

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Gàidhlig/Gaelic (Learners)

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
Included in this report**

Standard Grade Gaelic (Learners) - Credit, General and
Foundation
Standard Grade Gaelic (Learners) Writing
Intermediate 1 Gaelic (Learners)
Intermediate 2 Gaelic (Learners)

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002		
Pre appeal	Standard Grade	331
	Standard Grade Writing	148
	Intermediate 1	17
	Intermediate 2	34

Number of entries in 2003		
Pre appeal	Standard Grade	335
	Standard Grade Writing	145
	Intermediate 1	25
	Intermediate 2	37

General comments re entry numbers

There is a slight increase in presentation entries at Standard Grade level and at Intermediate 2. At Intermediate 1, there is a slight decrease in the number of entries. At Intermediate 1, there is an increase in the number of candidates presented from S3. Five centres presented at Intermediate 1, and 13 at Intermediate 2. At Standard Grade, most of the cohort was presented at Credit and General levels. The presentations included some very able and talented candidates

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Standard Grade

Reading

Grade	Maximum Mark	Minimum Mark for Grade	% Mark
1	60	52	87%
2	60	35	58%
3	50	39	78%
4	50	29	58%
5	40	31	78%
6	40	23	58%

Standard Grade

Listening

Grade	Maximum Mark	Minimum Mark for Grade	% Mark
1	50	36	72%
2	50	24	48%
3	40	28	70%
4	40	20	50%
5	30	18	60%
6	30	12	40%

Intermediate 1

	Maximum Mark 110	% Mark
Upper A	93	85%
Lower A	77	70%
B	66	60%
C	55	50%

Intermediate 2

	Maximum Mark 110	% Mark
Upper A	93	85%
Lower A	77	70%
B	66	60%
C	55	50%

General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries

- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as syllabuses evolve and change

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

In determining grade boundaries, discussion took place regarding the varying linguistic backgrounds of the candidates. It seems evident that candidates residing in a Gaelic-speaking community may have an advantage over non-Gaelic speaking areas. All papers afforded candidates with sufficient challenge to be deemed appropriate for the level to which they were assigned. Listening at Intermediate 2 proved the most challenging paper. In the Intermediate levels, the external paper represents about 50% of the overall award.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

In all three examinations, teachers, lecturers and candidates are to be commended for their preparation of candidates for this diet of examinations.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

There were some outstanding performances. This was particularly evident at Standard Grade Credit.

Standard Grade Reading

The papers covered a wide range of language areas and purposes, and grammatical knowledge. At all levels, a challenge was presented within a balanced framework. Wording of questions was very clear and supportive of the candidate. Overall, the papers were well set.

At Credit level, there were many examples of careless reading and interpretation of questions.

At Credit level, some candidates achieved full marks. However, at General and Foundation levels the best performances were 2 or 3 marks short of this.

Standard Grade Listening

Overall, the papers were fair but were interwoven with a sufficient number of challenging questions to deem them suitable for the assigned levels. The standard of audio materials was very good. Generally, candidates found the Listening paper more challenging than the reading. Wording of questions was very clear and supportive of the candidate.

Standard Grade Writing

The overall response of the candidates was very disappointing with very few candidates meriting a grade 1. Only 8.2% received a grade 1 in comparison to 19.6% in the previous year. 19.2% were awarded a grade 2 in comparison to 33.8% in the previous year. However, the number of general 3 awards has improved – 30.8% compared to 27.7%. Centres may wish to be more selective in presenting candidates for appropriate levels, as there were a large number of fails in comparison to the previous year.

Intermediate 1

The papers were sufficiently testing for this level, and contained some complex vocabulary and structures to ensure challenge. A wide range of language areas and purposes were sampled. On the whole, the folio items were excellent and exemplified an innovative use of Information Communication Technology.

Intermediate 2

The reading and listening papers were sufficiently challenging and sampled a range of language areas and purposes. The Listening, challenged those candidates operating at a C grade. However, some able A-grade candidates performed very well in the listening paper. With the exception of one question, texts were supported with clear and unambiguous questions. The standard of audio materials was very good. Generally, the folio items were of a very high standard with good attention to grammatical accuracy, spelling and detail. There were many examples of candidates fulfilling the targets outlined in the grammar grids. There is evidence that a small number of centres should provide more guidance to their candidates regarding the requirements for Folio evidence. Such submissions, for example menus, do not demonstrate sufficient evidence in relation to the grade

descriptions.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Standard Grade Reading

- There was a tendency to not answer in sufficient detail and precision.
- Candidates were not competent in recognising whether nouns were singular or plural.
- It was quite common for candidates to recognise vocabulary but not to contextualise accurately.
- Some candidates failed to fulfil choices when presented with an option.

