



# **Common questions about National 3, National 4 and National 5 Course Gaelic (Learners)**

SQA has developed this document in consultation with colleagues in Scotland's National Centre for Languages (SCILT). The information contained in the document will be updated on an on-going basis, and SQA will continue to work with SCILT in order to provide further clarification as required.

SQA worked with SCILT to produce the original version of this document which was published on SCILT's website in September 2013. This issue contains further information and clarification where appropriate.

## **Section A**

### **General Questions**

#### **Can candidates give an oral rather than a written response to the Unit reading and listening assessments?**

Yes, but for evidence purposes the assessor is required to keep a written record or checklist to indicate that the candidate has completed the activity satisfactorily.

#### **If a candidate fails to meet the standard required to pass a Unit assessment, can the candidate be re-assessed?**

The candidate can be re-assessed on one occasion (or two occasions in exceptional circumstances). However, depending on the circumstances, it is not always necessary to use a different instrument of assessment. For example, failure to address the overall purpose question may result in the candidate being re-assessed in that element only.

#### **Will employers understand the standards required for the new qualifications at National 4 and National 5?**

Yes, SQA has been engaged with employers to ensure that they understand the requirements of the new qualifications at each level.

#### **Why was the first Unit assessment support pack for National 4 and 5 in English?**

The first pack was a generic pack that was created to exemplify the assessment process. However, SQA has now translated these materials and provided associated sound files (autumn 2013).

#### **How long should candidates be given to complete Unit assessments?**

Time restrictions are not normally a feature of Unit assessment. However, assessments should normally be able to be produced in no more than one hour. Candidates can access audio recordings themselves, and should be allowed to listen to them as often as they require. However assessors should exercise judgement, as it is unlikely that candidates would benefit from more than two or three playings.

#### **In what way will writing be assessed?**

Approaches to the assessment of writing should encourage candidates to use a range of resources in order to synthesise effectively from these resources. Such an approach builds skills that do not rely heavily on rote memorisation. This methodology allows a candidate to access a range of materials that will have been developed during class activities (discussion of discourse markers, connectives, useful conjunctions, high frequency phrases etc, where and if appropriate). Such activities are supportive in nature, and will be used judiciously depending on the candidate's level and the purpose of the assessment (for instance where

the focus in a Unit assessment may be predominantly on formative aspects, or where activities focus more on strategies for retention for the purposes of external assessment).

## Section B

### National 3

#### How are evidence requirements changing for National 3?

Based on on-going consultation and dialogue with practitioners, SQA has decided to amend evidence requirements for Courses at National 3 (Understanding Language and Using Language Units), with immediate effect. Unit Specifications will be updated to reflect these changes.

The changes in evidence requirements will reduce the amount of evidence centres are required to submit for the purposes of verification. However, in session 2013/14, centres are free to submit additional evidence if already generated during this session.

The changes are listed as follows:

For the *Understanding Language* Unit, where evidence requirements currently state:

For this Unit, candidates will be required to provide evidence of their reading and listening skills by:

- ◆ showing understanding of at least two simple written texts
- ◆ showing understanding of at least two simple spoken texts

Assessment generated for this Unit must come from at least two of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, or culture.

Evidence requirements will now state:

For this Unit, candidates will be required to provide evidence of their reading and listening skills by:

- ◆ showing understanding of at least one simple written text
- ◆ showing understanding of at least one simple spoken text

Assessment generated for this Unit must come from one of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, or culture.

For the *Using Language* Unit, where evidence requirements currently state:

For this Unit, candidates will be required to provide evidence of their talking and writing skills by:

- ◆ using simple spoken language in at least two conversations
- ◆ using simple written language in at least two activities

Assessment generated for this Unit must come from at least two of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, or culture.

Evidence requirements will now state:

For this Unit, candidates will be required to provide evidence of their talking and writing skills by:

- ◆ using simple spoken language in at least one conversation
- ◆ using simple written language in at least one activity

Assessment generated for this Unit must come from one of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, or culture.

