Course Report 2017

Subject	Gaelic Learners
Level	N5

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Markers commented that although there was a decrease in the number of candidates presented for National 5 Gaelic learners this session, many showed a high standard of performance. This was a factor in the decision to apply the notional grade boundaries.

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Writing

Overall, the marking team was very happy with the standard of performance in this component. The vast majority of candidates completed the paper in their allocated time.

Reading

This paper performed as expected. The contexts of Employability, Learning and Society were covered. Candidates are becoming more adept at including the necessary detail required for responses at National 5 level.

Item 3 (Society) contained more unfamiliar language, but the questions did not disadvantage candidates. Many candidates performed well in this item.

Although this was not an issue that affected a large number of candidates, a few lost marks as a result of not interpreting command questions correctly, eg Q1a) a few candidates stated **where** Ceitidh did work experience instead of **when**.

Writing

This component performed as expected. It was pleasing to see many examples of excellent pieces of writing. Some candidates produced responses that were more in line with the standard expected at the Higher level.

Component 2: question paper: Listening

The component performed as expected. Candidates performed to a high standard in this year's paper. This is in contrast with the previous two years. As a result, notional grade boundaries were applied.

In spite of the improvement in the overall standard of the Listening paper, this continues to be the most challenging component for most candidates.

Component 3: performance – Talking

The Performance performed as expected. The samples observed reflected a range of attainment with candidates, on the most part, displaying a good level of language skill in talking.

Centres applied assessment judgments well, with reference to the marking instructions and a commitment to rigorous internal verification.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Writing

Reading
Most candidates performed well in the supported questions: 1e, 2b and 3a. It was also encouraging to see candidates perform well in the following questions:

♦ Question 1 a) 'when she was in S6'
♦ Question 1 c): Many candidates accessed the full three marks which was encouraging as this was a challenging question (gave them food, made sure they were comfortable, listened to their stories).
♦ Question 1f): 'she has the correct skills'
♦ Question 2d) '94' (It was encouraging that a good number candidates answered this question correctly as numerals have proved challenging in previous years)
♦ Question 3b) although this part of the text contained more unfamiliar language, there was optionality in this question, as candidates had to state any two points (out of three in total). As a result, a large number of candidates accessed the full two marks.
♦ Question 3e)(i): Again, this part of the text contained less familiar language (eg 'waves') but a large number of candidates accessed the full two marks.

Writing
♦ Candidates who achieved either 16 or 20 marks produced responses that were accurate and detailed.
♦ Many candidates attempted to use a variety of tenses, eg past tense when discussing previous experiences. It was also encouraging to see candidates use the subjunctive/conditional tense correctly when discussing their skills eg 'Chanainn gu bheil mi…'
♦ Many candidates produced authentic responses with opening such as: 'Chunnaic mi sanas air an eadar-lìon agus tha ùidh agam anns an obair' or 'Is mise… agus tha ùidh agam san obair' and closings such as: 'Is mise le meas'
♦ The most successful candidates also used extended sentences by incorporating connectives.
♦ It was encouraging to see a good number of candidates cope well with the unpredictable bullet points.

Component 2: question paper: Listening
Candidates performed well in the following questions:

♦ Question 1d) Supported question (gap fill)
♦ Question 2a) Multiple choice question
♦ Question 2d) (ii): 'very beautiful country'
♦ Question 2e) There was optionality in this question (two out of three) which meant that a good number of candidates accessed the full allocation of marks.

Component 3: performance – Talking

Candidates performed well in the presentation element of the performance. They were well-prepared, displaying a range of vocabulary and tenses, as well as a range of language structures suitable to the level.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Writing

Some candidates found the following questions challenging in the Reading paper:

♦ 2e) 'Useful school trips' – 'trips' was a challenging plural for many candidates.
♦ 3c) 'beginning of March to end of July – giving the precise detail was challenging for some candidates.

Writing
♦ A small number of candidates experienced difficulty in addressing the four predictable bullet points which would perhaps suggest that these candidates were presented at the wrong level.
♦ The two unpredictable bullet points were demanding for a few candidates.

Component 2: question paper: Listening

Some candidates found the following questions challenging in the listening paper:

♦ Question 1c): 'About five million' – This was challenging for the vast majority
♦ Question 1b) 'Wetter and warmer' – These comparatives proved challenging for many candidates.
♦ Question 2d) (i): 'For a day'.

Component 3: performance – Talking

Candidates, on the whole, dealt well with the performance. However, they do find the conversation more demanding than the presentation, and those candidates who are the highest achieving tend to cope with the conversation much more readily than those who are less suited to this level.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Writing

Reading

♦ Candidates should continue to practise their dictionary skills so they can identify plural nouns.
♦ Candidates should make sure they read questions carefully and make sure that they do not confuse the different command words, eg when/where/what/why.

Writing

While it is acknowledged that the writing standard is continuing to improve, centres should be aware of the following issues:

♦ Centres should continue to encourage candidates to produce responses which are authentic and well-structured, eg appropriate opening and closing paragraphs.
♦ Candidates should avoid using repetitive language.
♦ To produce an authentic job application, candidates do not need to describe their home town/village and discuss family members and pets.
♦ Candidates should be aware that they can increase the complexity of their sentence structures by including simple connectives such as: 'agus', 'ach' and 'oir' and more complex connectives if they are confident in this area.
♦ Candidates should use a variety of tenses. It is not sufficient to only apply the verb 'to be'.
♦ Candidates should be encouraged to incorporate a variety of sentence structures, eg

— Tha ùidh agam ann an…
— Is toigh leam…
— Is fheàrr leam…
— Is urrainn dhomh…
— Faodaidh…
— Feumaidh tu…
— 'S e ….a th' annam.
— 'S e … an t-ainm a th' orm.

♦ Centres should encourage candidates to personalise their responses. There was evidence of responses from some centres that were too similar in style, content and structure.
♦ A more secure awareness of the dative case would enhance candidates' responses, eg 'Tha mi ag obair aig a' phort-adhair'

Component 2: question paper: Listening

♦ Candidates should familiarise themselves with vocabulary/language structures pertaining to the four specified contexts.
♦ In particular, candidates should familiarise themselves with comparatives
♦ Candidates need to show awareness of the preposition 'mu'.
♦ Candidates should take advantage of every opportunity to maximise their exposure to the language in order to raise their awareness of important grammatical structures/vocabulary.

Component 3: performance – Talking

Centres should be aware of the need to cover two contexts from session 2017–18 in the performance.

Centres should seek to prepare candidates in such a way as to allow them to cope with language difficulties effectively. Centres should also ensure that the topic area that the candidate chooses will give them the optimum opportunity to use language of a sufficient standard to allow them to achieve as high a mark as possible.

It is recommended that Family is not the main topic of presentation or conversation as it tends to limit the range of tenses and structures that can be used.

Centres should also ensure that they stick to the rubric of the performance, which requires the presentation to precede the conversation.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	145

Number of resulted entries in 2017	115

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	52.2%	52.2%	60	70
B	16.5%	68.7%	19	60
C	13.9%	82.6%	16	50
D	8.7%	91.3%	10	45
No award	8.7%	-	10	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

♦ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

♦ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). 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 management team at SQA.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

♦ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

♦ 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, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this 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.

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