



Course report 2019

Subject	Gaelic (Learners)
Level	National 5

This report provides information on candidates' performance. 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

The course assessments components performed as expected. The reading question paper was more demanding and the grade boundary was adjusted to reflect this.

There were some outstanding candidate performances in all components and many had prepared well for the assessment. In 2019, there was a higher number of candidates, which is encouraging. A small percentage achieved no award which would suggest these candidates were presented at the wrong level.

Question paper 1: Reading

The three reading texts were based on the contexts of culture (the National Mòd), society (mobile phone usage among young people) and learning (exam preparation). There were two supported questions in the paper. There was optionality in questions 2(b)(ii), (c) and 3(f).

All three reading texts were about topics which most candidates could closely associate with as they are relevant topics in the lives of many candidates. As a result, it would appear that many candidates attempted to guess probable answers without closely studying the texts. This resulted in a number of candidates incorrectly guessing answers which impacted on their overall performance in this question paper. It would therefore, appear that the familiar and relevant topics disadvantaged some candidates.

Feedback from markers suggested that the level of challenge was more demanding than last year's paper. As a result, the grade boundary was lowered to take into account the increased demand of this question paper.

Question paper 1: Writing

The writing question paper largely performed as expected. The advert was for a job at a school. The unpredictable bullet points asked candidates to discuss their experience of working with young people and the after-school clubs they could run; the latter of which had never appeared in the National 5 assessment.

Candidates who achieved high marks coped well with both unpredictable bullet points. There was evidence of some dictionary misuse in the responses of candidates who coped less well with the unpredictable bullet points.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper was based on the context of employability. Candidates cover this context extensively in centres as it forms the basis for the writing question paper. Therefore, the listening texts contained familiar and accessible language. This context has been covered in previous listening papers.

The monologue was about future career plans and the conversation was about a career in ICT. There was one supported question. There was optionality in questions 1(d)(ii), 2(b) and (c).

The paper performed in line with expectations. Feedback from the marking team suggested that it was appropriately demanding. Some questions were accessible to most candidates while others were more challenging.

Assignment–writing

The assignment writing is conducted in centres and externally marked. This assessment allows for personalisation and choice. This most common topics encountered by the marking team were school life, personal fact file, free time and holidays.

The assignment writing performed as expected. Marker feedback suggested that it was a fair and accessible assessment for candidates. There were many outstanding performances, which were well structured and contained detailed language and accuracy appropriate to the level.

A small number of responses did not meet the standard expected at National 5, which would suggest that these candidates were not presented at the right level.

Performance–talking

Both the presentation and conversation allowed candidates to perform as expected and at an appropriate level for the demands of the course.

A very small number of centres did not follow the rubric of the assessment, placing the conversation before the presentation. This should not happen; the conversation should flow naturally from the presentation. While a candidate may benefit from a couple of preliminary questions to warm-up for the presentation, they should start their presentation section as soon as possible in order to have the most opportunity to perform at their appropriate level.

All centres were covering at least two contexts within their performances.

Also of note is that an interlocutor should not stop the performance to indicate that they have moved onto the conversation section. Centres should also always remember that candidates rarely benefit from an extended performance.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates performed well in the following questions, with the majority achieving the full range of marks. The question design is detailed below.

Question 1(c): supported question

Question 2(b) (ii): any three from four required

Question 3(b): any one of two required

Question 3(d): supported question

Question 3(f): any one from two required

Question paper 1: Writing

There was less evidence this year of candidates giving irrelevant information such as details of family and their home area.

Many candidates attempted to produce an authentic response to the job advert by opening and closing their responses appropriately.

There were some very good examples of responses, which contained a range of grammatical structures including a range of verbs.

One of the unpredictable bullet points had not previously been covered in a question paper. Candidates who achieved high marks coped well with both the unpredictable bullet points.

Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates performed well in the following areas:

Question 1 (a) this question was accessible to almost all candidates.

Question 1(e): candidates had to understand that the speaker wished to be a 'restaurant manager' in the future. The Gaelic word for 'restaurant' is often confused with the word for 'hotel', and it was encouraging that many candidates were able to answer this question accurately.

Question 2(b): any one of two points was required and most candidates achieved the full mark range.

Question 2(h): this was a 3-mark question and it was encouraging that most candidates achieved at least 1 mark.

Assignment–writing

The standard of candidates' assignment–writing was higher than in the previous year. Only a few candidates achieved 8 marks or less. Candidates who achieved 16 or 20 marks produced mostly accurate responses that contained detailed language appropriate to the level. Many candidates also attempted to offer ideas, opinions and reasons in addition to factual information.

This is the second year of this assessment and candidates are to be commended for preparing well.

Performance–talking

Candidates performed well in the 10-minute conversation. They expressed ideas and opinions, and used content, which allowed them to achieve a good standard in relation to the national standard for National 5. Candidates had good pronunciation overall, as well having a good language resource.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates found the following areas challenging:

Question 1(e): there was a leader into the answer (a' còrdadh ri), however many candidates gave responses which were not based on the text, which suggests that candidates guessed their response. This text was about the National Mòd, a significant and well-known cultural event in the Gaelic world which may have been the reason candidates guessed probable answers.

Question 1(f): the question asked candidates what the best thing about the Mòd is. Again, for reasons outlined above, many candidates appeared to guess probable answers.

