



Course Report 2017

Subject	Gaelic (Learners)
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Component 1: question paper 1 Reading and Directed Writing

Reading

The question paper performed as expected and was fair and accessible for all candidates, most of whom performed well. The reading article discussed language learning. Candidates were asked to identify where such an article would appear and its purpose. Most candidates provided valid evidence from the text to justify their answer.

The overall response was as expected and the vast majority gained at least 50%. Some candidates did not provide enough information to achieve full marks for a question.

Translation

The translation provided candidates with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills of language successfully, and most of the candidates performed well in this aspect of the paper, which was encouraging.

Directed Writing

The topics were designed to be relevant and open to the candidates, and each stimulus contained four bullet points to address.

The majority of candidates managed to address all four bullet points, although some candidates did not and lost marks accordingly. There was a fairly equal distribution of choice displayed in candidates' responses, and answers varied from high quality to poor.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Writing

Listening

Listening is still the skill that challenges most candidates. There was a wide range of performance in the listening comprehension.

Section 1 listening text was based on a radio programme about a music band, and section 2 was an interview with a festival organiser.

Writing

Most of the candidates opted to write about a short story or a poem. There were a number of outstanding performances, although generally candidates performed adequately with the set questions.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Directed Writing

Reading

Overall, most of the candidates gained good marks in the reading paper and they performed particularly well in questions 1, 4a and 4b and 10.

Directed Writing

Some candidates performed very well and addressed all the bullet points accurately and fluently with few errors. They also used a wide variety of verbs and tenses which highlighted their understanding and control of the language, which flowed and read well.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Writing

Listening

Candidates performed well in questions S1 (1a) (1d) and (1f).

Writing

The standard was generally high in most of the responses. Most candidates addressed the set question well, in addition to justifying their personal responses by the effective use of criterial terminology.

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 Directed Writing

Reading

Most candidates performed well with the reading paper, although questions 5 and 8 were challenging.

Directed Writing

Cognisance should be given to advice given in this and previous year's reports regarding regular and irregular verbs, correct use of prepositional phrases and adjectives. The correct use of the dictionary is another element which some candidates find difficult.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Writing

Listening

The following questions proved to be demanding for many candidates: S1: 1b, 1c, 1e, S2: 2a, 2b, 2c, 2e, 2f, 2h

Writing

Some essays were too short and general instead of focusing on the specific requirements of the question.

Component 3: performance: Talking

Candidates, on the whole, dealt well with the performance. However, candidates 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 Directed Writing

Special attention should be given to recognising and accurately translating tenses and articles. It is also important for all candidates to read and review their translation when they complete it, to ensure that it makes sense in English.

Directed Writing

Teachers should ensure that they inform the candidates that all four bullet points must be addressed and make them aware of the penalties that are incurred if they do not address all bullet points. Advise candidates to consider the wording of each bullet point carefully. Centres should share all grade related criteria and pegged mark descriptors with candidates.

The use of a dictionary has to be carefully handled — misuse causes many candidates to lose marks. They should use a dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written and ensure that the spelling is correct. Candidates would benefit from being directed to use a dictionary correctly.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Writing

Listening

Centres should encourage candidates to make use of the questions as a means of anticipating the information required from the listening text. Candidates should be encouraged to provide full and detailed answers when required. Strategies to improve listening skills should be built into the teaching programme. For example, more listening exercises, and the teacher using the target language as much as possible during class.

Literature

Most candidates do well in this part of the exam, but centres should remind candidates that they should give close consideration to the question that is set. The question asks for specific detail regarding a literary piece, and candidates should ensure that they are addressing the requirements of the question.

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

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 the candidate chooses gives 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	84
Number of resulted entries in 2017	69

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	42.0%	42.0%	29	70
B	21.7%	63.8%	15	60
C	17.4%	81.2%	12	50
D	4.3%	85.5%	3	45
No award	14.5%	-	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.