

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Gàidhlig/Gaelic(Learners)

Qualification area

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

Gàidhlig Higher and Gàidhlig Advanced Higher

Statistical information: update

Higher

Number of entries in 2002	72
Pre appeal	

Number of entries in 2003	75
Pre appeal	

Advanced Higher

Number of entries in 2002	14
Pre appeal	

Number of entries in 2003	11
Pre appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

Higher

The number of candidates presented for the 2003 examination showed a slight rise with the number of presenting centres continuing to increase. This is due to more Gaelic-medium pupils coming to S5.

Advanced Higher

There was a slight decrease in the numbers for the Advanced Higher but with such small numbers there will be a degree of variance from year to year. The increased number at Higher level has still to filter through to Advanced Higher level.

General Comments

Higher

As in 2002 there were no outstanding candidates but there was quite a number of very good candidates. The Folios and Reports were, in general, very good but there is inconsistency between marks received for the Folio and Report, and marks received in the examination.

Advanced Higher

Although the number of candidates was small there was quite a variance in the range of performance. In general most candidates did reasonably well.

Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards

Higher	Maximum Mark 270	Minimum Mark for Grade
Upper A		229 (85%)
A		189 (70%)
B		162 (60%)
C		135 (50%)

Advanced Higher	Maximum Mark 300	Minimum Mark for Grade
Upper A		255 (85%)
A		210 (70%)
B		180 (60%)
C		150 (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

Higher

The grade boundaries were in line with those set in previous years.

Advanced Higher

The grade boundaries were in line with those set in 2002.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Higher

Folio

The Folio continues to be well done and the general response of candidates was good. There is evidence, from most centres, that a fairly wide range of texts is read and the requirements outlined in the arrangements documentation is fully complied with.

There are still one or two centres concentrating on a limited number of unsuitable texts and in these instances candidates are disadvantaged. There is also some evidence of candidates' over reliance on teachers' notes. In some centres all the candidates are choosing the same poem or novel with the same points or quotes being constantly referred to.

A few candidates still resort to retelling the story or poem without comment, therefore candidates are failing to produce Folios which meet the assessment criteria (requiring both detail and sufficient depth) and losing marks as a result.

The average mark shows a continued increase.

Report

The overall quality of the Reports submitted was very good. There was an encouraging range of topics with some very interesting final products. In general they were well researched, and presented, with evidence of detailed research and analysis supplemented by excellent supporting documentation.

A few candidates are losing marks for producing Reports that lack detail and depth and have little supporting documentation. Some capable candidates are losing marks for submitting Reports that are not fully in line with what is required in the arrangements. Close reading of course documentation would alleviate this problem.

Paper I Reading

The overall response of candidates was fair. However, more candidates seem to be content with paraphrasing from the passage and make little attempt to interpret. They are losing marks for 'copying' chunks from the passages. It states clearly in the introduction that candidates must answer questions in their own words.

The language in the passage was accessible. However the candidates had difficulty in those questions which required not only understanding but also analysis and evaluation eg Question 5.

Paper II Writing

The overall response of candidates was slightly better than in 2002. A minority of candidates produced good essays. As mentioned earlier there is evidence that the standard of writing in the external examination is inconsistent with the standard of writing being produced in the Report. Candidates are producing good quality writing in their Reports but they are not demonstrating the same level writing skills outwith a supported environment.

There is also evidence of bad spelling, lack of fluency and grammatical inaccuracies.

Paper III Listening

The listening was done well by most candidates although the average mark was slightly down on the average in 2002. Some candidates found Questions 4 and 6 difficult, although they were appropriate for the level.

Advanced Higher Folio

The Folios submitted were of satisfactory standard. Candidates should be encouraged to read more widely or to study more than two poems by the same poet.

Likewise for the written responses. Candidates should be encouraged to use a variety of media, rather than everyone producing a newspaper article.

Report

There was a spread of marks awarded to the Reports with evidence of some having been very well researched and presented, others less well so. Candidates should be encouraged to improve the presentation of their Reports and be made aware of the necessity to include the following - contents page, introduction, conclusion and bibliography. Inclusion of support material is also advised.

