. Candidates should ensure that they are answering the question asked in the format requested, eg for a letter, there should be an address, date, greeting, close, etc, given. Centres should exemplify how prepared, memorised language can be easily adapted and modified to answer a range of questions, eg a diary entry about a holiday, a report for a magazine about a holiday, a letter to a friend about a holiday, etc.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	24
Number of resulted entries in 2010	10

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	30.0%	30.0%	3	126
B	30.0%	60.0%	3	108
C	20.0%	80.0%	2	90
D	10.0%	90.0%	1	81
No award	10.0%	100.0%	1	–

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.