



# **Course report 2023**

## **Advanced Higher Gàidhlig**

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. You should read the report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

# Grade boundary and statistical information

## Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022: 26

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 20

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

<b>A</b>	Percentage	12	Cumulative percentage	60	Number of candidates	60	Lowest mark	80
<b>B</b>	Percentage	5	Cumulative percentage	25	Number of candidates	85	Lowest mark	68
<b>C</b>	Percentage	1	Cumulative percentage	5	Number of candidates	90	Lowest mark	57
<b>D</b>	Percentage	2	Cumulative percentage	10	Number of candidates	100	Lowest mark	45
<b>No award</b>	Percentage	0	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	100	Lowest mark	N/A

Please note that rounding has not been applied to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of SQA's website.

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

### **Question paper: Sgrùdadh (Practical Criticism)**

Candidates readily engaged with the two texts provided for practical criticism. The poetry section was a poem based on the subject of home and connections, and the prose passage focused on the subject of drug taking in sport.

The question paper was fair in terms of overall level of challenge and demand, and the texts were suitably accessible and able to differentiate between candidates.

### **Question paper: Litreachas agus Sgrìobhadh (Literature and Writing)**

The paper provided a range of questions for candidates to respond to their chosen literature text(s). All candidates, as in previous years, answered questions on prose and poetry, with one or two examining more than one text as part of the options for these genres. A number of well-known texts were prevalent such as Briseadh na Cloiche, Cisteachan-Laighe, Srath Nabhair, An Roghainn and Latha Foghair, all of which worked well and provided good material for able candidates to construct good essays.

The writing paper offered a number of different titles as prompts and candidates used these in a number of different ways, with both personal reflective writing and discursive writing being popular.

### **Question paper: Eadar-theangachadh (Translating)**

In this question paper candidates translate a piece of prose from English into idiomatic Gàidhlig. This year's piece was a press release about the new visitor centre at Corrieshalloch Gorge in Wester Ross. All candidates engaged well with this question paper and subject matter.

### **Còmhradh (performance–talking)**

Visiting assessors conducted live in-person assessments where candidates conversed on a range of different topics including their coursework, particular research that they had carried out, and future plans. For session 2022–23 conversations were modified to 15 minutes in length, however this will revert to 20 minutes for session 2023–24.

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

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

#### **Question paper: Sgrùdadh (Practical Criticism)**

Overall candidates coped well with most aspects of the Sgrùdadh paper. Candidates demonstrated a fair understanding of the poetry and a good level of understanding of the prose. The questions in both papers were quite directed, which seemed to encourage a good level of engagement. Most candidates were able to attempt all questions.

Some candidates were able to effectively use evidence to develop their answers. Some also gave interesting interpretations of the poem, particularly in response to question 6.

#### **Question paper: Litreachas agus Sgrìobhadh (Literature and Writing)**

In the literature section, as last year, answers that focused on poetry were the most popular. Some essays were of good length and detailed, and combined focused quotation with detailed analysis and evaluation. Some candidates were very polished in their expression and coverage of their chosen text(s) in answering their selected question and showed a good command of critical language and good Gàidhlig.

In writing, the titles Spòrs, Gaol and Stoirm air fàire were popular and generated a number of different essay styles and interesting and engaging pieces of writing. A few responses showed real depth of thought coupled with effective expression of ideas.

#### **Question paper: Eadar-theangachadh (Translating)**

Candidate responses varied, with a small number of very well translated pieces that kept to the original tenor, idea and meaning in the original text, and showed a good standard of accuracy. Candidates coped well with some of the technical or business speak vocabulary, such as 'maoineachadh' and 'taic-airgid'.

### **Còmhradh (performance–talking)**

Visiting assessors commented on the willingness of most candidates to engage in conversation and that they undertook the assessments confidently. Discussions were wide-ranging and covered a number of different and interesting topics. Candidates who were knowledgeable about the texts they had studied and researched benefited by being able to demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of complex language and structures.

