

## Principal Assessor Report 2004

**Assessment Panel:**

**Gaelic**

**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 2003	72
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Number of entries in 2004	89
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### Advanced Higher

Number of entries in 2003	11
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Number of entries in 2004	12
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## General comments re entry numbers

### Higher

The number of entries for the 2004 examination showed a continued increase with one FE college presenting candidates at this level for the first time. The numbers have more than doubled from the number presented for the 2000 examination.

### Advanced Higher

The number presented for the Advanced Higher Course is still very small although there was one more candidate in 2004 than in 2003.

### General Comments

#### Higher

With the numbers increasing there is a wider range of performance from candidates. Although some candidates produced excellent pieces of work, some other candidates performed very poorly. As in previous years, there was considerable disparity between marks internally generated and those externally generated.

#### Advanced Higher

The number of candidates was small and performance in most components was average. The literary criticism and reading components of the external examination were not well done.

## Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of awards

Higher	Number of candidates	Maximum Mark 270 Minimum Mark for Grade
Upper A	2 (2.2%)	229 (85%)
A	44 (51.7%)	189 (70%)
B	32 (87.6%)	162 (60%)
C	10 (98.9%)	135 (50%)
D	1 (1.1%)	<135 (49%)

Advanced Higher	Number of candidates	Maximum Mark 300 Minimum Mark for Grade
Upper A	0 (0.0%)	255 (80%)
A	1 (9.1%)	210 (70%)
B	7 (72.7%)	180 (60%)
C	3 (100.00%)	150 (50%)

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

#### Higher

The grade boundaries were in line with those set in previous years. There were two upper A awards and one D award in 2004.

#### Advanced Higher

The grade boundaries were in line with those set in 2003. There were fewer A's awarded in 2004.

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

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	53.9	53.9	46	189
B	36.0	87.6	32	162
C	11.2	98.9	10	135
D	0.0	98.9	0	121
No award	1.1	100.0	1	0

### 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

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### Information given on page 3

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

#### Higher

##### Folio

As in previous years the Folio continues to be well done and the general response of candidates is good. There is evidence, from most centres, that a fairly wide range of texts is read and that requirements outlined in the arrangements documentation are 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. Some centres produce Folio pieces that are too long (or too short). As a rough guide 600 words is the required length. Candidates should also outline the given task in their response. The average mark in 2004 was not as good as in 2003.

##### 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. Reports based on literary texts are not really suitable. Close reading of course documentation would alleviate this problem. The average mark for the Report continues to improve.

#### Paper I — Reading

The overall response of candidates was reasonably good. As in 2003 some candidates seem to be content with paraphrasing from the passage and make little attempt to interpret. They are losing marks for transcribing sections 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 and candidate performance was better than in 2003.

#### Paper II — Writing

The overall response of candidates was slightly worse than in 2003. Nevertheless a number of candidates produced some very good essays. As mentioned earlier there is evidence that the standard of writing in the external examination is not in line with the standard of writing being produced in the report. Candidates are producing good quality writing in their reports but 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 very well done by most candidates and the average mark was well up on the average in 2003.

#### **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. There was a sameness about many of the responses.

Likewise for the written responses. Candidates should be encouraged to use a variety of media, rather than everyone producing a newspaper article. Grammar and fluency was of a good standard, generally.

##### **Report**

There was a spread of marks awarded for the Reports with evidence of some having been very well researched and presented, others less well so. Most were merely pages of writing with no clear evidence of what research had been done and from where research had come. 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 1 — Writing**

There were no outstanding responses and most candidates lacked originality and creativity in their essays. Grammar, punctuation and spelling were of a reasonably good standard.

### **Paper II — Literacy Criticism**

Most of the candidates did very poorly in this section. 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). This was also done in 2003.

In turn this probably required greater analysis of the poem, in line with the arrangements, but candidates found this difficult. Candidates would benefit from spending more time 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 do not appear to have the necessary skills to tackle this section of the paper. Poems/prose must be studied in greater detail and scrutinised more closely.

Candidates need more direction in how to answer questions.

### **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. Candidates have a good idea of what will be required in this paper and need to make more points relating to the set questions in detail rather than providing very standard, general answers. A focused, quality response is required.

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

### **Higher/Advanced Higher**

There were some very good responses in all papers at Higher.

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

### **Higher**

Reading — Interpretation skills were lacking with candidates' over-reliance on quoting/paraphrasing from the passage.

Writing — Too many grammatical inaccuracies, bad spelling, lack of fluency.

### **Advanced Higher**

Writing — More depth required in some responses area.

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

Comments are in general as for 2003 but some centres are ignoring the advice given and candidates are being penalised as a consequence.

Candidates should ensure that their responses are personal and do not rely entirely on teachers notes. Retelling of the story or poem etc 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. Not as well done as in 2003.

##### 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. Reference should be made to course documentation and the general comments section. There are still some able candidates being penalised for submitting superficial Reports; evidence of support material is also important. In general, the Reports are being very well done although the average mark was down slightly from 2003.

##### 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 good examples of writing but some of the responses were poor. 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

The listening paper was very well done.

#### Advanced Higher

##### Folio

In general, they were quite well done. Some 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. **The given task for each response should be clearly indicated on the flyleaf.**

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 reasonably 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**

Responses were, in general, average and continued attention must be paid to grammar, fluency and spelling.

**Paper II — Literary Criticism**

This section was poorly done. More detail required in responses. Interpretation skills are lacking and this area needs to be addressed. Markers look positively at any reasonable attempt to answer the questions.

**Paper III — Reading**

Candidates have a rough idea of the type of questions to be set in this section and should write shorter, detailed answers for Question 1, 2 and longer answers for Q3 and 4.