Course Report 2017 – External Assessment

Subject	Gàidhlig
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

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1 — question paper 1: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation; Critical Reading and Writing

The reading question paper performed in line with expectations. Feedback from the marking team and from practitioners suggested that the question paper was fair and accessible in terms of overall level of demand and content. Candidates engaged fully with the passage based on the aftermath of a nuclear war.

All questions functioned as hoped, and individual questions functioned appropriately to differentiate candidates. One or two minor adjustments were made to marking instructions to take account of overall performance and responses.

The writing question paper fully performed in line with expectations, and again, feedback from the marking team suggested that the question paper was fair in terms of overall level of demand and in providing plenty opportunities for candidates to select an appropriate question.

Component 2 — question paper 2: Listening for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation

The listening question paper fully performed in line with expectations and candidates were able to fully engage with the passage and questions with no issues being identified during marking.

Component 3 — performance: Talking

Candidates performed as expected in this aspect of the assessment. Candidates' performance covered a wide range of topics. Most candidates selected topics that gave them the opportunity to fully demonstrate their skills and allow them to achieve to the best of their ability.

Most centres use an approach where the interlocutor is sympathetic to the needs of the individual candidates and allows candidates the opportunity to demonstrate a level of spontaneity that allows them to access the full range of marks.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1 — question paper 1: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation; Critical Reading and Writing

Reading

Candidates generally performed particularly well in answering questions 3 and 5, and were able to gain at least some of the marks from other questions. There were some overall strong responses where candidates were well prepared and had clearly practised their answering technique and were able to demonstrate a high degree of reading skills.

Markers commented on how many candidates are more aware of the need to use their own words in responses and to explain their answers instead of just using quotations.

Writing

The majority of candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of their chosen texts. Some candidates were able to write at length in response to the question chosen and, as in previous years, a wide range of texts were in evidence.

Nearly all responses continue to be based on prose and poetry.

Component 2 — question paper 2: Listening for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation

The vast majority of candidates were able to answer all questions, and all engaged well with the paper and its subject matter. Some responses were particularly well done across the range of questions.

Component 3 — performance: Talking

The performance of candidates was very good overall, with a number of excellent performances from across this year's cohort.

The performances were generally of an appropriate length and took the form of a conversation. The topics chosen for the performances provided the candidates with the opportunity to fully demonstrate their language skills.

Candidates were allowed to set the tone and pace of the conversation, and this benefited them greatly.

Assessors used a range of open-ended questions. This is to be commended — closed questions restrict the performance of the candidate.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1 — question paper 1: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation; Critical Reading and Writing

Reading

Some candidates found time-management problematic. As highlighted previously, it is important that candidates work methodically through the passage and questions, and are adept in answering concisely and in a focused way to answer the questions.

- Question 11 on imagery saw difficulty being encountered in explaining effectiveness and referencing with examples.
- Difficulty was also encountered in explaining the message or ideas in the passage, and in explaining the effectiveness of the ending in question 10.
- Some questions where a number of examples were required saw only a minimum answer being supplied and consequently a lower number of marks. This was clear in giving examples of word choice and sentence structure.

Writing

Though candidates were in the main able to demonstrate a good knowledge of their texts, a significant number were not connecting that knowledge to the focus of the question as set. Those who did would often only reference the question briefly.

Accuracy in spelling and grammar in some responses continue to be areas in need of attention.

Component 2 — question paper 2: Listening for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation

Some candidates found questions 8 and 9 problematic, showing a lack of evidence from the passage used to support answers.

Component 3 — performance: Talking

Some candidates did find it difficult to initiate the conversation, though they were able to keep the conversation flowing with some encouragement from the assessor.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1 — question paper 1: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation; Critical Reading and Writing

Reading

Candidates should be given plenty of opportunity to practice and gain experience in answering the different types of question and must be aware of the need for clear explanations of examples. Their experience of a range of different texts as part of their learning is crucial to this.

Questions that focus on effectiveness should be referenced by clear examples, rather than general vague comments. The focus should be on what makes it effective and why.

Candidates also need to make sure they are taking cognisance of the number of marks for individual questions and provide the required number of points for the questions.

Where appropriate, bullets can be helpful in organising responses in some answers to not only ensure coverage of the question but also to focus answers.

The connotations of examples given in response to questions based on word choice need to be clear.

Writing

Candidates need to experience a range of texts during their coursework, and should avoid 'prepared' responses. Instead they should gain plenty of experience in writing responses to a range of different questions.

Candidates should also ensure that they are focusing clearly on the question throughout the response and making reference to it rather than a brief reference at the opening or in the conclusion.

At this level, candidates should also ensure that there is some depth to their analysis and that their evaluation and analysis is personal to them rather than from notes.

They should ensure they are accurate in their use of technical terminology, and in spelling and grammar. Knowledge of the different cases and their accurate application within the body of an essay should also be a focus.

Texts chosen for study at Higher should provide candidates with plenty writing opportunities and not limit their scope for demonstrating their ability.

Component 2 — question paper 2: Listening for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation

Along with continuing practice in listening, candidates should gain practice in analysis and evaluation questions like those at the end of this year's paper where evidence as well as opinions are required.

Component 3 — performance: Talking

Centres should ensure that they follow the guidance outlined in the Gàidhlig Performance: Talking Assessment Task, which states that the assessment task is a conversation. Prolonged monologues can self-penalise insofar as the 'interaction with assessor' element of the assessment is concerned.

Centres should ensure that the quality of recordings submitted for external verification is of a suitable standard.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	132

Number of resulted entries in 2017	126

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	36.5%	36.5%	46	70
B	23.8%	60.3%	30	60
C	20.6%	81.0%	26	50
D	7.1%	88.1%	9	45
No award	11.9%	-	15	-

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.