



## Course Report 2018

Subject	Gaelic (Learners)
Level	Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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.

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

# **Section 1: comments on the assessment**

## **Summary of the course assessment**

### **Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing**

The question paper consists of a reading comprehension and includes a translation element. There are 30 marks available. Overall, the paper was at an appropriate and suitable level, and all feedback was positive which suggests that it was a suitable paper for this level.

There were discriminating questions that differentiated between A and C candidates. Candidates performed particularly well in the translation element and many candidates achieved high marks.

In the directed writing question paper, candidates were given the choice of two stimuli from the contexts of employability and society. There was an even distribution in the choices that candidates made.

The reading and directed writing question paper performed as expected and no adjustment to grade boundary was required.

### **Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Literature**

Item 1 of the listening section of this question paper, which is a monologue, proved challenging. The topic was 'lifelong learning', which most pupils are well acquainted with in schools.

Most candidates tended to perform better with item 2 of the listening, which consisted of an interview, although a varied range of marks was evident.

All of the candidates opted to write a short story or poem in the literature section of the question paper. Candidates performed well and this compensated to the underperformance of some candidates in the listening section.

### **Component 3: performance–talking**

The performance–talking 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 talking.

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

## **Section 2: comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

#### **Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing**

Most candidates performed positively, and seemed to identify with the subject matter of the comprehension element. There were very few poor performances.

Candidates did particularly well in the translation element.

The majority of candidates managed to perform well in the directed writing question paper by fulfilling the requirements of the task, although the candidates who chose the employability question had a better average mark.

Most candidates addressed all of the bullet points.

#### **Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Literature**

There was a significant range of marks from high to low, although a significant number also obtained excellent marks.

Most candidates performed well in the literature section of the paper.

#### **Component 3: performance–talking**

Candidates performed well in the presentation element of the performance–talking.

They were well prepared, displaying a range of vocabulary and tenses, as well as a range of language structures suitable to the level.

Candidates tended to perform better in the presentation than in the conversation, although candidates at all levels of attainment showed that they had worked hard on their ‘sustaining the conversation’ skills.

### **Areas which candidates found demanding**

#### **Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing**

Candidates found questions 1 and 4(a) quite challenging.

In question 1, many candidates did read the question properly and did not give cognisance to the words in the question when it asked for a comparison. Many answers did not contain this comparison.

In question 4(a), the plural was required but many candidates only provided the singular answer.

## **Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Literature**

Some candidates found questions 1(b) and (d) difficult to answer correctly.

Candidates are accustomed to reading and hearing about 'lifelong learning' with the result that many tended to guess the answer rather than listening to the set text.

Questions 2(d) and (f) were particularly challenging, but were discriminatory in nature. This was evident in the responses.

## **Component 3: performance–talking**

Overall, candidates dealt well with the performance–talking. However, they did find the conversation more demanding than the presentation, and those candidates who were the highest achieving tended to cope with the conversation much more effectively.

# **Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates**

## **Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing**

In the reading comprehension, candidates should take time to read and understand the questions carefully. This can be very helpful when answering set questions.

Some candidates lost marks in areas that you would not expect at Higher, for example plurals, numbers and comparisons. Candidates should have a greater awareness of such basic skills at this level. Candidates also lacked 'detail from the text' in their response to the overall question.

In the directed writing question paper, candidates should read the whole scenario carefully and ensure that all bullet points are covered in adequate detail. Candidates are advised to present each bullet point as a separate paragraph as this makes it easier for them to review and check that all bullet points have been addressed. This would help to ensure that candidates do not lose marks by not covering all the bullet points. They should also proofread what they have written, if time allows for this.

## **Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Literature**

They should use the 1 minute provided in advance of each playing to read the questions to anticipate the kind of information required. Careful understanding of the questions would support their understanding and enable them to know what might be required in the answer.

They should also be aware when the plural is used, as well as being well acquainted with numbers, dates, months, days and years.

Teachers should use strategies such as practising listening exercises frequently in class and using the target language in class as often as possible as this develops candidates' listening skills.

### **Component 3: performance–talking**

Centres should ensure they are aware, from the 2018-19 diet, the performance–talking is solely based on a conversation. Centres should also familiarise themselves with the new pegged marking scheme when making their assessment decisions. This is available on SQA’s website, in the *Higher Modern Languages Course Specification*.

Talking should be an integral part of coursework on a regular basis, with particular emphasis on dealing with language difficulties and Gaelic’s use of the verb for answering yes and no.

## Grade boundary and statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	69
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	75
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### Statistical information: performance of candidates

#### Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	41.3%	41.3%	31	70
B	22.7%	64.0%	17	60
C	18.7%	82.7%	14	50
D	4.0%	86.7%	3	45
No award	13.3%	-	10	-

## **General commentary on grade boundaries**

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which 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.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.