

2 March 2007

To: SQA Co-ordinator  
Secondary schools and FE colleges  
EA special schools  
Independent secondary schools  
Higher Education Institutions

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
✓	Note and pass on
	None – update/information only

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Dear Colleague,

The contents of this letter should be passed to the teacher responsible for Gaelic (Learners)/Gàidhlig subjects in your centre.

The introduction of the new revised NQ Gaelic (Learners) and Gàidhlig Courses in diet 2007 will present candidates and centres alike with a revised examination format. Please note the following advice and instruct your candidates accordingly.

**1. Timings within question papers**

Recent experience in other subjects which have been reviewed strongly suggests that candidates do better if they follow the advice given about recommended timings. The Listening parts of the question papers are an exception as they all have a set time allocated to them. However, the remaining time has to be split between Reading and Writing and at some levels, Literature. Please draw the attention of your candidates to the times recommended for each section of the paper, lest they over run and fail to complete all parts of the paper

**2. Writing questions in Gaelic (Learners) and Gàidhlig Courses**

Writing questions offer a wide choice and also offer assistance by suggesting ways of developing an answer. This is in the form of bullet points with attached text. It is crucial that candidates understand that these are merely suggested ways of developing their answers and they are not compulsory. The main aim of the writing task is to answer the question. This is in contradistinction to the bullet points in other languages' question papers (eg French, German, Spanish and Italian Directed Writing where they are mandatory and the omission of any one will result in deduction of marks). In Gaelic (Learners) and Gàidhlig they are only advisory bullet points.

### 3. Use of dictionaries and texts in examinations

#### **Gaelic (Learners) Higher:**

Up to four texts, which can be in bilingual format, may be taken into the exam. Please see the Invigilators' Handbook for details.

#### **Gaelic (Learners) Advanced Higher:**

Up to four texts, which can be in bilingual format, may be taken into the exam. Please see the Invigilators' Handbook for details.

#### **Gàidhlig Higher:**

Up to four Gaelic-only texts may be taken into the exam. Please see the Invigilators' Handbook for details.

#### **Gàidhlig Advanced Higher:**

Up to six Gaelic-only texts may be taken into the exam. Please see the Invigilators' Handbook for details.

Use of Gaelic dictionaries is permitted **neither** in the Gàidhlig exams **nor** in the Gaelic (Learners) Listening papers.

Other issues of relevance are plans to archive material from this forthcoming examination diet for use either as exemplification or, possibly, in Professional Development Workshops in early November 2007. Information will be made available as soon as possible about the likelihood of a workshop or workshops taking place. Listening CDs to accompany the revised National Assessment Bank material are also in the final stages of production and it is hoped to be able to distribute them to centres in the near future.

When setting internal assessments it is worthwhile to note that, as far as possible, SQA avoids the use of half-marks in the marking of its examination papers. This is a policy recommended in order to avoid statistical anomalies generated by marks being rounded-up.

Revised guidelines on the Course Assessment of Speaking have been produced (please see attached document).

Finally, SQA would like to extend its gratitude to the many members of the Gaelic teaching profession who continue to support and enable the maintenance and development of National Qualifications in Gaelic (Learners) and Gàidhlig.

Yours faithfully



Alan Wilson  
Qualifications Manager, National Qualifications  
Performing Arts, Language, Maths and Science

Encs: Course Assessment of Speaking  
Subject summary grids