Course report 2023

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:   108

Number of resulted entries in 2023:   126

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	54	Percentage	42.9	Cumulative percentage	42.9	Minimum mark required	68
B	Number of candidates	31	Percentage	24.6	Cumulative percentage	67.5	Minimum mark required	58
C	Number of candidates	20	Percentage	15.9	Cumulative percentage	83.3	Minimum mark required	48
D	Number of candidates	19	Percentage	15.1	Cumulative percentage	98.4	Minimum mark required	38
No award	Number of candidates	2	Percentage	1.6	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	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 1: Leughadh (Reading)

This year's reading passage was based on Mairead and her attempt to meet Ruairidh for a date, prevented by Catriona, Mairead's 'friend', who had given her advice to be late and had then gone to meet Ruairidh instead.

The passage was driven by the characterisation and narrative structure. Overall, candidates fully engaged with the passage, and this was evident in responses to the different questions. The text allowed a wide range of questions to be asked, which differentiated between candidates. Questions were suitably challenging and fair.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Questions in this paper provided plenty scope for candidates to demonstrate their ability to write about the literature studied. As in previous years, most responses were based on prose and poetry, and these were mostly based on traditional texts that have been the foundation of courses through the years. These include Cisteachan-Laighe, An Tobar, An Eala Bhàn, An Roghainn, Màiri Iain Mhurch' Chaluim, An Coigreach and Bùrn.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

The topic of the listening passage was a visit to Raasay and Calum's Road, with the question paper set in line with previous years. Candidates engaged well with the passage and questions. The paper was fair and accessible, with a range of responses.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (assignment–writing)

The requirement to complete the assignment–writing was removed for session 2022–23.

Còmhradh (performance–talking)

The performance–talking performed as expected. Candidates discussed a wide range of topics and applied an appropriate approach.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Many candidates tackled the range of questions very well. Overall, candidates did well in question 1, the summary question, with most achieving at least 2 marks. Candidates answered well on question 2, which dealt with punctuation and repetition. Candidates performed quite well in question 4, and in question 10, which dealt with the effect and use of rhetorical questions.

Most candidates were able to work through most questions in the time allocated.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Many candidates produced essays in which they adapted their knowledge towards the demands of the question. Some candidates wrote quite lengthy, comprehensive responses and clearly demonstrated their knowledge of their chosen texts. Many candidates gave several quotations in responses and were able to analyse these. Candidates chose a good spread of questions in the prose and poetry sections.

Question paper 2: Listening

In the listening paper, candidates provided good, solid answers to questions 1, 2, 3 and 8. Overall, candidates produced a number of good responses.

Còmhradh (performance–talking)

Candidate interaction with the teacher or lecturer was an area of strength this session. Candidates selected a wide range of topics.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Most candidates were able to work through all questions in the time allocated, while some candidates found it more challenging to manage their time. Some candidates found the paper's structure testing, with it being focused on narrative structure and character, along with the final questions that focused on aspects of the whole passage.

Some candidates found it difficult to express ideas clearly when explaining how examples of word choice or imagery worked or when explaining ideas and feelings. Some candidates' language skills made it difficult for them to make more than basic points. Some found the latter stages of the paper that focused on specific parts of the whole passage more testing. However, the guidance on where answers were obtainable aimed to alleviate the demand here. As in previous years, in particular questions some candidates were not giving sufficient examples to match the number of marks being offered and therefore missed marks.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Some responses lacked depth and substance, often short on detail and without a deep understanding of the text. Some candidates were unable to express their ideas in a coherent way that addressed the demands of the question. A small number of candidates chose simple texts and they struggled to adapt their knowledge towards the question, which was self-penalising. Some essays were weak in terms of the language resource within them.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

Some candidates found questions 9 and 10 challenging. This seemed to be due to the need for expressing opinions or ideas and supporting these with evidence from the passage that they had heard.

Còmhradh (performance–talking)

Candidates frequently found it demanding to make use of specialist vocabulary in the context of their chosen topic.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ gain sufficient experience in dealing with a range of different texts, both fiction and non-fiction, and the different types of questions

♦ are aware of the number of marks for each question and attempt to give full examples and explanations

♦ use evidence within the parameters of the question

♦ carefully read each question to avoid incorrect answers

♦ are aware that they do not need to repeat the question when answering the individual questions

♦ are aware of how clear, bulleted answers can be effective

♦ ensure their handwriting and answers are clear and legible

♦ are aware that they need to give clear explanations as to how chosen quotations 'work', and focus on connotation and ideas suggested

♦ mention techniques, for example, repetition or metaphor, where this is appropriate

♦ give examples, signposted by words such as 'Seall'

♦ give the key part of quotations (where necessary) for explanations in answers — some candidates did not clearly isolate specific words in quotations, or dealt with several quotations with one comment or brief analysis

♦ are aware that each quotation should be dealt with separately as merging quotations together into one answer leads to them not achieving full marks

♦ answer questions dealing with 'effectiveness' with links to textual evidence — questions that focus on specific features of the passage as a whole (for example questions 11 and 12) should be answered with this in mind

♦ are aware of the need to connect to ideas or images or language earlier in the passage

♦ are aware of how to deal with techniques such as extended metaphor and effective endings of passages

♦ are sufficiently prepared to deal with questions on areas such as narrative and characters, and recognise how the structure of the story impinges on the characters and on the readers themselves — these areas were important in this year's passage

♦ balance their language skills against the demand of the paper and work on their time management skills

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Texts need to be suitably challenging and must be of sufficient quality and substance to allow candidates to provide sufficient depth to their essays at Higher level, and therefore have the best chance of success.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- consider their writing style and work towards a well-constructed, polished essay
- give sufficient detailed analysis along with evaluation of effectiveness. This should be done so that the essay reads as a whole, and as an answer to the question chosen, rather than separate individual paragraphs
- clearly show personal appreciation, and evaluation of examples and of the text as a whole
- avoid formulaic, pre-prepared essays and ensure that answers are shaped towards the question
- avoid wasting time on long introductions, summaries and long conclusions
- in dealing with poetry, consider the effect of style and shape to poems. They should consider how this has a bearing on the tone, message and effect of the poem, in addition to imagery and other stylistic features
- cover the key important areas of texts, and deal with the text as a whole and not just select a particular number of quotations they know
- select quotations that are significant in advancing the points they are trying to make in answering the question, rather than being random
- are aware of the need in any question to illustrate what the central ideas are within the text

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- carefully read questions, particularly those that require considered opinion and evidence to support, for example questions 10 and 11. They should read these types of questions in the time available before the recording is played, which will help them answer
- are aware of the number of marks for individual questions and any specific requirements
- are aware that they are required to give clear answers to questions rather than just key words that they have heard. For example, for question 3 an answer of only 'slighe-coiseachd' would not have been sufficient, as the full answer was 'Cha robh ann ach slighe-coiseachd thuice'. This marks the distinction between an answer and a note

Còmhradh (performance–talking)

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- have knowledge of, and can apply, detailed vocabulary that is specific to their chosen topic in a natural manner
- select topics that will allow them to demonstrate fully their broad understanding of, and ability to use, the language

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.