



# **Course report 2023**

## **National 5 Gaelic (Learners)**

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: 137

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 116

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

<b>A</b>	Number of candidates	67	Percentage	57.8	Cumulative percentage	57.8	Minimum mark required	82
<b>B</b>	Number of candidates	27	Percentage	23.3	Cumulative percentage	81	Minimum mark required	68
<b>C</b>	Number of candidates	13	Percentage	11.2	Cumulative percentage	92.2	Minimum mark required	55
<b>D</b>	Number of candidates	6	Percentage	5.2	Cumulative percentage	97.4	Minimum mark required	41
<b>No award</b>	Number of candidates	3	Percentage	2.6	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**

Overall, the 2023 National 5 Gaelic (Learners) course assessments performed as expected and were fair and accessible to all candidates.

There was a range of candidate performances in all components, but it was clear that most candidates had prepared well for the assessment. There was an increase in the 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 context of employability (part-time work), learning (language learning) and culture (a holiday to Nova Scotia). There was a supported question in the first text, question 1(c). There was optionality in questions 1(a) and (d). Candidates engaged well with the texts and performance was consistent over all three sections, indicating that they had managed their time better and had improved exam technique than in 2022.

Text 1 was on the context of employability, which is covered extensively in centres as it forms the basis of the writing paper. Texts 2 and 3 were on topics that most candidates could relate to.

Most candidates attempted to answer all questions, and there were less no responses than in 2022.

### **Question paper 1: Writing**

The writing paper performed as expected. Candidates had to reply to a job advert for a shop assistant by responding to six bullet points. The first four bullet points are predictable and appear every year and the final two bullet points are unpredictable. The unpredictable bullet points asked candidates to discuss their communication skills and ask any questions they had about the job.

Candidates who achieved high marks coped well with both unpredictable bullet points and had a high degree of accuracy and variety of language in the predictable bullet points. This is an element that candidates can prepare to a high degree in advance. Many candidates achieved 12 marks or above with an increase in those gaining full marks.

There was evidence to suggest that most candidates had prepared very well for this paper.

## **Question paper 2: Listening**

The listening paper was based on the context of society. Society and culture are the widest of the contexts. Both listening texts contained language that was accessible and found in previous papers at this level.

The monologue compared rural and urban lifestyles and the conversation was about a sports centre. There were two supported questions, 1(a) and 2(c). There was optionality in questions 1(b) and 2(d). A 3-mark question, 1(c), with no optionality was included for the second time at this level.

The question paper performed as expected. The paper was appropriately demanding, with many questions accessible to most candidates, and some that were more challenging. There was good signposting towards the correct answers throughout. The marking team noted that there were less no responses than in 2022 and most candidates attempted all the questions.

Listening tends to be a more challenging component than the others, and a lack of basic vocabulary was evident.

## **Assignment–writing**

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

## **Performance–talking**

Candidates performed well in this assessment task, in line with performance in previous years.

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

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

#### **Question paper 1: Reading**

Candidates performed well in the following questions:

- ◆ 1(a)(i): any one from two required
- ◆ 1(c): supported question
- ◆ 1(d): any two of three required
- ◆ 1(e): good signposting
- ◆ 1(f): two adjectives as answers
- ◆ 2(b): two clear answers separated by 'and'
- ◆ 2(c)(i): optionality created due to typesetting
- ◆ 2(d): clearly signposted answer with accessible vocabulary

#### **Question paper 1: Writing**

Most candidates coped well with the predictable bullet points displaying a good range of vocabulary, grammatical structures and tenses. Most candidates were well-prepared for the task and had good time management and exam technique between the writing and reading papers.

The unpredictable bullet point about communication skills was tackled well by most candidates.

There were several extremely good candidate answers that used language more consistent with Higher level.

#### **Question paper 2: Listening**

Candidates performed well in the following questions:

- ◆ 1(a): supported question with numerical answer
- ◆ 1(b): any two of three required
- ◆ 1(d): weather answers
- ◆ 2(b): optionality added into answer scheme
- ◆ 2(c): supported question with time answers
- ◆ 2(e): well signposted with vocabulary close to English

## Areas that candidates found demanding

### Question paper 1: Reading

Candidates found the following areas challenging:

#### Text 1 (employability)

Question 1(b): first job. Candidates did recognise the ordinal number *a' chiad* (first) but some guessed that it was her first day.

#### Text 2 (learning)

Question 2(a): opens your mind and gives you a (good) understanding of people. A lot of information was required for this question. Some candidates didn't put enough information and missed the *d' inntinn* (your mind).

