



## Course report 2019

Subject	Gaelic (Learners)
Level	Higher

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. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

# **Section 1: comments on the assessment**

## **Question paper 1: Reading**

The reading question paper was at an appropriate level and all feedback was positive, which also suggests that it was a suitable paper for this level.

There was a good balance of accessible and challenging questions which discriminated between A and C candidates. Candidates performed particularly well in the translation element where many candidates achieved high marks. The reading question paper performed as expected.

## **Question paper1: Directed writing**

In the directed writing question paper, candidates were given the choice of two stimuli from the contexts of learning and employability. Both scenarios proved to be manageable and gave the candidates the opportunity to show their ability in writing.

The additional bullet points in both scenarios provided candidates with the opportunity of producing an extended piece of writing and demonstrating their knowledge and skills. This also discriminated between A and C candidates. There was a fairly even distribution in the choice of scenarios that candidates selected. The directed writing question paper performed in line with expectations.

## **Question paper 2: Listening**

The listening question paper consisted of a monologue and a dialogue. The monologue entailed listening to a radio programme and the dialogue was interviewing a fiddler who was involved in performing music at different events during the summer.

The monologue proved challenging for candidates and a wide range of marks were evident in candidates' performances. Candidates generally performed better with the dialogue. The questions were both accessible and challenging and discriminated between A and C candidates, in line with expectation, although some candidates experienced significant difficulties with this element of course assessment.

## **Assignment–writing**

Candidates performed extremely well in this new component of course assessment, and benefitted from the support and feedback that centres were able to provide. Candidates produced a high level of work and most of the written work was of an exemplary standard. There were some interesting and creative examples of stimuli from some centres, although it was slightly disappointing to see other centres all using the same stimuli.

## **Performance–talking**

The performance–talking performed as expected. The new 10-minute conversation allowed for a more natural performance, while providing for a more demanding internally assessed component. Centres are reminded that an extended performance does not necessarily benefit the candidate.

The new pegged marking scheme worked well, allowing for more finesse in the awarding of marks for the performance. There was, however, a significant number of centres who did not use pegged marks. This resulted in these centres giving unobtainable marks.

Centres are reminded to ensure they have rigorous internal verification based on the marking instructions. Centres should use professional language at all times in reporting their judgements based on the marking instructions.

## **Section 2: comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

#### **Question paper 1: Reading**

Candidates performed well in the reading question paper and few poor performances were evident. Most candidates achieved more than half of the available marks, with some managing to achieve an excellent mark even with challenging questions. Candidates' dictionary skills are showing improvement although some candidates confused the word *fhiaicail* with *facal* in question 2.

The translation was generally of a high standard and many candidates achieved high marks. It was good to note that most of the translation was written in fluid, idiomatic English, in contrast to previous years where some candidates tended to use word-for-word translation. There was also an improvement noted in the use of plurals and the comparative.

#### **Question paper 1: Directed writing**

There was an improvement in addressing all the bullet points compared to previous years. Centres are better at making candidates aware of this element of the exam. Some candidates wrote with a high degree of accuracy and a variety of structures, which gained high marks.

#### **Question paper 2: Listening**

As in previous years, candidates performed better in the dialogue than the monologue. Many candidates did well with question 2(a) and (c). There was a wide disparity of marks overall, with several candidates achieving excellent marks.

#### **Assignment–writing**

Candidates mostly used detailed and complex language and a wide range of structures. The correct use of a wide range of regular and irregular verbs and tenses was evident, with a good degree of grammatical accuracy.

#### **Performance–talking**

Candidates performed well in the 10-minute conversation. They expressed ideas and opinions, and used content which allowed them to achieve a good standard in relation to the national standard for Higher. Candidates had good pronunciation overall, as well having a good language resource.

## Areas that candidates found demanding

### Question paper 1: Reading

In the reading section of the question paper, some candidates were unable to access the full range of marks in several questions as they did not give enough detail in their answers.

Question 3(a) was demanding, and few candidates were able to answer this question correctly.

Question 3(b): a number of candidates did not provide sufficient information for this question. In addition, several candidates had the wrong translation of *fhuair*, *mus robh* and *ach mu* and lost marks.

Question 4: some candidates were unable to translate the phrase *a' tighinn air adhart aig an ire fhèin*.

Many candidates did not answer the overall purpose question fully. They tended not to provide 'details from the text to justify their answer'. Instead, they gave their own opinions rather than providing evidence from the text.

Sense unit 2 of the translation was demanding with the use of the comparative and the superlative, and candidates lost marks here.

### Question paper 1: Directed writing

Candidates continue to make basic errors in their writing which you would not expect to see at Higher. Tenses are used inconsistently, and wrong word order detracts from the overall performance. The use of *chord e rium*, *tha e a' còrdadh rium* and reported speech form was highlighted by markers as an area of concern this year, as was the dative case. At Higher, candidates should be able to handle such aspects of grammar.

### Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates experienced difficulties with numbers in question 1(a) and in place names in 1(b) and few candidates managed to gain marks. Some candidates struggled with item 1 of the listening question paper although they achieved better marks in the dialogue. Many candidates did not gain all available marks by not writing enough detail in their answers. This was the case in question 1(e) where 'good at research' and 'interest in history' were required for the full marks, and questions 2(d) and (e) required the use of the plural to gain marks.

### Assignment-writing

More personalisation and choice in the stimuli from centres would have further enhanced candidates' marks. Some assignments were almost identical in presentation and argument and this can hinder the candidates' opportunity to express their own ideas.

**Performance—talking**

Candidates sometimes struggled to deal with unpredictable elements, although overall they recovered well and this tended not to detract from the overall impression.

## **Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment**

### **Question paper 1: Reading**

In the reading question paper, candidates should carefully read and understand the requirements of all questions. This can be very helpful when answering questions.

Some candidates lost marks in areas that you would not expect at Higher, for example plurals, numbers, prepositions, comparisons and place names. This was also the case in the translation question. Candidates should have greater awareness of these basic skills at this level.

Centres should be encouraged to develop candidates' comprehension skills holistically. This would be helpful in answering the overall purpose question. Many candidates write too much irrelevant information and lacked 'detail from the text' in their response.

It is also important for candidates to look over their answers at the end of the paper, in particular the translation, to ensure that it is comprehensible in English.

### **Question paper 2: Directed writing**

In the directed writing question paper, candidates should read the whole scenario carefully and ensure that all bullet points are covered in adequate detail. If they miss a bullet point, they can only gain 16/20 marks. They should also present each bullet point as a separate paragraph as this makes it easier for both candidates and markers to check that all bullet points have been covered.

Candidates should aim to proofread what they have written, if time allows for this. Some candidates are losing marks by not being able to use basic forms of reported speech, dative case, conditional, plurals and verbs correctly. More practice is also required with word order, verbs and tenses, in order to further enhance the candidates' opportunity to gain higher marks.

### **Question paper 3: Listening**

Candidates always tend to find the listening question paper challenging. They should use the time available to study the questions in advance. This would assist them in anticipating the kind of information required. They should be aware when the plural is used, and be well acquainted with numbers, dates, months, days and years as many careless mistakes are made here. Teachers should use strategies such as practising listening exercises frequently in class, and using the target language in class as often as possible to further develop candidates' listening skills.

## **Assignment–writing**

Some centres provided excellent examples of a variety of stimuli and candidates often excelled when they wrote about items in which they were interested in. Some assignments were almost identical in approach and argument and this can hinder the candidates' opportunity to express themselves.

This could have a detrimental effect on candidates' marks as they may not have sufficient interest in the stimulus which could result in a restriction on their level of engagement in the chosen stimulus. Centres should ensure that personalisation and choice is available to all pupils. New stimuli can be created by brainstorming with candidates on possible areas of interest.

It is also important to keep to the rubric of the task as the assignment must be relevant to the chosen stimulus. It is a discursive piece of writing and different viewpoints and a conclusion is expected at the end of the discourse.

## **Performance–talking**

It is recommended that regular talking is a feature of learning and teaching on a weekly basis in the classroom environment. This should encompass everyday routine while bringing in elements of vocabulary and grammar which will assist candidates with talking about their chosen contexts.

Centres where there was some element of personalisation and choice in context and subject choice were those which tended to see a good level of performance. Therefore, centres should build this into their preparation, learning and teaching. However, staff should ensure that the candidate is not over-extending themselves and has an understanding and ability to use language appropriate to the level.

Candidates should be prepared to deal with unpredictable elements, in particular dealing with language difficulties. Candidates should also be encouraged to interject and to take the initiative by asking questions.

Candidates should familiarise themselves with the productive grammar grid as well as the detailed marking instructions.

Overall, assessment judgements were in line with the national standard for Higher. As always, assessorsteachers and lecturers are encouraged to make use of the Understanding Standards materials, and to renew their skills on an ongoing basis. Centres who also provide Gàidhlig should ensure that assessors teachers and lecturers are aware of the difference between the two subjects regarding the use of pegged marking when marking Gaelic (Learners).



## Grade boundary and statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	75
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	61
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### Statistical information: performance of candidates

#### Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
<b>Maximum mark</b>				
<b>A</b>	52.5%	52.5%	32	84
<b>B</b>	24.6%	77.0%	15	72
<b>C</b>	13.1%	90.2%	8	60
<b>D</b>	9.8%	100.0%	6	48
<b>No award</b>	0.0%	-	0	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ 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.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The principal assessor and SQA qualifications manager meet with the relevant SQA head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards 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 to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.