



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Gàidhlig
Level(s)	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

The total number of candidates was 95. There were 24 centres involved, three for the first time.

90.5% of candidates attained grades A–C, and with a comparable distribution of marks.

Advanced Higher

The number of candidates was 34. There were 13 centres, including six new and two returning centres.

All candidates achieved A–C grades.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Higher

Question B (i)

Most candidates performed well, some very well, in the Reading section. Responses to questions of a factual or stylistic nature were sound for the most part, and there were some very perceptive responses to the more open-ended questions, indicating an understanding of the issues underlying the text.

Question B (ii)

In the Writing section, questions 1, 2 and 4 were most popular, namely personal reminiscences, discursive essays and stories. Most candidates structured their pieces competently and expressed themselves clearly, with occasional imaginative touches. Some drew on their personal experience in an effective, and occasionally moving, way.

Question B (iii)

Performance in the Literature section was good, with most candidates selecting appropriate (and sometimes unusual) texts, producing focused answers to questions and, most importantly, putting their personal response to the texts at the forefront while also showing awareness of the relevant technical aspects. There was some reliance on 'prepared' answers.

Advanced Higher

Question (ii) (Sgrùdadh)

Most candidates performed well in the first section of the Practical Criticism question ('Rosg').

Performances in the Writing, Literature and Translation sections included some good pieces of work.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Higher

Question A (Èisteachd)

This element proved challenging, resulting in a wide spread of marks, but still broadly in line with the other sections of the exam.

Questions on the wider social or economic context of the subject (a music festival) proved challenging, especially those towards the end of the passage (eg 10 and 11). Questions 7 and 9 required careful reading of the question as well as accurate recall of detail, and were found difficult by some candidates.

Advanced Higher

Question (ii) (Sgrùdadh)

Most candidates found the second ('Bàrdachd') section of the practical criticism question extremely demanding. This was taken into account in setting the grade boundaries.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Higher

Candidates should be encouraged to listen to passages of Gaelic in a formal register, including radio and television programmes. This will not only prepare them for the Listening section of the Higher exam but also for further and higher education, where lectures may be delivered in Gaelic, and for the world of work (eg in broadcasting).

Candidates should continue to be advised to plan their writing before starting in order to give it a coherent structure. Drawing on personal experience enhanced some of this year's writing and should be encouraged (with the proviso that this also needs to be planned and structured).

Some of the writing, while exhibiting good planning and content, was limited by a narrow range of vocabulary and syntax and some grammatical inaccuracy. These matters need attention but it is acknowledged that this has to be a longer range objective.

Reading and literature were handled well on this occasion, suggesting that centres have been paying particular attention to them. It is recommended that this should continue, with the emphasis on eliciting a personal response to the literature.

Candidates should be encouraged to read questions carefully, in all areas of the exam, and to make sure that their answers are relevant to the questions as set.

Advanced Higher

Practical criticism continues to be a challenging element of the exam at this level. Candidates should be encouraged to read prose passages in a formal register of Gaelic on subjects such as current affairs: this will help them both with the exam and, subsequently, in further study and employment. They should also be given guidance on how to undertake close reading of poetry and opportunities to practise this on their own.

Although translation is a small part of the Advanced Higher exam, it is an important career-related skill. The emphasis in teaching it should be on translating the gist of passages rather than translating words in a literal way.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Higher

Number of resulted entries in 2011	116
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	95
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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 150				
A	26.3%	26.3%	25	105
B	41.1%	67.4%	39	90
C	24.2%	91.6%	23	75
D	7.4%	98.9%	7	67
No award	1.1%	100.0%	1	

Statistical information: update on Courses

Advanced Higher

Number of resulted entries in 2011	18
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	34
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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	38.2%	38.2%	13	138
B	47.1%	85.3%	16	118
C	14.7%	100.0%	5	98
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	88
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	-

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.