#### Text 3 (culture)

Question 3(b): climbed high mountains on the north-east. Some candidates used information relating to other activities as they didn't read the question correctly, which signposted towards activities in the first week of his trip.

Question 3(c): connected to Scotland and his mum's ancestors were from there. Most candidates got the first mark but misread *sinnsearan* as *seanmhair*.

### Question paper 1: Writing

Candidates found the following areas challenging:

Unpredictable bullet point 2: ask any questions about the job. Overall, most candidates made a good attempt at answering this bullet point, but it was clear there was a lack of practice in composing questions. This bullet has not appeared in the National 5 Gaelic (Learners) papers before, but it has appeared in several other languages since 2014.

### Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates found the following questions challenging:

- ◆ 1(e) 'useful and bad': candidates put 'good and bad'. Both these words are National 5 level vocabulary, and this points to a lack of basics
- ◆ 2(a) 'beside the park': some candidates struggled with the directional word
- ◆ 2(c): some candidates struggled with the difference between half past (*leth uair an deidh*) and quarter past (*cairteal an deidh*)
- ◆ 2(f)(i) 'December last year': candidates struggled with both the month and time
- ◆ 2(f)(ii) 'very tasty and really healthy': candidates missed the qualifiers
- ◆ 2(g) 'go (to the sports centre) more often': candidates struggled with the comparative

## Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Centres should ensure that candidates are presented at an appropriate level.

### Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ practise reading the key words in the questions as signposts for where the answers are in the passages
- ◆ read through each question carefully and highlight or underline the correct answer in the text
- ◆ do not write in sentences in the reading paper
- ◆ remember that two elements are required for a mark at National 5, unless one of the words is very close to English
- ◆ read to the end of sentences to make sure they have all the information needed for an answer. Only answer the question that is being asked
- ◆ are familiar with qualifiers. In this year's question paper the following appeared and were required for answers: *mòran, tòrr, mu, a h-uile*
- ◆ practise their dictionary skills so that they can use this resource to their advantage, for example when looking up a word remove any *h* as the second letter. If there are several options of meanings, then candidates should choose the one that best fits the context of the reading passage
- ◆ read texts that test them on a wide range of grammatical structures and vocabulary appropriate to the level. They should learn common context vocabulary and grammatical structures as this saves time in the exam. This includes adjectives, comparatives and plurals. Vocabulary such as time and directional words can appear in any context
- ◆ practise the reading paper in conjunction with writing papers in order to replicate the timed conditions of the exam
- ◆ practise their skills by using past papers that are available on SQA's website

## Question paper 1: Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ prepare and practice 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 avoid using overly simple sentences
- ◆ leave a gap between their answers to each bullet point to make it clear that they have addressed each element
- ◆ are reminded that all the information provided must be relevant for a job application, for example it is not necessary to provide a description of their home area
- ◆ know they do not need to count their words. There is no penalty for length of answers, although responses that are too long may be self-penalising as there is a higher chance of inaccuracies
- ◆ are strongly encouraged to showcase a range of structures, tenses, regular and irregular verbs and verb structures, where appropriate. Awareness of prepositional pronouns and idiom suitable to the level is also desirable
- ◆ with regards to the unpredictable bullet points, know they may encounter a bullet point they have not seen in a previous question paper
- ◆ are reminded that it may be possible for them to adapt a sentence structure used in the predictable bullet points to tackle the unpredictable bullet points
- ◆ practise a range of unpredictable answers. It may help if teachers and lecturers look at all of the modern languages to see the range of points previously covered
- ◆ practise the writing in conjunction with reading papers in order to replicate the timed conditions of the final exam
- ◆ are encouraged to do the writing paper first in the first exam followed by the reading paper

## Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ read the introduction and questions carefully
- ◆ practise reading the key words in the questions as signposts for what type of answers they will hear in the passages, and use the silence in the recording to note the types of vocabulary they expect to hear
- ◆ familiarise themselves with common vocabulary and grammar from across the four contexts
- ◆ have regular opportunities to develop their listening skills
- ◆ 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 helps to further contextualise common language that could arise in a question paper
- ◆ practise their skills by using past papers that are available on SQA's website



## **Performance–talking**

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ familiarise themselves with the Modern Languages productive grammar grid and the detailed marking instructions to ensure that language is appropriate for the level
- ◆ have regular conversations with peers and interlocutors, using social language and the language that is used in the performance on a frequent basis throughout the course

## 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](#).