SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:	**Gaelic**

Qualification area

Subject(s) and Level(s) Included in this report	**Gàidhlig**	**Standard Grade** **Intermediate 1** **Intermediate 2**

Statistical information: update

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

Number of entries in 2004	Standard Grade 216 Intermediate 1 0 Intermediate 2 11

General comments re entry numbers

Standard Grade

The upward trend in the number of candidates at Standard Grade continued this year. The number of candidates has increased in each of the last five years - 1999 : 96 candidates; 2000 : 113 candidates; 2001 : 134 candidates; 2002 : 138 candidates; 2003 : 183 candidates; 2004 : 216 candidates.

This year's candidates were presented by a total of 23 centres, spread throughout Scotland. Although the number of candidates presented by some centres was very small, it is expected that these centres' numbers will increase. The influence of Gaelic medium education throughout Scotland is significant. It is, therefore, expected that the increase in candidate numbers will continue in future years.

Intermediate 1

No entries. This is largely due to the very small number of candidates who achieve Foundation level awards at Standard Grade.

Intermediate 2

The number of candidates presented was fairly close to the number presented in previous years. It had been expected that the increase in the number of presentations at Standard Grade would lead to an increase in the number of candidates presented at Intermediate 1 and at Intermediate 2. However, that has not happened although a reasonably high number of candidates achieve a General level award at Standard Grade.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

Standard Grade

Listening

Grade	No. of candidates	% of candidates	Cumulative % of candidates
1	101	47	47
2	56	26	73
3	25	12	85
4	20	9	94
5	11	5	99
6	3	1	100

Reading

Grade	No. of candidates	% of candidates	Cumulative % of candidates
1	95	44	44
2	62	29	73
3	21	10	83
4	20	9	92
5	13	6	98
6	5	2	100

Speaking

Grade	No. of candidates	% of candidates	Cumulative % of candidates
1	84	39	39
2	67	31	70
3	47	22	92
4	13	6	98
5	3	1	99
6	2	1	100

Writing

Grade	No. of candidates	% of candidates	Cumulative % of candidates
1	37	17	17
2	52	24	41
3	62	29	70
4	43	20	90
5	15	7	97
6	7	3	100

Intermediate 2 - Maximum Mark 160

Grade	Band	Number of candidates	Minimum Mark
A	1		136
A	2		112
B	3		104
B	4		96
C	5		88
C	6		80
D	7		72
No Award	8		64
No Award	9		0

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

There were no significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Standard Grade Assessable Element –	**Listening**		
Grade	**Maximum Mark**	**Minimum Mark for Grade**	**% Mark**
1	50	35	70
2	50	24	48
3	40	26	65
4	40	16	40
5	30	19	63
6	30	13	43
Standard Grade Assessable Element –	**Reading**		
Grade	**Maximum Mark**	**Minimum Mark for Grade**	**% Mark**
1	50	43	86
2	50	32	64
3	40	28	70
4	40	21	52
5	30	19	63
6	30	15	50

Intermediate 2

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	50	50	4	112
B	50	100	4	96
C		100	0	80
D		100	0	72
No award		100	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

Standard Grade

Writing and Speaking at Standard Grade are directly graded. The grade boundaries this year are quite close to the grade boundaries in previous years, indicating that the level of difficulty of the papers was quite similar to the level of difficulty in recent years.

Intermediate 1

No entries.

Intermediate 2

The boundaries at Intermediate 2 were exactly the same as they had been last year.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Standard Grade

The level of performance of candidates in Listening, Reading and Speaking was broadly similar. Candidates performed particularly well in Listening and in the Reading Exam paper. It was considered that the quality of the CDs and tapes for Listening was good. The performance in the Folio and in the Writing paper, however, was not as good as in the other areas of assessment.

