Course report 2023

Advanced Higher Gaelic (Learners)

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022:   10

Number of resulted entries in 2023:   10

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	8	Percentage	80	Cumulative percentage	80	Minimum mark required	138
B	Number of candidates	0	Percentage	0	Cumulative percentage	80	Minimum mark required	118
C	Number of candidates	1	Percentage	10	Cumulative percentage	90	Minimum mark required	98
D	Number of candidates	1	Percentage	10	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	78
No award	Number of candidates	0	Percentage	0	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

Please note that rounding has not been applied to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

♦ 'most' means greater than 70%
♦ 'many' means 50% to 69%
♦ 'some' means 25% to 49%
♦ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics and information page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates performed well in the reading and translation paper. The context was accessible to all candidates, and topical. The subject matter explores the close link between Scotland and Italy. The reading and translation paper performed as expected, with many candidates performing to a high standard. Most of the candidates performed well in the overall question with a comprehensive overview of the writer's purpose, although some found it challenging.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening section of this question paper presented candidates with a monologue about changing attitudes to smoking among young people and a dialogue about the smoking habits of young people. Candidates gained a range of marks in line with the expected demand of the paper.

The assessment contexts were appropriate and relevant to candidates studying at this level. The question paper performed as expected and was accessible to all candidates.

Portfolio

The portfolio provided candidates with personalisation and choice. Candidates' performance was of a good standard. Most candidates completed an analysis of literature in their portfolio and the topics varied. Candidates complete their portfolio in class as part of the course, and it is submitted to SQA for external marking.

Performance–talking

The performance requires candidates to take part in a discussion with a visiting assessor. Most candidates were well prepared, and many demonstrated excellent speaking skills.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The reading and translation question paper functioned well and was accessible to all candidates.

Candidates made good responses to most of the set questions. There was some evidence of dictionary misuse and mixing nouns and verbs.

Many candidates provided appropriate answers to the overall purpose question although some answers did not address the question. A few candidates simply provided information with little attempt to draw inferences.

Most candidates appeared to be well-prepared for the translation part of the assessment, achieving high marks. A few candidates answered this question at the beginning of the paper, but if taking this approach, candidates should ensure they read the whole passage carefully first.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Some candidates performed very well in the listening question paper while others found it very challenging. There was a wide range of marks evident.

There were some good examples of discursive writing this year. Pegged marking ensured that the full range of marks were accessible to candidates. Many candidates chose the learning question in the discursive essay, which focused on whether online learning was better than learning in the classroom. All candidates found the topics accessible, and the performance was of a high standard.

There were a few essays of a high standard with the language characterised by a high degree of accuracy and a comprehensive range of verbs. However, basic grammar mistakes continue to diminish the performance of a few candidates, for example different tenses being used in the same sentence and poor syntax.

Portfolio

Candidates performed well and focused on a good range of topics in their portfolios, from historical to modern-day literature. Most candidates chose literature as their focus of study. There was good evidence of an analytical approach and topics studied in depth.

Performance–talking

Most candidates performed well in the discussion. There were some very good examples of candidates who had attained a level of Gaelic that allowed them to sustain detailed discussions with the visiting assessor and demonstrate a high level of accuracy while using complex and sophisticated language. The discussion was natural and authentic throughout. There were a few who struggled to maintain a conversation and the standard was below what is expected at this level.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ continue to develop dictionary skills. Candidates often choose the first word that appears in the dictionary without considering the context of the passage and selecting the most appropriate meaning. Candidates continue to mix up nouns and verbs

♦ study the questions carefully to ascertain what the question is asking. Candidates should look at the marks allocated to guide them to the level of information required. This can help with completing the paper on time. Candidates can miss out on a significant number of marks when the paper is not completed

♦ practise the overall question and draw inferences from the text and not merely provide information or repeat the answers they have provided in the comprehension questions

♦ attempt and complete the translation

♦ read and review their translation once they complete it to ensure it makes sense and reads well in English

♦ check carefully for accuracy and omissions of single words in the translation and pay attention to accuracy of tenses and plurals

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ practise more listening exercises as this is an area that requires further development

♦ pay particular attention to numbers and dates, comparatives, superlatives, singular and plurals, days and months as marks continue to be missed when they are not acquainted with such elementary elements

♦ are developing their grammar and syntax skills. Candidates should aim to write correct sentences as simple errors continue to diminish the standard of writing. Candidates at this level should know the basic points of tenses, cases, plurals and reported speech and accents

♦ practise their dictionary skills during discursive writing

♦ allow time to proofread their essay after they have finished it. Basic errors could be avoided by carefully checking verb tenses and endings, adjectival agreements, genders, spellings and accents

♦ receive more detailed and frequent grammar input and practice to help them prepare

Portfolio

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ fully understand the requirements of the portfolio as detailed in the course specification
♦ choose the right topic or focus for their portfolio
♦ choose a title that is a clear lead to critical analysis and a discursive approach. Centres should discuss with candidates the title they have chosen to ensure that they can develop and research the subject matter at an appropriate depth

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ are regularly developing their talking skills in the classroom. This will help candidates show more confidence in using spoken Gaelic with the visiting assessor
♦ can deal with spontaneous questions that go beyond their area of study

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
♦ a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
♦ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the National Qualifications 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report.