



# **Course report 2024**

## **Higher 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 with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

# Grade boundary and statistical information

## Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 63

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 50

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

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

<b>A</b>	Number of candidates	31	Percentage	62	Cumulative percentage	62	Minimum mark required	84
<b>B</b>	Number of candidates	8	Percentage	16	Cumulative percentage	78	Minimum mark required	72
<b>C</b>	Number of candidates	5	Percentage	10	Cumulative percentage	88	Minimum mark required	60
<b>D</b>	Number of candidates	4	Percentage	8	Cumulative percentage	96	Minimum mark required	48
<b>No award</b>	Number of candidates	2	Percentage	4	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

We have not applied rounding 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 statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

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

The course assessment covered all four contexts: society, learning, employability, culture across all four components, which offered candidates flexibility, personalisation, and choice. The question papers and marking instructions offered an appropriate level of challenge at Higher level.

The assignment–writing was reinstated as part of the course assessment this year, which affected the overall performance as this is an area where candidates perform well.

The question papers largely performed as expected. Feedback from the marking team and teachers and lecturers indicated it was positively received by centres and was fair and accessible for candidates. Most candidates understood what was required and completed the required sections in the allocated time.

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

The reading question paper was accessible to all candidates and the level was appropriate for Higher. The subject explored the world of work and was very relevant to candidates. The balance of accessible and more challenging questions, especially the overall purpose question and the translation, helped differentiate candidate performance in line with expectations.

Some candidates performed particularly well in the translation and achieved high marks, especially those who translated in comprehensible English rather than in a literal translation. The translation comprises five sense units and each unit contains different challenges and complexity.

The overall purpose question tested candidates' inferential skills and proved challenging for some candidates. A few candidates did not attempt this question. In general, there was a good response to the comprehension questions and many candidates understood most of the main points.

### **Question paper 1: Directed writing**

In this question paper, candidates were given the choice of two stimuli from the contexts of employability and learning, each with six bullet points to address. Most candidates addressed all the bullet points, although the quality of grammar and syntax was varied. This discriminated between A and C candidates. The paper performed in line with expectations.

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

The listening question paper consisted of a monologue and a dialogue. The monologue was a podcast about different lifestyles. The dialogue was a radio presenter interviewing a support worker for teenagers, discussing the impact technology has on a teenager's health. Questions varied in level of demand and were well signposted to help candidates locate answers. The question paper largely performed as expected and discriminated between A and C candidates.

## **Assignment–writing**

The assignment–writing was reinstated for session 2023–24. Candidates produce a piece of writing in the modern language of 200–250 words using detailed and complex language. The piece of writing is based on one of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, culture. Candidates performed well in this component.

## **Performance–talking**

The course component performed as expected.

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

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

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

Overall, many candidates performed well, with few weaker performances. Many candidates achieved more than half of the available marks. Some candidates achieved high marks, even in the more challenging questions.

Candidates answered question 1(b) very well and most candidates included the plural answer, where required. Most candidates were awarded marks for the overall purpose question; although, with more practice candidates could achieve higher marks. Several candidates did very well.

The translation was of a good standard and some candidates achieved high marks. A few candidates received full marks, which they can only achieve with a very good translation of the text into English. Most candidates attempted to translate most of the translation.

#### **Question paper 1: Directed writing**

Many candidates performed very well in the directed writing question paper. Most candidates chose scenario 2, where they had to write about a school or college exchange visit to Canada. Candidates coped very well with the two-part first bullet point in both scenarios. Most candidates covered all the bullet points. Some candidates used separate paragraphs for each bullet point, which made it easier to identify these.

Some candidates achieved high marks for responses with a high degree of accuracy and a variety of structures. Candidates used a variety of idiomatic expressions. It was clear that candidates were well-prepared for the question paper and confident with its requirements.

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

The monologue was challenging for candidates and there was a wide range of marks in candidates' performances. Some candidates gained high marks and attempted most questions. Most candidates attempted a response to the questions in the dialogue.

In general, candidates found the dialogue more accessible than the monologue, although candidates would benefit from practising answering all of the set questions.

## **Assignment–writing**

The assignment–writing was well done, and candidates chose a variety of topics. Most candidates used detailed and complex language and a wide range of structures. The correct use of a wide range of regular and irregular verbs and tenses was evident, as were idioms with a good degree of grammatical accuracy.

## **Performance–talking**

Most candidates performed well. They spoke fluently and used a level of language resource appropriate to the level. Most candidates spoke with pronunciation and intonation that was readily understood.

