Course Report 2018

Subject	Gaelic (Learners)
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation

Most candidates coped very well with the reading question paper this year. The question paper performed as expected.

The reading and translation question paper presented candidates with an article that sampled the context of learning. The topic was today's school system and how it has changed over time. The topic was accessible to candidates.

Candidates were required to answer comprehension questions on the text in English, including an overall purpose question.

The last question required candidates to translate a section of the text.

The comprehension questions were worth a total of 30 marks, which included 7 marks for the overall purpose question. The translation question was worth 20 marks. The translation was sufficiently challenging for this level and most candidates were able to apply their translation skills and knowledge of language successfully.

Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening section of this question paper presented candidates with a monologue about Gaelic medium education, and a dialogue which was an interview between a radio broadcaster and a recently retired teacher who discussed her career in education. The context for the assessment was well chosen and was relevant to students studying at this level.

The discursive writing question paper required candidates to write an essay of 250–300 words on one statement from a choice of four. Each question sampled one of the four contexts studied as part of the course. Candidates attempted a good range of questions this year across the four contexts.

Component 3 — portfolio

The portfolio provided candidates with personalisation and choice at Advanced Higher.

Candidates completed an analysis of literature, media or language in work. Candidates complete their portfolio in class as part of the course, and it is submitted to SQA for external marking.

Component 4 — performance

The performance requires candidates to take part in a discussion with a visiting assessor. During the discussion, the candidates were required to talk about themes or topics related to at least one context studied, and the candidate's specialist study.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation

Most candidates provided good answers to question 7 (the overall purpose question).

Candidates displayed good time management skills.

Most candidates also coped well with question 8, the translation question. Markers noted that candidates, who attempted the translation question before the comprehension questions, did not achieve as highly as those who attempted the comprehension questions before attempting the translation.

Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Some candidates performed very well in the listening question paper this year. The contexts of employability and learning were accessible and familiar to candidates.

There were also some good examples of discursive writing this year. Pegged marking ensured that the full range of marks were accessible to candidates.

Component 3 — portfolio

Most candidates performed well in the portfolio. Candidates focused on a good range of topics in their portfolios. Candidates in some centres produced portfolios that shared a common focus.

Component 4 — performance

Most candidates performed well in the performance.

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 assessors and demonstrate a high level of accuracy while using complex and sophisticated language.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates who chose to attempt the translation questions before answering the comprehension questions this meant they were less familiar with the subject of the reading passage.

Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Some candidate responses were not discursive in their style, and this puts them at a disadvantage.

Candidates need to be prepared to write a response of a discursive nature and address one of the statements on a chosen context.

Component 3 — portfolio.

Most portfolios were of a good standard, but a number did not contain sufficient analysis at this level to obtain the maximum marks available.

Selecting an appropriate focus for the study is very important and, candidates should be discouraged from selecting a vague or general focus for their study.

Component 4 — performance

Overall, candidates achieved a good standard of marks in the performance this year. However, there were some candidates who did not cope with the demands of the performance at this level and who were unable to sustain conversations with the visiting assessors.

Candidates must be prepared to sustain a natural conversation beyond pre-learned material.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1 — question paper: Reading and Translation

Centres must ensure that candidates are taught how to use dictionaries and to select the most appropriate meaning from those provided in dictionaries.

It may be advantageous to candidates to answer the comprehension questions before attempting the translation question, as they will be more familiar with the subject of the reading passage.

Centres must ensure candidates are familiar with the translation section of the reading question paper and understand the importance of accuracy in order to achieve the available marks.

Component 2 — question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Centres should ensure candidates are exposed to sufficient Gaelic within the classroom and that they are able to cope with the demands of the listening question paper.

Centres must focus on teaching discursive writing techniques and stress to candidates the importance of accuracy and quality at this level. Some examples this year contained very few correct sentences, and an over-reliance on dictionaries compromised the quality of responses.

Candidates must ensure that the statement is addressed clearly in their response, and that a conclusion is provided.

Component 3 — portfolio

Centres must make candidates aware of the importance of choosing an appropriate focus for the portfolio. In some instances this year, the focus of the study restricted candidates. Each candidate should select their own individual focus for their study and portfolio, and must ensure that their study addresses their chosen focus.

Candidates should be advised against choosing two very similar literature pieces as this limits their ability to compare and contrast.

Candidates must provide a suitable bibliography.

Component 4 — performance

Centres are advised to implement regular talking activities in the Gaelic classroom to develop the natural element of interaction. By doing this, candidates may show more confidence in using spoken Gaelic with the visiting assessor.

Centres should ensure that candidates are entered at the correct level.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	9

Number of resulted entries in 2018	11

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	45.5%	45.5%	5	140
B	27.3%	72.7%	3	120
C	27.3%	100.0%	3	100
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	90
No award	0.0%	-	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 which 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. 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.