Course Report 2018

Subject	Gàidhlig
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: Leughadh (Reading)

The reading text this year was a fictional piece based around the theme of revenge. Candidates fully engaged with the passage, something that was evident in responses to particular questions. The text allowed a wide range of questions to be asked, which differentiated between candidates, and these were seen to have been suitably challenging and fair.

Component 2 — question paper 1: Sgrìobhadh (Writing)

The questions set in this section were seen to be suitable, and able to provide plenty scope for candidates to demonstrate their ability to write about the literature studied in their course. As in previous years, all responses were based on prose and poetry and were mostly based on traditional texts that have been the mainstay of courses through the years.

Component 3 — question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

The topic of the listening passage was about salmon; their life cycle and changing fortunes. The question paper was in line with previous years and, although there was a lot of information to digest, candidates coped well with this. The paper was seen as being fair and accessible and there was a range of responses.

Component 4 — Còmhradh (performance–talking)

Of the samples observed, all candidates performed as expected. Candidates participated in conversations that covered a range of subjects that supported them in their performance.

In the samples, performances were mostly in the specified conversation model and this benefitted candidates greatly. Samples were also of an appropriate length. Assessors should ensure that the assessment consists of a conversation as opposed to a presentation.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1 — question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

There was a marked improvement in candidates being able to demonstrate the appropriate number of pieces of evidence offered in answers, with clear explanations for each. Some candidates were able to work through the questions in a very methodical way, using appropriate examples from the text, followed by clear and sufficiently detailed explanations. There was evidence of better management of time across the paper.

Component 2 — question paper 1: Sgrìobhadh (Writing)

A good number of candidates were able to write quite lengthy, comprehensive responses to literature, and demonstrate their knowledge of particular texts. Some were adept at integrating quotations along with detailed analysis, which went beyond straightforward responses and were able to illustrate their own personal appreciation of the text.

Component 3 — question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

Many of the candidates performed well in the listening paper and were able to answer most if not all of the questions. Some candidates wrote particularly detailed and precise answers for questions 10 and 11, and this is to be commended.

Component 4 — Còmhradh (performance–talking)

Candidates performed well when discussing topics that they had chosen, as well as general conversation regarding their courses and interests. Candidates selected topics that were appropriate to support them in achieving the best possible grade. Some candidates did take full control of the conversation and lead the discussion. This allowed these candidates to fully demonstrate their ability, and achieve marks that reflected their ability.

Candidates performed very well in this aspect of the assessment. Candidates were well prepared and discussed a range of different topics that allowed them to perform to the best of their abilities.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1 — question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Candidates should take into account the number of marks available for each question, and that this number corresponds with the number of points required in their answer. Some continue to not use their 'own words' where this is required.

Candidates should ensure that they avoid simply restating the words of the question. For example in question 2, this led to a number of candidates giving an appropriate example but

then not gaining marks through repeating the question rather than explaining how the example worked.

In question 11, some candidates need to be aware of the need to summarise as directed in this type of question.

Candidates need to ensure that they read questions carefully and take into account specific directions in questions such as making comment on both word choice and sentence structure, as in question 9.

Some candidates need to ensure specific examples from the text are used, for example in question 12.

Component 2 — question paper 1: Sgrìobhadh (Writing)

Some candidates failed to go beyond telling about the plot and characters in short stories or summarising poems, and had little in the way of analysis of technical skills. Some wrote responses which were not closely connected to the question and instead were almost like 'prepared' responses. In a number of instances, weaknesses in spelling and grammar detracted from the overall quality of a piece.

Component 3 — question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

Some candidates found questions 10 and 11 more challenging, where they had to use evidence from the passage they had listened to. Some candidates found question 10 more challenging, as they gave their own opinion on the salmon's situation rather than the writer's stance, as was required in the question.

In question 11, some candidates were unable to provide sufficient evidence to gain the full marks.

Component 4 — Còmhradh (performance–talking)

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

Within the sample verified, there was no evidence of candidates selecting topics that were too complex, however some did lack vocabulary regarding their chosen topic. As a result, further focus on vocabulary specific to the chosen topic should be incorporated into preparation for the assessment.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1 — question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

As highlighted previously, candidates should ensure they gain sufficient experience in dealing with a range of different texts, and that they are clear about the different types of questions, which they may be asked, and how to approach them.

Candidates should take note of the number of marks for each question, and how this translates into examples and sufficiently detailed comments for each.

They should also be aware of the line references outlined for specific questions, and the requirement for the use of 'own words'. Candidates should mention techniques, for example repetition, where this or that is appropriate, for questions dealing with word choice, and clearly highlight the connotations of chosen words. Questions dealing with 'effectiveness' should be linked to textual evidence. Candidates should note the summary question and the directions given within it.

Component 2 — question paper 1: Sgrìobhadh (Writing)

In all essays, candidates should also consider their writing style and how a 'mechanistic' style of essay writing can be avoided, allowing a more polished essay with sufficient detailed analysis, reference to techniques and personal appreciation of the text being at the forefront. They should also ensure that they take note of the question asked and that answers are shaped with this in mind rather than a 'prepared' answer.

In dealing with poetry, candidates should also consider the effect of style and shape to poems and consider how this has a bearing on the tone, message and effect of the poem in addition to imagery and other stylistic features.

Continual reinforcement of accuracy in grammar and spelling such as the usage of *Tha* and *'S e* was also recommended by markers.

Consideration should be given to the range of different literature that candidates have, and the appropriateness of texts and their complexity to allow good responses at Higher. Though the tried and tested favourites of Gaelic literature are well known, a wider range of literature can also be beneficial.

Component 3 — question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

Candidates should ensure that they read questions carefully, particularly those that require considered opinion and evidence to support, for example questions 10 and 11. Candidates should also ensure they use sufficient evidence to justify opinions.

Component 4 — Còmhradh (performance–talking)

Candidates should ensure that they have knowledge of, and can apply, vocabulary that is specific to their chosen topic in a natural manner.

Assessors must ensure that the assessment consists of a conversation. A series of prepared generic questions do not support candidates as much as a natural, flowing conversation.

Teachers, lecturers and assessors are encouraged to make use of understanding standards materials to help them in supporting candidates so that they can perform to the best of their ability in the best possible conditions.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	126

Number of resulted entries in 2018	130

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	46.9%	46.9%	61	71
B	29.2%	76.2%	38	61
C	14.6%	90.8%	19	51
D	3.8%	94.6%	5	46
No award	5.4%	-	7	-

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.