### **Areas that candidates found demanding**

#### **Question paper: Sgrùdadh (Practical Criticism)**

Some candidates seemed to struggle with some of the subtleties of the poem, for example noticing the meaning of 'a-bhos' and interpreting the type of love being discussed. Question 11 was problematic for some, with only a few candidates picking up on the connection between what young people experience and how that will manifest itself in future. There was a lack of candidates who drew on the proverb, suggesting a lack of comprehension of more idiomatic Gaelic.

In the prose section, some candidates were not careful when reading question 10 and so misinterpreted the demands of the question.

### **Question paper: Litreachas agus Sgríobhadh (Literature and Writing)**

In the literature section, some candidates' essays were characterised by poor expression and/or a lack of the language resource needed to write critically about the text(s). Some candidates performed very poorly when analysing literature that was too simplistic in nature for Advanced Higher. This was particularly true of poetry where some candidates used a straightforward narrative poem more suited to National 5. Although some answers were detailed, the poetry chosen did not allow for the depth of analysis required at this level.

In writing, one or two pieces of writing were short or lacked a real engagement with the task. In literature, some pieces of writing were very simplistic in nature.

### **Question paper: Eadar-theangachadh (Translating)**

As last year, there were some weak responses and a number of responses where inaccuracies with some more straightforward points of grammar led to marks being missed in sense units. Some candidates struggled with vocabulary relating to nature and there were some examples of very poor grammatical accuracy, for example *tha* instead of *'s e* and the command of irregular verbs.

### **Còmhradh (performance–talking)**

A very small number of candidates were lacking in preparation of their coursework and knowledge of the texts that they had studied. This had a detrimental effect on the conversation for these candidates as in many cases they became hesitant and required prompting and/or found it more difficult to demonstrate their full ability and potential.

Some candidates entered texts on the subject topic list (STL) form that had been previously studied at another level and so their knowledge of these texts was sometimes limited.

## **Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment**

### **Question paper: Sgrùdadh (Practical Criticism)**

Candidates should ensure that they have a good knowledge of different linguistic techniques and aspects of style when looking at both prose and poetry. Candidates should be able to identify and illustrate by example how they impact on the text and, where appropriate, illustrate their effectiveness. Candidates should also ensure they give sufficiently detailed explanations of how meaning has been interpreted and that they are specific in doing so rather than giving a broad, vague comment.

Candidates should continue to ensure they manage their time appropriately so that marks are not missed. Some candidates may wish to use bullets to improve their answering technique. Candidates should also be aware of the number of marks for each question and how this translates to the number of points required.

### **Question paper: Litreachas agus Sgrìobhadh (Literature and Writing)**

Candidates should continue to have the opportunity to study a range of literature that is appropriate to their level of study and allows them to generate suitably comprehensive and detailed responses to their chosen question. Candidates should avoid using short pieces of straightforward poetry, more suited to National 5, as this is counterproductive.

Candidates should practise developing a stylish approach to critical essay writing that is well linked to the text(s) and question, and that has some depth of analysis and genuine personal evaluation.

In writing, candidates should show some development of style and attention to accuracy with spelling and grammar, and should create an engagement with the reader. Long-term, continued practice in developing writing skills and accuracy along with the use of language, structures and complexity, benefits candidates' writing and also has a positive effect on other parts of the assessment.

Candidates should also be mindful of their handwriting as there is a definite deterioration in the legibility of some responses.

### **Question paper: Eadar-theangachadh (Translating)**

It is crucial for this paper that candidates show accuracy and attention to spelling and grammatical rules, coupled with awareness of the register of the extract.

### **Còmhradh (performance–talking)**

Candidates should ensure they have a good knowledge of the literature and other aspects of the work that they have covered in the course, as a minimum. They should also be able to

highlight themes and techniques inherent within texts and illustrate their own opinions about these.

As in previous years, the best conversations were seen to come from candidates who had a good knowledge of the texts they studied and other subject matters that might come up during conversations. As already mentioned, candidates who were uncertain about these areas found it more difficult to demonstrate some of the higher mark descriptions of performance.

There is no expectation for any speech to be delivered as part of the conversation. The emphasis is on conversation about a range of matters.

The STL form submitted before the assessment period is very useful for helping candidates and assessors to shape the discussion and the more detail and accuracy that can be included on this, the better.

## Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade 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 for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty 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 on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining



standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).