Course Report 2016

Subject	Gaelic Learners
Level	N5

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: Reading and Writing

There was little evidence that candidates had issues with time management during the exam — the vast majority completed the paper. This would indicate that the vast majority of candidates were also presented at the correct level.

Reading

This assessment performed as expected. Candidates generally performed better in the Reading paper than they did in the Listening paper. Improvement was shown of the candidates' awareness of the greater level of detail required for individual marks.

Writing

This assessment performed as expected. The candidate performance in this paper was very encouraging. Performance in the two unpredictable bullet points was also better than in previous years. This could be due to greater familiarisation of the exam structure and the greater availability of past papers.

Component 2: question paper: Listening

This was a challenging paper for many candidates and, generally, they did not perform as well in this paper. Candidates have no access to a dictionary and, therefore, must rely solely on their knowledge.

The paper was considered to be at the correct standard and contained vocabulary and grammatical structures which should be expected at National 5 level.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Writing

Reading

Candidates performed very well in the following questions:
Question 1 (Multiple choice)
Question 2 (a) (i) 'October this year'
Question 2 (b) 'Very good at speaking to people'
Question 2 (f) 'It was a long week'
Question 3 (e) 'They buy more than people in Britain'
Question 3 (g) (Multiple choice)

Writing

There were excellent examples of responses with appropriate opening and closing sentences which enhanced the authenticity of the job application. Although the question does not appear to lend itself naturally to the inclusion of a range of tenses and verbs, there were some excellent examples of how the past, future and subjunctive tenses could be included.

Candidates who achieved 'Very Good' produced responses that were accurate for the most part and which included a wide range of verbs, tenses, sentence structures and conjunctions.

Candidates generally performed well in the two unpredictable bullet points.

Component 2: question paper: Listening

Candidates performed well in the following questions:

Question 1 (a)	'4000' and 'going up'
Question 1 (e)	Overall purpose question (multiple choice)
Question 2 (a)	Multiple choice
Question 2 (b)	9.15 (time)

It should be noted that there was good optionality in Question 2 (d) (i).

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Listening

Reading

Few candidates achieved the full mark allocation for the following questions:

Question 1 (f) 'Young people understand the bad effect'
Question 2 (d) 'Helping two boys/who were not skilled at writing'
Question 3 (f) 'many languages fluently' and 'do English till they leave school'

Writing

Generally speaking, candidates were not secure in their knowledge of accents, or in their understanding of the use of the apostrophe to denote verbal nouns.

A proportion of candidates did not include a range of verbs and tenses.

Component 2: question paper: Listening

Candidates found the following questions challenging:

Question 1 (d)   'very helpful' and 'speak to them at any time'

Question 2 (c)   'two (other) girls'
Question 2 (d) (ii)   'buy cheaper books'
Question 2 (e) (ii)   'Lots of friends'

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Writing

Reading

♦ Candidates should practise their dictionary skills, especially with regard to using the singular noun to identify plurals.

♦ Candidates should also practise recognising adjectives in comparatives.

♦ Candidates should revise simple idiomatic phrases so that phrases are not translated literally, eg *ceann a deas a' bhaile.*

Writing

♦ Candidates must demonstrate an awareness of a wide range of tenses, verbs and sentence structures. A candidate who uses the verb 'to be' throughout their response will not achieve 'Very Good'.

♦ Candidates may increase the complexity of their sentences by using conjunctions.

♦ Candidates must be vigilant with regard to using accents and apostrophes correctly.

♦ Candidates should develop a more secure awareness of the dative case (simple examples) eg *aig a' chonsairt; anns a' bhùth.*

♦ Authenticity of the job application is enhanced with the use of appropriate opening and closing sentences.

♦ Candidates should be vigilant that they only include relevant information in their job application. Candidates should be encouraged to produce an authentic response.

♦ Candidates must be careful not to repeat themselves. This was apparent in the responses of some candidates who had addressed the unpredictable bullet points earlier on in their response. It is not necessary to repeat the same points again.

♦ Candidates do not need to address the bullet points in the order in which they appear in the question paper.

♦ Candidates must write in sentences. Writing in bullet points does not properly demonstrate candidates' competence. They are, in fact, doing themselves a disservice by not answering in full sentences.

Component 2: question paper: Listening

♦ Candidates should take advantage of all opportunities to develop their listening skills. Candidates should familiarise themselves with beneficial media resources eg BBC Alba, www.bbc.co.uk/alba, www.learngaelic.net , etc.

♦ Candidates must also ensure that they revise vocabulary/grammar pertaining to topic areas.

♦ Candidates are strongly advised to revise common verbs, common adjectives and numbers eg mìle, millean, etc.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	109

Number of resulted entries in 2016	145

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	42.1%	42.1%	61	69
B	20.0%	62.1%	29	59
C	16.6%	78.6%	24	49
D	11.7%	90.3%	17	44
No award	9.7%	-	14	-

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.