



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Gaelic (Learners)
Level(s)	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

Most candidates performed well and there were a few outstanding performances.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Reading

Responses to the Reading section were generally of a high standard, despite misunderstandings by some candidates. Most candidates understood the passage well, and responded to the questions accordingly, although some unexpected errors were made.

### Writing

There was continued improvement in the Writing section. This was particularly noticeable with regard to orthography — it was evident that candidates continue to become more familiar with the orthographic recommendations of GOC.

Most candidates wrote on the theme of Holidays. There was some good usage of idiomatic phrases in some pieces.

### Literature

Most candidates attempted the question on poetry, while a significant number responded to the short story question. Quite a wide variety of texts were used. Very few candidates responded to the question about the novel and drama. Generally, literature responses showed evidence of extensive preparation.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Listening

Generally, candidates did not perform well in the Listening paper. Most attempted to answer all questions, but a number of candidates did not attempt a significant number of the questions.

Examples of demanding areas:

**Q2** Many did not identify 'cia mhead' correctly. This is a standard phrase which pupils should have learned as early as S1.

**Q3** Although most candidates recognised 'Èirinn', many missed out on marks because they were unable to identify 'càirdeas'.

**Q4(c)** 'Abhainn Chluaidh' presented challenges for some candidates.

**Q7** Some candidates had difficulty in identifying 'toilichte', which is a common everyday word.

**Q11** many did not understand that she 'cleaned houses and stairs'.

**Q12** 'cothroman' was not correctly identified by many candidates.

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

### **Listening**

Greater emphasis must be placed on preparing candidates for the Listening. It might be that many candidates have insufficient exposure to the language, and they should be encouraged to use radio, television programmes and CDs to increase their awareness of the spoken word. As in previous years, this is the section of the examination where responses were weakest.

### **Reading**

Some candidates should pay greater attention to detail, and be guided by the number of marks on offer for the questions. For example, identifying a plural as a singular will result in loss of marks, as will unfamiliarity with common, everyday words. While the Reading section was well done, candidates can gain more marks by looking closely at the questions and responding in detail accordingly.

### **Writing**

While there was a continued improvement in Writing this year, there is still room for further improvement. Candidates should ensure that their sentences make sense, and avoid the omission of simple words such as *ann(s)*, *aig*, *air* and the definite article. Confusion between the verbal noun and the infinitive should also be avoided. Tenses are important, particularly when writing about specific themes.

### **Literature**

While the thorough preparation of candidates in respect of Literature is to be commended, there is an impression that some responses have been over-prepared. Many centres' candidates wrote similar essays on the same text, giving this impression. It is important that the set question is answered, without too much focus on re-telling the

poem or short story or with too little on analysis and evaluation. Candidates should not refer to authors by their first name. Quotations should be used effectively as support for points raised in responses, and not 'at random' – quotations must relate to points being made by candidates.

### **General**

Some very good candidates took part in the 2012 examination diet, and it is hoped that the points highlighted in this Report will encourage candidates and centres towards further improvement in forthcoming examinations.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	127
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	110
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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	39.1%	39.1%	43	154
B	30.0%	69.1%	33	132
C	22.7%	91.8%	25	110
D	3.6%	95.5%	4	99
No award	4.5%	100.0%	5	-

## **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.