



Course Report 2019

Subject	Gàidhlig
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: Leughadh (Reading)

The reading text this year was a fictional piece based around the story of a man returning after many years to the place of his upbringing. Candidates fully engaged with the passage and this was evident in responses to the different questions. The text allowed a wide range of questions to be posed which differentiated between candidates, and these were seen to have been suitably challenging and fair.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Questions set in this section were seen to provide plenty of scope for candidates to demonstrate their ability to write about the literature studied in their course. As in previous years, most responses were based on prose and poetry and these were mostly based on traditional texts which have been the mainstay of courses through the years.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

The topic of the listening passage was the Great Glen. The question paper was set in line with previous years and candidates engaged well with the passage and questions. The paper was seen as being fair and accessible and there was a good range of responses.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (assignment–writing)

This was the first year of this new component. Candidates submitted a range of different responses, with personal writing and discursive-type pieces being very popular.

Còmhradh (performance–talking)

Of the samples observed, all candidates performed as expected. Candidates participated in conversations that covered a range of subjects that supported them in their performance.

Performances were all in the specified conversation model and this benefitted candidates greatly. Some performances were outwith the suggested assessment length. It is worth noting that candidates rarely benefit from unnecessarily prolonged conversations and though candidates are not penalised for going over the suggested time allocation, an excessively long conversation could be self-penalising.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

The majority of candidates were able to attempt the range of questions very well. Some were adept at referencing techniques, giving examples and appropriate analysis as required for the different types of questions. There was evidence of good time management across the paper.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Some candidates were able to write quite lengthy, comprehensive responses to the questions and clearly demonstrate their knowledge of particular texts. Some were particularly adept at integrating quotations and detailed analysis which went far beyond a straightforward retelling of the plot, and were able to illustrate their own personal appreciation of the text.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

There were a number of very good responses in the listening question paper. Question 8 saw some good answers which effectively used evidence to prove the fairness of the writer's opinions.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (assignment–writing)

Some of the best responses were in personal reflective writing, with a number of candidates submitting very good responses in this genre. There were also good responses on interesting discursive topics. Markers saw a variety of responses, many of which were of good quality.

Còmhradh (performance–talking)

Candidates performed well when discussing topics that they had chosen, and in general conversation regarding their courses and interests. Candidates were well prepared and discussed a range of different topics that allowed them to perform to the best of their abilities. All assessments were of a natural discussion between the assessor and the candidate.

The nature of the discussions were of a conversational style, which fully supports candidates in achieving to the best of their ability. Some candidates did take full control of the conversation and lead the discussion. This allowed these candidates to fully demonstrate their ability and achieve marks that reflected this. Candidates performed very well in this aspect of the assessment.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Some candidates did not take note of the number of marks available for particular questions, only giving a partial answer and therefore not gaining the full marks available.

Some found questions 2, 3 and 6 more difficult, where explanation of imagery was required as part of the answer. Some candidates failed to use examples and/or quotations from the text in answering particular questions. Some candidates did not always demonstrate understanding of particular ideas and vocabulary in the text.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

As in previous years, some candidates failed to go beyond information about the plot and characters in short stories, or summarising poems, and had little in the way of analysis of technical skills. A number of candidates' responses were not closely connected to the question, or they failed to demonstrate a clear understanding of the text as a whole. In a number of instances, weaknesses in spelling and grammar detracted from the overall quality of a piece of writing.

Markers commented on the deteriorating standard of handwriting over the years. There were a number of responses this year which were difficult to read.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

Some candidates' answers lacked precision and were disjointed notes which failed to answer the question. Some candidates did not give clear textual evidence to support answers to question 8, with some drawing on personal opinion and experience in their answers.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (assignment–writing)

There were a number of factual pieces which lacked anything more than a retelling of events and had very little, if any, personal or additional views. There were also a number of imaginative pieces which lacked a coherent storyline and were difficult to follow.

Candidates should be aware of the detrimental effect of tools such as online translation tools and online dictionaries, which provide vocabulary which is inaccurate or is not natural in the context being used. This often spoils candidates' pieces of writing, where using their own knowledge of language and vocabulary would have been more successful for them.

Còmhradh (performance–talking)

Some candidates found it difficult to initiate the conversation; however, they were able to keep the conversation flowing with some encouragement from the assessor. In the samples verified, there was no evidence of candidates choosing a topic which was too complex, however some did lack vocabulary regarding their chosen topic.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Candidates should:

- ◆ ensure they gain sufficient experience in dealing with a range of different texts, both fiction and non-fiction
- ◆ ensure they are clear about the different types of questions and how to approach them
- ◆ be aware of the line references given for each question
- ◆ ensure handwriting and answers are clear in this and the other question papers
- ◆ be aware of the number of marks for each question and attempt to give full examples and explanations
- ◆ mention techniques, for example repetition, where this is appropriate
- ◆ be aware of the requirement to give examples, which is signposted by *Seall*
- ◆ ensure that the key part of quotations is given where necessary
- ◆ be aware answers to questions dealing with 'effectiveness' should be linked to textual evidence
- ◆ avoid repeating the question in their answers
- ◆ be clear on how to explain imagery giving both the literal and figurative meaning

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Candidates should be aware of the requirements and the need to carefully follow directions for submission, including tick boxes and submission of word counts

Còmhradh (performance–talking)

Candidates should:

- ◆ ensure that they have knowledge of, and can apply, vocabulary that is specific to their chosen topic in a natural manner

Assessors must continue to ensure that the assessment consists of a conversation.

Preparation should include recognition of the recommended length of the assessment. Candidates rarely benefit from unnecessarily prolonged conversations and though candidates are not penalised for going over the suggested time allocation, an excessively long conversation could be self-penalising.

Teachers and lecturers are encouraged to make use of Understanding Standards materials to help them in supporting candidates so that they can perform to the best of their ability in the best possible conditions.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	126
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	135
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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
Maximum mark				
A	43.7%	43.7%	59	84
B	27.4%	71.1%	37	72
C	20.0%	91.1%	27	60
D	7.4%	98.5%	10	48
No award	1.5%	-	2	-

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 which allows 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.

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 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.

Grade boundaries from exam 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 exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.