Some candidates missed the underlined words in three of the questions below, which were essential in order to access the full range of available marks:

Question 2(b)(i): more than 7 hours.

Question 2(f): it is clear there are good and bad reasons for teenagers to have mobile phones.

Question 3(a): he liked/enjoyed some of his subjects.

Question 3(e): candidates experienced difficulty in understanding the plural of cousin.

Question paper 1: Writing

Although the assessment performed as expected there was a slightly higher incidence of candidates coping less well with the four predictable bullet points. These responses generally did not contain the accuracy required for 16 marks or above.

With regard to the unpredictable bullet points, there was some evidence of dictionary misuse and mother tongue interference.

Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates found the following areas challenging:

Question 1(d)(i): summer holidays (summer essential)

Question 2(e): the adjective 'mòr' was used with a feminine noun, which caused lenition. As a result its pronunciation was altered which made the adjective less familiar to many candidates.

Question 2(g): Làraich-lìn (websites) proved challenging for many candidates.

Assignment–writing

Candidates who were awarded 12 marks or less produced responses, which did not have sufficient accuracy and language resource.

It is acceptable for candidates to choose seemingly more simple titles, but they must ensure that they are accurate and use detailed language appropriate to the level in their responses.

Performance–talking

Candidates sometimes struggled to deal with unpredictable elements, although overall they recovered well and this tended not to detract from the overall impression.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Centres should ensure that candidates are presented at the correct level.

Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates should resist the temptation to guess probable answers. Responses must be based on the text, even if the text is about a topic with which they are familiar.

Candidates must also practise their dictionary skills so that they can use this resource to their advantage. Candidates must familiarise themselves with Gaelic plurals especially, and know how to use the dictionary to assist them in working out the singular or plural.

Candidates must also be aware that when numerical information is required for an answer, it is highly likely that they will be required to give more than just a precise number. In this year's question paper, *còrr is* (more than) was required for an answer.

Reading texts test candidates on a wide range of grammatical structures and vocabulary appropriate to the level. Centres should remind candidates that they should learn common context vocabulary and grammatical structures, for example *meadhanan sòisealta* (society) as this will save time in the exam.

Past papers are available on SQA's website and candidates are advised to practise their skills by working their way through this resource.

Question paper 1: Writing

Candidates should prepare thoroughly for the predictable bullet points as these do not change from year to year. Candidates must use these bullet points as an opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their skills and they should avoid using overly simple sentences, for example using the present tense of the verb 'to be' throughout.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to incorporate a range of tenses and verbs including both forms of the verb 'to be', regular and irregular verbs. Other desirable verb structures include: *Is fheàrr leam*; *'s urrainn dhomh* and *faodaidh mi*. Awareness of prepositional pronouns and idiom appropriate to the level is also desirable.

Centres should remind candidates that all the information provided must be relevant to the job advert. It is not necessary to discuss family members, the weather or provide a description of their home area.

With regards to the unpredictable bullet points, candidates may encounter a new bullet point which they have not seen in a previous question paper. Centres should remind candidates that it may be possible for them to adapt a sentence structure used when addressing the predictable bullet points.

Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates are encouraged to familiarise themselves with common vocabulary and grammar from across the four contexts.

Centres should give candidates regular opportunities to develop their listening skills.

Candidates should also maximise their exposure to Gaelic by making a concerted effort to hear Gaelic being spoken in their centres, media and community (if applicable) as this will serve to further contextualise common language which could arise in a question paper.

Assignment–writing

Candidates should use detailed language appropriate to the level in order to demonstrate the full range of their skills. They are encouraged to show an awareness of a range of verb forms and tenses; personal pronouns and prepositional pronouns; more complex adjectives and Gaelic idiom, if appropriate. They must ensure that they offer a range of ideas, reasons and opinions. Long lists should be avoided.

Candidates are also encouraged to open and close their responses appropriately.

If candidates opt to write about school life, they should avoid duplicating language used in the writing question paper.

Performance–talking

It is recommended that regular talking is a feature of learning and teaching on a weekly basis in the classroom environment. This should encompass everyday routine while bringing in elements of vocabulary and grammar that will assist with talking about their chosen contexts.

Centres where there was some element of personalisation and choice in context and subject choice were those which tended to see a good level of performance. Therefore, centres should build this into their preparation, learning and teaching. However, teachers and lecturers should ensure that the candidate is not over-extending themselves and has an understanding and ability to use language appropriate to the level.

Candidates should be prepared regarding being able to deal with unpredictable elements, in particular dealing with language difficulties. Candidates should also be encouraged to interject and to take the initiative by asking questions.

Candidates should familiarise themselves with the productive grammar grid as well as the detailed marking instructions.

Overall, assessment judgements were in line with the national standard for National 5. As always, teachers and lecturers are encouraged to make use of the Understanding Standards materials, and to renew their skills on an ongoing basis. Centres who also provide Gàidhlig should ensure that teachers and lecturers are aware of the difference between the two subjects regarding the use of pegged marking when marking Gaelic (Learners).

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	107
Number of resulted entries in 2019	135

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	41.5%	41.5%	56	84
B	15.6%	57.0%	21	72
C	16.3%	73.3%	22	60
D	16.3%	89.6%	22	48
No award	10.4%	-	14	-

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 that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ 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 head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question 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 question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.