



Course Report 2015

Subject	Gaelic Learners
Level	New Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors 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 assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question papers

Question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing

Reading

Candidates generally performed very well in this paper. It was to the candidates' advantage that there was a lot of optionality in some of the questions, eg Questions 2, 3(b), 4(a), 4(b); and question 7 gave candidates a choice of responses. For example, in Question 2, there were five possible answers for a three-mark question.

Sign-posting (which is a new feature of Higher Gaelic Learners) directed candidates to the appropriate sections of the passage.

Directed Writing

The vast majority of candidates opted for Scenario 1 (Employability).

Question paper 2: Listening and Literature

Candidates performed reasonably well. It was to the candidates' advantage that there was some optionality in some of the questions which allowed candidates to maximise their performance — for example, Questions 1(b), 1(d), 1(e) 2(c), 2(d) and 2(f).

Literature

All candidates opted to write about a short story or a poem.

Component 2: Performance

The purpose of the performance is to deliver a presentation based on one context from society, learning, employability, culture, and then take part in a natural, spontaneous follow-on conversation, which must develop into at least one other context. The performance is worth 30 marks.

Overall, assessors applied the pegged marks in the Marking Instructions successfully. Centres used the required Approach (Presentation/Conversation).

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question papers

Question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing

Reading

The majority of candidates are to be commended for attempting to provide sufficient detail for each mark.

Candidates generally performed to a higher standard in the Reading than they did in the Listening paper.

Directed Writing

Most candidates attempted to address all the bullet points

There were a few very good responses in which candidates attempted to use a wide variety of verbs and grammatical structures. Most other responses were satisfactory or unsatisfactory as candidates did not demonstrate a wide variety of verbs and other grammatical structures, and were generally less secure in their language skills.

Most candidates coped well with the time constraints of the Reading and Directed Writing paper.

Overall, candidates were commended for coping well with the new format of the exam.

Question paper 2: Listening and Literature

Listening

Compared to the Reading paper, candidates generally did not perform as well in the Listening paper.

Literature

It was evident that all candidates had studied literature. Some responses were outstanding, and many candidates wrote mature and detailed responses.

Although candidates only had 1 hr 15 mins for the Listening and Literature, many candidates were commended for writing a substantial amount about their chosen text. Most candidates coped very well with the time constraints.

Some candidates demonstrated a very good understanding of their chosen text but did not address their chosen question.

Component 2: Performance

Overall, the level of candidate performance was high.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question papers

Reading

The following questions were completed very well by many candidates:

- ◆ Question 1
- ◆ Question 4 (b)
- ◆ Question 6 online bullying
- ◆ Question 8 (a) and (b)
- ◆ Question 9 an overall purpose question. Most candidates achieved at least one mark. This was encouraging as this is a new type of question. Some candidates gave very detailed responses.

Candidates generally performed very well in the translation. Many responses indicated a high degree of accuracy.

Directed Writing

Some candidates made an effort to write a detailed response containing a range of verbs, tenses (including Subjunctive) and grammatical structures.

Listening

The following questions were completed very well by many candidates:

- ◆ Question 1 (b) speaker's level of fluency
- ◆ Question 1 (f) multiple choice, overall purpose question
- ◆ Question 2 (d) two details required from a possible four.

Literature

Some candidates produced excellent responses which referred closely to the question. These candidates also integrated technical terms in their response and justified their opinions succinctly and maturely.

Component 2: Performance

Almost all candidates passed, which indicates that centres are presenting the vast majority at the right level. Overall, the level of candidate performance was high.

Section 4: Areas in which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question papers

Reading

Many candidates experienced difficulties in the following questions:

- ◆ Question (2): Some candidates did not write 'help with homework' which was required in order to access the whole mark; 'companaidhean-malairt' problematic for many.
- ◆ Question 4(a): Some candidates mixed up and combined parts of different points.

Directed Writing

- ◆ Scenario 1: Third bullet point was problematic for some.
- ◆ Some candidates did not include a variety of verbs and grammatical structures.

Listening

Many candidates experienced difficulties in the following questions:

- ◆ Question 1 (e) diligent with marking, creative with lessons, patient at listening, many candidates were only able to access half of a correct response.
- ◆ Question 2 e) the verb 'sing' in the subjunctive tense.

Literature

Some candidates did not refer to their chosen question in their response, which affected the marks they were awarded.

Component 2: Performance

Some responses were over-long and lacking in spontaneity.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question papers

Reading and Listening

- ◆ Candidates should be aware of additional detail required with numerals, eg 'about', 'more than', etc.
- ◆ Candidates should practise their dictionary skills to ensure correct use and accuracy in reading questions and translation.

- ◆ In the overall purpose question in the Reading paper, candidates should be specific and concise in their responses. They should avoid making broad and general statements, and they should resist the urge to repeat themselves.
- ◆ In order to develop listening skills, candidates should take advantage of all opportunities to maximise their exposure to Gaelic.

Directed Writing

- ◆ Candidates must become more secure in their use of the Subjunctive tense
- ◆ Candidates must become more secure in all their language skills in order to answer their chosen questions more readily and accurately.
- ◆ Candidates must also be aware that they must use a wide variety of verbs, tenses and grammatical structures.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded that they will not be penalised for exceeding the suggested word count.

Literature

- ◆ Candidates are encouraged to refer to their chosen question in their response.
- ◆ Candidates should be vigilant that if they choose a question about a poem that they do not write about a short story and vice versa.
- ◆ Teachers should refer closely to the Marking Instructions when preparing candidates.

Component 2: Performance

Centres should provide advice to candidates as to what level of language they should be able to cope with, and should ensure comprehension of their Presentation before learning it.

Some centres needed reminded that candidates must use detailed and complex language at Higher in most parts of the performance.

Centres are encouraged to provide candidates with every opportunity for personalisation and choice.

Role of Interlocutor

- ◆ Interlocutors should bear in mind the differing requirements of National 5 and Higher when conducting assessments. Asking candidates the same questions at both levels is likely to disadvantage candidates at one or other level. This happened in several centres.
- ◆ Interlocutors should carefully consider the type of questions they ask, as closed questions do not offer candidates the scope to develop their ideas.
- ◆ Centres have been encouraged to refer to the Productive Grammar Grid for Higher to inform their choice of questions to candidates.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	0
Number of resulted entries in 2015	41

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100				
A	61.0%	61.0%	25	70
B	12.2%	73.2%	5	60
C	17.1%	90.2%	7	50
D	4.9%	95.1%	2	45
No award	4.9%	-	2	0

For this Course, the intention was to set an assessment with grade boundaries at the notional values of 50% for a Grade C and 70% for a Grade A. The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

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.