

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Gaelic

Qualification area

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

Gaidhlig Standard Grade
 Intermediate 1
 Intermediate 2

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	Standard Grade 134 Intermediate 1 0 Intermediate 2 8

Number of entries in 2003	
Pre appeal	Standard Grade 183 Intermediate 1 0 Intermediate 2 13

General comments re entry numbers

Standard Grade

There was a significant increase in the number of entries this year. There had been a gradual increase in the previous four years - 1999: 96 candidates; 2000: 113; 2001: 134; 2002: 138. This year's increase, however, is the most noteworthy increase in one particular year to date. This year's candidates were presented by a total of 23 schools. The number of candidates presented by each school ranged between 1 and 36. Three schools presented more than twenty candidates each. It is probable that the numbers will increase further due to the continuing expansion of Gaelic Medium education.

Intermediate 1

No entries.

Intermediate 2

The number of candidates presented at Intermediate 2 was again low, but there was an increase from previous years. The increase in the number of candidates presented for Standard Grade this year should lead to an increase in the number of candidates presented at Intermediate 2 next year.

There were no candidates presented at Intermediate 1 in 2002 or 2003. The small number of candidates achieving Foundation level awards at Standard Grade would explain this.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Standard Grade Listening

Grade	Maximum Mark	Minimum Mark
1	50	37 (74%)
2	50	25 (50%)
3	40	28 (70%)
4	40	20 (50%)
5	30	21 (70%)
6	30	15 (50%)

Standard Grade Reading

Grade	Maximum Mark	Minimum Mark
1	50	42 (84%)
2	50	34 (68%)
3	40	28 (70%)
4	40	20 (50%)
5	30	19 (63%)
6	30	12 (40%)

Talking and Writing are Directly Graded

Intermediate 2 – Maximum Mark 160

Band	Minimum Mark
Upper A	136 (85%)
A	112 (70%)
B	96 (60%)
C	80 (50%)
No Award	

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

Intermediate 2

The grade boundaries were very close to what they had been last year. No candidate failed to achieve an award at grade C. This would indicate that candidates had been presented at the correct level and that reasonable challenges were presented by the examination papers.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Standard Grade

Candidates performed very well overall. The percentage of candidates achieving Credit awards was comparable to recent years, although the percentage achieving Grade 1 was slightly lower than in recent years. The number of candidates achieving Foundation awards was small.

In Writing, candidates performed considerably better in the Folio than they did in the examination. In Reading, candidates performed well in both the Folio and the examination.

Intermediate 1

No entries.

Intermediate 2

The overall performance of candidates was satisfactory with all presented candidates passing. However, performance of candidates was slightly poorer than it had been in 2002.

In the Listening paper, many candidates performed better in the second passage than they did in the first passage. They were able to give more correct, concise answers to questions on the second passage.

Candidates performed reasonably well in the Reading papers, although there were few very good performances. There were few areas of obvious difficulty for candidates, although no candidate made a successful attempt at Part 1 Question 9.

A number of Folios were not word processed, were poorly presented and were difficult to read. A range of literary texts was studied and candidates were given good topics for writing tasks. However, candidate responses were generally too brief and lacking in quality.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Standard Grade

Candidates performed very well in both the Reading and the Listening examinations. There appeared to be no particular areas of difficulty, although a number of candidates were unable to complete the final few questions of the Credit Reading paper. On the whole, candidates responded well. The standard of candidates' written Gaelic was generally good, with very few responses in Reading or Listening proving difficult to read. This was reflected in the very small number of candidates who gained either a Foundation award or no award.

Candidates attempted a range of topics from the choice on offer in the Writing paper. The most popular questions were 4, 6, 8 and 14. Although the quality of responses was generally poorer than in the Folio, there was a good standard of creative writing in evidence. In fact, the quality of creative writing in the examination was probably better than the creative writing in the Folio.

Intermediate 1

No entries.

Intermediate 2

Candidates performed well in Listening, with the average mark higher than in previous years. Candidates also performed well in Talking, with the average mark on a par with previous years.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Standard Grade

Although there were no significant areas of difficulty in external assessment, a few candidates had difficulty in identifying the correct answers to some of the questions at Credit Reading. This was particularly true of Passage B Questions 2 and 3. Few candidates gave acceptable answers to question 7 of the same passage. These problems were encountered by the weaker candidates at this level; more able candidates coped well with all the questions, with a few candidates achieving full marks.

Intermediate 1

No entries.

Intermediate 2

There were no significant areas of difficulty in external assessment, although a few candidates encountered difficulty with one or two questions in the Listening and Reading papers.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Standard Grade

Candidates performed well in this year's Standard Grade examinations. It was evident that good work had been done in schools in preparing candidates for the exams. The standard of written Gaelic was generally good in all elements of the assessment. Candidates could be afforded greater opportunities to demonstrate their skills in creative writing through both the Folio and the Writing examination paper.

Intermediate 2

Candidates performed quite well in all aspects of the assessment. Candidates would benefit, however, from greater preparation in this area. Many Folio pieces were too brief, rather lacking in content and poorly presented.