



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Gaelic (Learners)
Level	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

Overall response was very good. However, there were few outstanding candidates. Of the 18 candidates presented for Advanced Higher, 94.4% were awarded Grade A–C.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Literature

This was well done by most candidates, and responses showed evidence of thorough preparation. A variety of the questions set were answered and candidates successfully related their responses to the questions asked. Some responses were comprehensive with a good variety of texts.

Reading

The Reading section was very well done. Candidates were well able to understand the passage and most gave comprehensive responses to the questions.

Writing

There was a noticeable improvement in Writing, although there were no outstanding essays. Generally candidates were able to deal competently with their choice of themes.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Listening

There were some mediocre performances in the Listening section. Few candidates managed to give a full answer to Q1, where the full name was required. A number of candidates did not successfully identify three kinds of shellfish in the passage — at Advanced Higher level this is disappointing, as 'Food and Health' is one of the themes of study.

There was a marked lack of attention to detail by some candidates, resulting in loss of marks.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Advice for preparation concerns the Listening section. Candidates should have more exposure to the spoken word. Radio, television and debates could contribute towards this. A greater proportion of candidates' time should be devoted to listening and responding.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	15
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	18
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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 240				
A	55.6%	55.6%	10	168
B	22.2%	77.8%	4	144
C	16.7%	94.4%	3	120
D	0.0%	94.4%	0	108
No award	5.6%	100.0%	1	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, 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.