The following text proved difficult in the Credit paper:

- 1e - *bha mi a' leughadh leabhar inntinneach*
2a - *pàirt den dùthaich*
2b - *àrd* [in the context of appearance]
2h - *chòrd e rium a bhith ann an dùthaich eile*
3f - *sgoiltean eile*
4a - *an-uiridh*
4g - *ainm na sgoile*
4h - ... *a' sealltainn dhealbhan a rinn iad tron bhliadhna*

The following text proved difficult in the General paper:

- 1d - ... *mar as trice*
3f - ... *na flùraichean brèagha a tha a' fàs ann*
4e - ... *trì notaichean nas saoire na tha e anns na bùthan*
5c - ... *faisg air*

The following text proved difficult in the Foundation paper:

- 6a - *Seòras Caimbeul*

Standard Grade Listening

- There was a tendency to answer in insufficient detail and precision, for example *mu* was omitted from the question focusing on time.
- Candidates were not competent in recognising plurals, months, countries and comparisons.

The following text proved difficult in the Credit paper:

- 3 - *Tha thu an seo*
5 - ... *cunnartach. Feumaidh mi a bhith faiceallach*
6 - ... *feumaidh mi falbh*
7 - *aice* was omitted in the vast majority of answers
9 - *beathaichean*
10 - Many answers had 4 Highers instead of 5
11a - *tuathanach* was only recognised by a small minority
11b - *oilthigh*
13 - *fada*
14 - *Bhuail làraidh*

The following text proved difficult in the General paper:

- 7c - *An Fhraing*
9 - *Ògmhios*
10 - *Fàg an doras fosgailte. Tha mi a' dol a-mach ann am mionaid*
11 - *Sguab an làr. Sgioblaich na sgeilpichean. Nigh na cupannan*
13 - ... *a shnàmh no a dhol don taigh-dhealbh*

The following text proved difficult in the Foundation paper:

- 7 - ... *Dè a' phrìs a bha sin?*

- 10 - *Sgrìobh d' ainm agus an uair an seo*
13 - *Chaidh Iain dhachaigh*
16 - *seo peann, a Shìne*

Standard Grade Writing

- Many candidates had difficulty in articulating their communications.
- There were many incidents of misuse of a dictionary.

Intermediate 1 Reading

- The candidates had difficulty with the weather and time.

Intermediate 1 Listening

- Plurals were often confused with the singular.

The following questions proved challenging:

- 4 - *airgead*
6 - ... *air an t-Sràid Àird*
8 - ... *chi mi thu aig an dannsa anns an taigh-òsta*
10 - *Seo an t-aran donn...*
13 - ... *a' marcachd agus a' leughadh*

Intermediate 2 Reading

- Some candidates tended to answer in insufficient detail.

The following text proved challenging:

glè thoilichte
sgoinneil
dà fhichead
ag èigheachd

Intermediate 2 Listening

This paper proved to be testing with a distinct categorisation between A-grade and C-grade candidates emerging. There were some examples of low achievement as a result of failure to recognise text, answer in insufficient detail and a tendency to confuse vocabulary.

The following text proved challenging:

rudan
dannsairean, pìobairean agus seinneadairean
taigh-bìdh ùr
fìon dearg
cearc, rediteag

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

In all three examinations, teachers/lecturers and candidates are to be commended for their preparation of candidates for this diet of examinations.

Presenting centres should ensure that

- Guidelines on allocation of candidates to Gàidhlig or Gaelic (Learners) courses are adhered to.
- Centres should ensure that candidates are not entered for Writing unless it is expected that they are able to achieve at least a Grade 4 (General).
- In advising candidates on Folio submissions, it is important that cognisance is taken of the grade descriptions. Short, disjointed writing rarely exemplifies use of language structure and idiom.
- It is recommended that writing to be done (for Folio items) within the presenting centres and supervised without imposing examination conditions. Candidates should be given the opportunity to redraft on one occasion, based on suggestions for improvement and recommendations rather than detailed correction by the teacher/lecturer.