Some topics chosen did not lend themselves to a great deal of research.

Paper I - Writing

There were some very good responses and examiners were pleased to note the grammatical accuracy of the language and the use of apposite idioms.

However, responses for some questions, particularly Question 8, produced insufficiently detailed answers.

Paper II - Literacy Criticism

There were no very high scores and some fairly low scores. To make the examination more accessible, the number of questions set was increased in order to help candidates (more questions with fewer marks were set rather than setting fewer questions with greater marks).

In turn this probably required greater analysis of the poem, in line with the arrangements, but candidates found this difficult. Candidates would benefit from more time spent on working on literary criticism in order to prepare them adequately for this part of the examination. Although there is always the inevitability of different interpretation in literary criticism, candidates are marked positively if they manage to present a cogent explanation in their responses.

Candidates did not lose marks in Question 7 if they had been misled by the word 'dealbh' into giving a description of the old man as described in the poem.

Paper III - Reading

This paper was not well done, although it was in line with papers from previous years. Responses were average, lacking the details and depth required at this level.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Higher/Advanced Higher

There were some good responses in the written paper, but only from a small number of candidates

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Higher

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Reading | - Interpretation skills were lacking with candidates simply quoting/paraphrasing from the passage and in particular responses to Question 5 highlight this problem. |
| Writing | - Too many grammatical inaccuracies, bad spelling, lack of fluency. |
| Listening | - Gaps in basic language terminology disadvantage some candidates. |

Advanced Higher

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Writing | - More depth required in some responses. |
| Literary Criticism | - Interpretation skills are lacking, and this needs to be addressed. |
| Reading | - Superficial responses. Detail and depth required in responses at Advanced Higher level. |

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Higher

Folio

Candidates should ensure that their responses are personal and do not rely entirely on teachers notes. Retelling of the story or poem is not acceptable. Please refer to the general comments on the Folio. One or two responses were too long. Although candidates did not lose marks for this, over lengthy responses are not to be encouraged. Most Folios were well done.

Report

Reports must be the product of a years' detailed research and investigation. Topics chosen should allow candidates adequate scope in order to meet the course criteria. Please refer to course documentation and the general comments section. There are still some able candidates losing marks for submitting superficial reports; evidence of support material is also important. In general, the reports are being very well done.

Paper I - Reading

As highlighted in previous reports, candidates must attempt to answer questions in their own words. Interpretation is required, simply quoting parts of the passage is not sufficient.

Paper II - Writing

Grammar, spelling and fluency require attention. There were some very poor essays, but some of the responses were encouraging. There is inconsistency between the standard of writing in the Folio and Reports, and that seen in the examination. Candidates may benefit from more preparation in producing written work under controlled conditions.

Paper III - Listening

It would help candidates greatly if they were to listen to the Gàidhlig news on radio. It would expose them to the type of language used in the Listening passages. This issue was also highlighted in 2002.

Advanced Higher

Folio

In general, they were quite well done. However, centres should ensure that candidates have the opportunity to study a wider range of literature and to produce more of a variety in the written work. Please give a clear indicator to markers as to what the given task is for each response.

It would assist in marking if centres made clear on the flyleaf what actual task had been given – eg a short story, or a personal account.

Report

Most were very well done but some candidates chose unsuitable topics. Please read the arrangements regarding topic choice, guidance to candidates, report structure and support material. If some candidates chose more suitable topics and included relevant support material it would enhance their mark. Please refer to general comments section.

Paper I - Writing

Some good responses but continued attention must be paid to grammar, fluency and spelling. Ensure candidates choose topics that will allow them adequate scope to give detailed responses.

Paper II - Literary Criticism

More detail required in responses. Interpretation skills are lacking and this area needs to be addressed. General responses are not sufficient. Detailed answers are required. Markers look positively at any reasonable attempt to answer the questions.

Paper III

More detail and depth required particularly for Questions 3 & 4.