## Section C

### National 4

#### How are evidence requirements changing for National 4?

Based on on-going consultation and dialogue with practitioners, SQA has decided to amend evidence requirements for Courses at National 4 (*Understanding Language* and *Using Language* Units), with immediate effect. Unit Specifications will be updated to reflect these changes.

The changes in evidence requirements will reduce the amount of evidence centres are required to submit for the purposes of verification. However, in session 2013/14, centres are free to submit additional evidence if already generated during this session.

Evidence requirements for *Modern Languages Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit* remain unchanged.

The changes are listed as follows:

For the *Understanding Language* Unit, where evidence requirements currently state:

For this Unit, candidates will be required to provide evidence of their reading and listening skills by:

- ◆ showing understanding of at least two straightforward written texts
- ◆ showing understanding of at least two straightforward spoken texts

Assessment generated for this Unit must come from at least two of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, or culture.

Evidence requirements will now state:

For this Unit, candidates will be required to provide evidence of their reading and listening skills by:

- ◆ showing understanding of at least one straightforward written text
- ◆ showing understanding of at least one straightforward spoken text

Assessment generated for this Unit must come from one of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, or culture.

For the *Using Language* Unit, where evidence requirements currently state:

For this Unit, candidates will be required to provide evidence of their talking and writing skills by:

- ◆ using straightforward spoken language in at least two conversations
- ◆ using straightforward written language in at least two activities

Assessment generated for this Unit must come from at least two of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, or culture.

Evidence requirements will now state:

For this Unit, candidates will be required to provide evidence of their talking and writing skills by:

- ◆ using straightforward spoken language in at least one conversation
- ◆ using straightforward written language in at least one activity

Assessment generated for this Unit must come from one of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, or culture.

## **Do assessments need to be linked thematically?**

Assessments do not need to be linked thematically. None of the assessments need to be combined. They can all be done independently of each other. However, assessors may find it helpful to combine assessments, where possible.

## **How are Unit assessments marked?**

Unit assessments should be marked according to the 'judging evidence' tables, available within Unit assessment support packs, on the SQA secure website. Candidates should, for instance, identify the overall purpose of the reading or listening text and be able to extract the main points of the passage.

Assessors should exercise their professional judgement in determining whether a candidate has written enough detail to satisfy the requirements of the assessment.

## **How should evidence be recorded?**

Detailed notes should be retained for talking (similar to the Grade Related Criteria at Standard Grade). Audio/video recording of each candidate's performance is not mandatory for the Unit assessments, but it may be good practice to retain the evidence from each class for verification purposes. At National 5 and Higher, recordings for the Performance element must be available for verification purposes. Reading, listening and writing scripts should also be retained for verification purposes. Templates have been provided by SQA for this purpose.

## **Section D**

### **National 4: Added Value Unit**

#### **Do schools have to use the SQA Added Value Unit?**

For next 2 sessions, schools must follow the SQA approach to the Added Value Unit, but assessors are not required to use the material which was produced by SQA for this unit. This is merely for exemplification.

Prior Verification of this unit is not mandatory.

#### **How is reading assessed for the Added Value Unit?**

A minimum of two texts should be used. These can be selected from a range provided by the assessor. Candidates are required to show their understanding of the content of the texts by demonstrating comprehension. Comprehension can be demonstrated in various ways (ie gap fill task; questions in English: written or oral summary in English of main points of text).

Candidates should be judged on their ability to extract main points of the passages. There may be evidence of some misunderstanding but it will not be serious.

Candidates may use a dictionary.

#### **How is talking assessed for the Added Value Unit?**

The candidate should make a short presentation, lasting 1 – 2 minutes. The presentation can be supported by brief headings in English OR Gaelic or by visual aids.

The presentation can be delivered to the whole class or to groups of candidates within the class, but candidates should be discouraged from a one-to-one presentation to the assessor.

