



Course Report 2016

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| 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 largely performed as expected and was fair and accessible for all candidates. The reading article discussed traditional Celtic music festivals, which candidates related well to.

Candidates were able to choose an option from the overall question and had to provide evidence from the passage that required them to demonstrate a good understanding of the article. Some candidates provided good evidence from the passage. Question 10 – some candidates tended to give their own opinions rather than ‘evidence from the passage’.

The translation provided candidates with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills of language successfully and most of the candidates performed reasonably well.

Directed Writing

In the directed writing, candidates were given the choice of two stimuli from the contexts of society and learning. The topics were designed to be relevant and open to the candidates and each stimulus contained four bullet points to address, with the first being a two-part bullet point.

There was a fairly equal distribution of choice displayed in candidate’s responses and the responses were varied in quality.

Component 2: question paper 2 Listening and Literature

Listening

The listening text was based on an appropriate topic, and the level of demand builds on National 5 learning. Feedback suggests that it was at a suitable level for the Higher course.

There were a wide range of responses from very good to quite poor. A number of questions proved to be very challenging although the level of language used was at an adequate level.

Literature

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 given.

Component 3: performance: Talking

The purpose of the performance is to deliver a spoken presentation based on one context chosen from society, learning, employability and culture. Candidates then take part in a natural, spontaneous follow-up conversation, which must develop into at least one other context.

Assessors applied the pegged marks in the marking instructions successfully and centres used the recommended approach — presentation, then onto conversation. The majority of assessments were in line with national standards.

Overall, the level of candidate performance was high. There was a good range of contexts used which allowed candidates to display their language resources and to give more detailed responses. Interlocutors were encouraging and supportive of their candidates during the assessment.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Directed Writing

Reading

Most candidates performed well with the reading paper and the following questions were completed by most candidates:

- ◆ Question 1
- ◆ Question 3
- ◆ Question 5 an option question, ‘ any 2 from 5’
- ◆ Question 6
- ◆ Question 7

Some candidates performed very well in the translation and a number of candidates gained full marks.

Directed Writing

The best answers were able to extend the range of accurate responses over all the bullet points, and also produced free-flowing pieces of writing. Good mastery of regular and irregular verbs across the tenses, and correct use of prepositional phrases and adjectives marked out the best-organised pieces of writing.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Literature

Listening

The following questions were completed very well by most candidates:

- ◆ Question 1 (b)
- ◆ Question 1 (e) option question 'any 1 from 3'
- ◆ Question 1 (f) multiple choice, overall purpose question
- ◆ Question 2 (d) two details required from a number of options

Literature

Some candidates produced excellent responses which met the requirement of the question. They also integrated the critical terminology in their responses and justified their opinions succinctly and maturely

Component 3: performance: Talking

All candidates performed well with this aspect of the course. Overall the level of performances was high.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Directed Writing

Reading

Most candidates performed well with the reading paper, although some questions were challenging for candidates:

- ◆ Question 4 (a) (b) — a number of candidates found these question confusing as they got their answers mixed up and combined different parts to the wrong question.
- ◆ Question 8 was challenging for most candidates.
- ◆ Question 10 — some candidates tended to give their own opinions rather than 'evidence from the passage'.

Translation

A number of candidates did not complete the translation aspect of the paper (possibly due to time constraints) which had an impact on their overall mark.

Directed Writing

Many responses were too short and lacking in content and a fair number of candidates did not address all bullet points.

Some of the responses were more suitable for National 5 level than Higher, and the writing tended to deteriorate the further the candidate wrote.

In scenario 1, some candidates found the fourth bullet point challenging.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Literature

Listening

Many candidates experienced difficulties in the following questions:

- ◆ Question 1(d) — most candidates struggled to answer this question.
- ◆ Question 2 (a)(b)(c) — few candidates were able to answer the question, even though (a) and (c) had a choice of answers and the language used was not difficult. A small number managed part of the answer, but most were unable to fully answer these questions.
- ◆ Question 2 (e) — some candidates struggled with the word ‘marketing’.
- ◆ Question 2 (g/h) — the language used in the passage was not challenging, but most candidates failed to attain the complete answer — *roghainn de chlubaichean, ionad-spòrs, taigh-dhealbh no taighean-bìdh eadar-dhealaichte*.

Literature

Some candidates tended to re-tell the short story or the poem and made little attempt to address the set question. Other candidates lacked critical terminology.

Component 3: performance: Talking

Candidates should be reminded of the importance of basic pronunciation, especially with commonly-used words and phrases.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Directed Writing

Reading

- ◆ Candidates should take care that they understand the nature of the questions — some candidates were mixing up their questions and answers.
- ◆ They should also take note whether the overall question specifically requires evidence from the passage, and should avoid broad generalisations.
- ◆ Candidates should be given ample opportunity to practise translation during the year and ensure that the final translation is comprehensible in English.
- ◆ Some candidates can take too long with some aspects of the paper and fail to complete the whole paper. They should allocate sufficient time for each aspect of the paper in order to complete the paper within the allocated time.
- ◆ Candidates need to further develop their listening skills, and centres should ensure that candidates are receiving enough practice to develop this skill.

Directed Writing

- ◆ Candidates should try and avoid basic mistakes in syntax and spelling at this level. Areas of concern are the use of lenition, the apostrophe, comparisons, regular and irregular verbs, plurals and tenses.
- ◆ Candidates should be able to use the prepositional case correctly at Higher level.
- ◆ A range of verbs and the use of the subjunctive as well as the correct use of the reported speech form should be evident at this level.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Literature

Literature

Candidates should focus closely on the set question and respond accordingly. Some candidates tend to re-tell the story/poem without reference to what the question is actually asking.

Component 3: performance: Talking

- ◆ Centres are advised to implement regular talking activities to develop the natural element of response.
- ◆ Centres should ensure they refer to the whole of the 'Modern Languages Performance: talking: General assessment information' document rather than using the general marking instruction in isolation.
- ◆ Centres are reminded that the marks for sustaining a natural conversation should be awarded holistically on their performance throughout the conversation, not solely for the candidate's response to some unpredictable questions.
- ◆ Interlocutors should take into account non-verbal techniques when coming to assessment judgements on the sustaining conversational element.
- ◆ The verification of a very small number of centres was unable to proceed due to administrative errors. Centres should read all documentation and material thoroughly, ensure they know exactly what element they are being verified on in that round and to make themselves aware of SQA terminology.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

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|------------------------------------|----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2015 | 41 |
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| Number of resulted entries in 2016 | 84 |
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

| Distribution of Course awards | % | Cum. % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|----------------------|-------------|
| Maximum Mark - 100 | | | | |
| A | 40.5% | 40.5% | 34 | 70 |
| B | 26.2% | 66.7% | 22 | 60 |
| C | 17.9% | 84.5% | 15 | 50 |
| D | 4.8% | 89.3% | 4 | 45 |
| No award | 10.7% | - | 9 | 0 |

For this course, the intention was to set an assessment with grade boundaries at the notional values of 50% for a Grade C and 70% for a Grade A. The course assessment functioned as intended; therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

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.