Course Report 2017

Subject	Gàidhlig
Level	National 5

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Summary of the Course assessment

Component 1: question paper – Reading and Writing

Reading

The overall performance of candidates in the Reading paper was good. It was considered that the paper was set at an appropriate level; no specific issues were identified during marking, and no specific issues were raised by presenting centres. It was felt that the passage was relevant and that there were no particular barriers to understanding the content.

The questions were also deemed to be appropriate, allowing candidates the opportunity to demonstrate comprehension and analysis of the passage. There was an appropriate range of questions to meet the needs of all candidates. Some questions required fairly brief, specific responses, while others required lengthier, more detailed responses.

Two questions proved to be slightly problematic for candidates — 1(b) and 9. In question 1(b) some candidates were confused by the information required and the information required in question 2. In question 9, many candidates got one part of the answer but failed to get the second. However, the performance of these questions did not require any specific action to be taken at Grade Boundary stage.

Writing

The performance in Writing was reasonably good. The standard of the questions was deemed to be appropriate. None of the candidates chose to answer the question on drama; the vast majority of candidates answered on prose or poetry; very few candidates answered the questions on film or on personal research.

A wide range of texts were covered in the response to poetry and prose. For prose, all the responses were on short stories; no novels were covered, although that option is available.

Many of the responses were good, with detailed analysis of texts. However, some were also poor, with very little relevant content. Some candidates' work was also poorly presented, with very poor handwriting. This meant that a number of responses were difficult to read.

Component 2: question paper – Listening

The level of candidate performance in the Listening paper was very good. The passage appeared to be set at an appropriate level, and most candidates showed a good level of comprehension. The quality of the recordings was good, with very clear diction.

No specific issues were identified during marking and no issues were raised by presenting centres. The questions were also deemed to be appropriate. Most of them required fairly

brief responses, and candidates showed that they were able to cope well with the majority of them.

Only one question proved difficult for candidates — question 3. This was because many of the candidates failed to correctly identify the word 'connadh'. However, the failure of many candidates to get the answer to this question was more than compensated for by their ability to identify the answers to the other questions, and no specific action was required at Grade Boundary stage.

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 allow 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 – Reading and Writing

Reading

Candidates performed well in the Reading paper. There was strong evidence that candidates were well prepared for the exam. The vast majority of the questions proved no particular problems for candidates. The majority of questions were 2- or 3-mark questions; there were two 1-mark question and two 4-mark questions.

Candidates performed particularly well in questions 1(a), 5(b), 7(a), 7(b) and 8.

Question 1(a) asked candidates to identify ways in which tourism is important for Scotland. There were 2 marks. Candidates were expected to identify two ways in which tourism is important, from three possible options. The vast majority of candidates secured the 2 marks.

Question 5 required candidates to identify two responsibilities which rest with Historic Environment Scotland. Most candidates correctly identified the two items of information required.

Questions 7(a) and 7(b) were 1-mark questions which required candidates to identify specific, brief items of information in the text. Again, most candidates secured the marks.

The message from this appears to be that candidates performed best in the questions which required them to identify specific information in the passage.

Writing

There were many good responses in the Writing paper. This was particularly true in the questions on short story and poetry. Most candidates answered the specific question that was asked. However, some candidates appeared to have a 'prepared response' which did not answer the specific question asked in the paper.

There was strong evidence that candidates had prepared well for the exam. A wide range of texts was covered in both the short story question and the poetry question.

A couple of the responses on personal research were good and well structured. It is always interesting to read of pupils' individual research, particularly if it has a local relevance to their own area.

Component 2: question paper – Listening

Candidates performed very well in the Listening paper. They were able to cope comfortably with the vast majority of the questions. The passage was considered to be relevant and quite accessible for all candidates.

Candidates coped particularly well with questions that required them to identify specific information in the text. That information could generally be presented in brief responses. This was particularly true of questions 4, 6(a), 8(a) and 8(b). Two of these questions were 1-mark questions and two were 2-mark questions. Three of these questions — 6(a), 8(a) and 8(b) — allowed candidates to give correct responses from different possible answers.

Some candidates' handwriting was difficult to read. This is more evident in Listening than in other elements of the assessment since candidates do not have a text to refer to. It was often difficult to decipher what candidates were trying to write. A number of candidates had the benefit of using word processing or had scribes.

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 as closed questions restrict the performance of the candidate.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper – Reading and Writing

Reading

Candidates found very few aspects of the Reading paper demanding. They showed a good understanding of the passage and an ability to answer the questions well.

However, candidates failed to perform well in two of the questions: 1(b) and 9. For some reason that is not obvious, some candidates were confused about the information required in question 1(b) and question 2. A number of other candidates were only able to identify one of the two pieces of information required in question 1(b).

In question 9, many of the candidates got the second part of the response (an fheadhainn a thog e sa chiad àite) but failed to get the first part (an fheadhainn a chum an caisteal aig ìre tro na linntean).

Question 10 was answered reasonably well by candidates. However, although most gave a good attempt at identifying the author's purpose, many were weak in terms of providing evidence to support their answer.

Writing

There were no aspects of the Writing paper that candidates found too demanding. Candidates seemed to understand the questions, although they did not all answer the specific question they were asked to answer. That is probably not due to a lack of understanding of the question but because they have a 'rehearsed' response in mind and they deliver this irrespective of what the specific wording of the question is.

Some candidates devoted too much of their answer to literature to re-telling the plot rather than engaging in a critical analysis of the text. The message is that candidates should read the wording of the question carefully and answer what is specifically required. The best candidates will usually address the specific question asked.

Component 2: question paper – Listening

Only one question proved problematic for candidates: question 3. This was probably due to the fact that many candidates did not recognise the word 'connadh'. As a consequence, some candidates were trying to provide responses which were not intelligible.

Component 3: performance – Talking

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

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Question papers

There was strong evidence again this year that candidates were well prepared for the examinations. This was borne out by the performance of the candidates.

There were, however, a few candidates presented at National 5 who should possibly not have been presented at that level; and were probably National 4 candidates.

The handwriting of some candidates posed a problem; at times it was very difficult to decipher. Candidates should be encouraged to write clearly and legibly under exam conditions. Where appropriate, more use should possibly be made of the support mechanisms available: word processing, scribe, etc.

Iain Crichton Smith still continues to be the most popular author, in both writing sections. Pupils could, perhaps, be exposed to more 'modern' literature.

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 are of a suitable standard.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	158

Number of resulted entries in 2017	151

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	59.6%	59.6%	90	70
B	20.5%	80.1%	31	60
C	16.6%	96.7%	25	50
D	0.7%	97.4%	1	45
No award	2.6%	-	4	-

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.