

## Principal Assessor Report 2004

**Assessment Panel:**

Gaelic

**Qualification area**

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

Gaelic (Learners) — Higher

### **Statistical information: update**

<b>Pre appeal</b>	
<b>Number of entries in 2003</b>	133

<b>Pre appeal</b>	
<b>Number of entries in 2004</b>	136

### **General comments re entry numbers**

Entry numbers up by three — no significant difference.

## **Statistical Information: Performance of candidates**

### **Distribution of awards**

See section on Grade Boundaries.

### **Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards**

There was some variation in percentages of awards compared with 2003. There was a decrease of 15.2% in Upper A awards. There was an increase in Lower A and B awards. C awards were similar to 2003, while the No Award category increased for the second consecutive year, ie an increase of 4.2% over 2003.

## Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	47.8	47.8	65	172
B	26.5	74.3	36	148
C	12.5	86.8	17	125
D				
No award	13.2	100.0	18	

### 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 arrangements evolve and change.

### Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Maximum mark	240
Lowest mark for Upper A	204
Lowest mark for Lower A	172
Lowest mark for B	148
Lowest mark for C	125

## **Comments on candidate performance**

### **General comments**

There was a good range of performance, and few questions posed significant difficulties. Some good attempts at Folio presentation. There was quite a wide range of responses — ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. Listening was generally well done. However, overall the quality of candidates' responses was not as high as in previous years.

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well**

There were good performances in all areas. No questions can be highlighted as presenting considerable difficulty, although some marks were lost due to insufficient attention to detail.

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty**

No areas of outstanding difficulty were apparent; difficulties tended to be particular to specific candidates.

## **Recommendations**

### **Feedback to centres**

In Folios, centres should clearly identify which piece of writing is which, in order to prevent candidates from being penalised because something is wrongly labelled — this seems to be an annual problem. Folios should conform to the word limits recommended by SQA. No specific feedback is recommended for Listening and Reading. Recommendations for Talk have been the subject of a separate report.