Folio
Candidates had in general been well prepared and some folios showed evidence of careful and thoughtful work. The folios were generally well presented and the vast majority of them were word processed. However, many of the folio pieces were quite short, even at Credit level. While the number of words expected is not stipulated, there is an expectation that candidates at Credit level should present sufficiently lengthy pieces of work to enable them to do justice to the task.
Occasionally folios have three good pieces and one piece which is of lesser quality, possibly inserted at a later point, maybe to make up the required four pieces. Candidates should be encouraged to select work in sufficient time to allow redrafting, in order that the standard of work is consistent.
A number of candidates in a small number of centres responded to the same stimulus, suggesting that a group task had been set. This approach is discouraged as it is potentially restrictive.
Many of the responses to Reading did not display detailed in-depth literary analysis of texts. Some good candidates also responded to texts which would usually be studied on S1 or S2 (eg 'Na Balaich air Ronaidh'; 'Clann a' Phroifeasair'). Some responses to poetry were very good.
In Writing, candidates who had been given very specific instructions performed well. It was disappointing that there was a dearth of creative writing because some of the creative writing was of a high standard. In general, candidates who had been given a wide remit performed less well than those who had been given very specific instructions.

Intermediate 1

No entries.

Intermediate 2

The overall performance of candidates was good. All candidates achieved Grade C or above.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Standard Grade

Candidates performed very well in both the Reading and the Listening external examinations.

Reading
Candidates were able to cope well at Foundation level and no significant problems with the paper can be identified. Some candidates' responses were difficult to read. A few candidates had been assigned a scribe.
Although candidates performed well at General level, few candidates scored more than 30/40 marks. The vast majority of candidates achieved between 15/40 and 30/40. Again, it is difficult to identify specific questions or portions of the text which posed significant problems for candidates.
It was noted at Credit level that many candidates secured better marks in Earrann B than in Earrann A. Earrann B was of a more factual nature than Earrann A. A large number of candidates achieved high marks at Credit level and the range of marks was not as evenly distributed as at the other levels. Candidates were able to answer most of the questions, although only a small number of candidates answered the language questions (questions 7a and 7b) correctly.

Listening
A number of candidates who were presented at Credit/General should probably have been presented at General/Foundation since they achieved very few marks at Credit level. Fortunately they were able to secure enough marks at General level to achieve a Grade 4.
Only a small number of candidates sat the Foundation level, but they were able to cope well with the examination.
Candidates were able to cope well with the General papers. No significant areas of difficulty were identified.
There was a reasonable spread of marks at Credit level, although a small number of candidates achieved very low marks. Able candidates were capable of coping with the questions competently.

Speaking
The performance of candidates in Speaking was very similar to the performance of candidates in 2003. However, the performance of candidates in the last two years at Credit level has been poorer than the performance at Credit in 2001 and 2002. Only 2% of candidates achieved a Foundation level award in Speaking.

Intermediate 1

No entries

Intermediate 2

Candidates performed well in both the Reading and the Listening examination papers. They had no difficulty with regard to comprehension of the passages and their answers were generally accurate and comprehensive.

The folio submissions were generally good, with strong evidence of accuracy in spelling and

punctuation. However, most of the folio pieces were quite brief.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Standard Grade

There were no areas of external assessment in which candidates had specific difficulty. Inevitably, there were a few questions in the Reading and in the Listening which some candidates found difficult.

Intermediate 1

Intermediate 2

There were no areas of external assessment in which candidates had specific difficulty.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Standard Grade

1. Candidates performed well in this year's Standard Grade examinations. There was strong evidence that good work had been done in schools in preparing candidates for the examinations.

2. Care should be taken with regard to level of presentation to ensure that candidates are presented at the correct level and element.

3. Concerns were expressed by markers with regard to the quality of some folios. A document entitled *'Gaidhlig and Gaelic (Learners) on the Standard Grade: Guidance for teachers on the assessment of Writing'* was issued by SEB in August 1993. Teachers should ensure that they are familiar with this document. It is intended that further guidance and exemplification on writing at Standard Grade will be issued during school session 2004-2005.

4. Occasionally folios have three good pieces and one piece which is of lesser quality, possibly inserted at a later point, maybe to make up the required four pieces. Candidates should be encouraged to select work in sufficient time to allow redrafting, in order that the standard of work is consistent.
   A number of candidates in a small number of centres responded to the same stimulus, suggesting that a group task had been set. This approach is discouraged as it is potentially restrictive.

Intermediate 2

Candidates performed well in all aspects of the assessment. Performance in the Reading and Listening examination papers was very good. A number of folio pieces, however, were rather brief and lacking in content.