#### **Should the oral presentation be based on the reading texts?**

The presentation does not need to make direct reference to the reading texts, but should be on a related theme. Candidates could be encouraged to incorporate words and phrases from the reading texts into their oral presentation.

#### **How is listening assessed for the Added Value Unit?**

On completion of the presentation, the candidate will participate in a conversation, with a number of responses that provide evidence of listening for communication. This part of the assessment should last about 1 minute.

The candidate should be able to ask for help in Gaelic, where appropriate.

## **Should the questions for the listening section of the Added Value Unit be prepared in advance?**

The questions should not be scripted in advance, but the candidate should be asked questions that have been covered previously in class. For example, a candidate may be asked questions which he/she has previously practised in class, but will be unaware of exactly which questions he/she will require to answer, or in which order the questions will be asked.

## **How long do candidates have to complete the Added Value Unit?**

There is no stipulated time limit for the completion of the Added Value Unit. The time limit is at the discretion of the centre. The Added Value Unit should be part of a series of lessons, and can be done at an appropriate point in the course. It should be part of the on-going classroom work, and not be seen as a stand-alone test.

## **How much assistance should candidates be given in the preparation for the Added Value Unit?**

Assessments should be completed in class time under some supervision and control but not necessarily in traditional “exam conditions”.

Candidates should be given reasonable assistance and support from the assessor to complete the Added Value Unit, but should be encouraged to work independently.

The amount of support a candidate requires, particularly in the listening/responding section, should be reflected in the assessor’s overall assessment of the candidate.

## **What evidence is the assessor required to retain?**

Assessors should retain copies of candidates’ written responses to the reading texts. If the candidate has given oral feedback on the texts, detailed notes should be retained by the assessor.

For talking, assessors should retain a written summary or detailed checklist of responses or an audio/video recording, if desired. It is not mandatory to audio or video record the oral presentation.

Pieces of evidence should be named and dated.

## **What happens if a candidate does not pass the Added Value Unit?**

Candidate should be given one re-assessment opportunity (two in exceptional circumstances).

## **What if a candidate passes the reading and talking presentation sections of the Added Value Unit, but not the listening part?**

The candidate is not required to do the entire Added Value Unit again. The candidate should only be re-assessed in the section he/she did not pass. If the candidate did not secure a pass in listening, he/she would only be required to do that part again, but would need to be asked a different set of questions from the first attempt.

## Section E

### National 5

#### **Could all four skills be assessed within one context, eg culture?**

Yes, in theory, but this would not be deemed to be good practice.

#### **Do assessments need to be linked thematically?**

Assessments do not need to be linked thematically. None of the assessments need to be combined. They can all be done independently of each other. However, assessors may find it helpful to combine assessments, where possible.

#### **How should evidence be recorded?**

Reading, listening and writing scripts should also be retained for verification purposes. Speaking for the performance element must be recorded and retained for verification purposes.

#### **Can the talking for the Using Language Unit be used for the final talking assessment?**

Technically, this is possible. However, it is important to produce evidence that indicates that a candidate has met the Assessment Standards of the Unit and the centre has judged the evidence accordingly. This evidence may originate from preparation for the performance element, where appropriate.

#### **What percentage of the total mark does a candidate have to achieve in order to pass a Unit assessment?**

There are no cut-off scores. Assessors will base their decision on whether a candidate has given enough information to show understanding by referring to the judging evidence tables. The extraneous rule (used at Standard Grade and Intermediate 1 and 2) no longer applies, neither for Unit nor external assessment.

#### **What happens if a candidate is presented for National 5, but subsequently fails the final Course assessment?**

There will be no automatic fall-back position. Candidates will only gain an award at National 4 if the assessor has retained evidence gathered throughout academic year, and the **candidate has completed the Added Value Unit**. SQA has published information on this (*Recognising Positive Achievement*) which can be downloaded at: [www.sqa.org.uk/cfedelivery](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfedelivery).

General Curriculum for Excellence questions and answers can be found on the [frequently asked questions section](#) of SQA's website.