## **Areas that candidates found demanding**

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

Some candidates did not provide enough detail for the overall purpose question. They included quotes from the text but did not highlight their significance in the passage. Some candidates did not give enough detail in their answers. Candidates sometimes focused on minor details in the passage rather than considering the whole text. Many responses contained irrelevant information and lacked detail from the text.

Some candidates quoted from answers already given. Some of the answers were too vague and did not have enough details from the text to justify the answer. Candidates' dictionary skills occasionally led to a lack of clarity in answers: they should always check their answer to ensure it makes sense.

In the translation, a few candidates did not translate the plural form, which is an essential skill at this level. There was use of the incorrect pronoun, poor use of the negative *gun*, and the comparative. A few candidates did not manage to finish the translation.

### **Question paper 1: Directed writing**

Some candidates had difficulty with more basic aspects of grammar, syntax, plurals, and tenses. Some incorrectly used the conditional, for example *bhithinn mi*.

Some candidates who chose scenario 1, found the fifth bullet point challenging and had difficulty describing the atmosphere during the band's performance. Some candidates submitted their writing in one paragraph.

## **Question paper 2: Listening**

Candidates continue to find the listening paper challenging. A few candidates only attempted to answer one or two questions.

Many candidates struggled with qualifiers and numbers, which detracted from their overall performance.

## **Assignment–writing**

Some candidates were not prepared for the structure of the assignment–writing. This should be a discursive piece and different from the directed writing piece.

Although some candidates' writing was of a high standard, they missed out on marks because they did not refer to their title and had weak content for a discursive piece of writing.

## **Performance–talking**

A few candidates found the performance demanding when the conversation became less structured and more unpredictable.

## Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

### Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ focus on the main points to ensure they are answering the question
- ◆ know that they can only achieve full marks in the translation when there is a very good translating of the text into English
- ◆ take note of all the plural nouns in the translation
- ◆ develop their comprehension skills holistically: this is helpful in answering the overall purpose question
- ◆ provide a clear and concise answer, including justification from the text, to show an accurate reading of the text
- ◆ are not vague in the overall purpose question and do not re-use answers to previous questions
- ◆ practise identifying areas of the text that gain no marks. These often contain useful information for the overall purpose question
- ◆ make good use of their dictionary when required to translate words
- ◆ check over their answers at the end of the exam
- ◆ are aware of the importance of qualifiers and quantifiers

### Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ proofread and edit their work, and factor in time for this during the exam
- ◆ practise using forms of reported speech, dative case, conditional, plurals and verbs
- ◆ practise word order, verbs and tenses, to help achieve higher marks
- ◆ address all bullet points
- ◆ use the productive grammar grid in the appendix of the [Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) to show the type of language use that is expected at Higher level
- ◆ attempt to write six distinctive paragraphs addressing all six bullet points to the same extent and length

### Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ use the time allocated to study the questions in advance: this is helpful in anticipating the information required
- ◆ are aware when the plural is used, and practise numbers, dates, months, modifiers, days and years as they make many mistakes here
- ◆ practise listening exercises frequently and use Gaelic in class as often as possible to further develop their listening skills



## Assignment–writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ fully understand the requirements of the assignment
- ◆ write in a focused and structured way, write in paragraphs, and leave a line between paragraphs
- ◆ are aware of the discursive nature of this piece of writing
- ◆ know they can refer to other contexts in their writing if they wish
- ◆ express or discuss different viewpoints, while demonstrating relevant content, ideas and opinions and, where applicable, give reasons for their opinions
- ◆ draw conclusions and demonstrate language resource (variety and range of structures) and accuracy
- ◆ have adequate time and practice throughout the year to prepare for this type of writing
- ◆ practise how to structure a piece of writing and develop techniques to check the accuracy of their writing
- ◆ have opportunities for remediation and consolidation of their writing
- ◆ receive feedback on areas for improvement. Teachers and lecturers should do this by using, for example, SQA’s writing improvement code or their own code

## Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should:

- ◆ provide candidates with talking practice in Gaelic, ideally twice a week. This practice should include regular conversations about personal information and daily routine, and using relevant grammar, language structures, for example different tenses and vocabulary from subjects across the four contexts, as appropriate to the level
- ◆ support candidates to choose contexts and topics that allow them to use a range of language resource
- ◆ focus on practice that supports candidates to use the correct forms of the verb used in a question as either the affirmative or negative, a particular feature of Gaelic. This helps candidates to sustain the conversation more effectively
- ◆ always read the course documentation on the Higher [Modern Languages web page](#)
- ◆ remind candidates of the assessment conditions for the performance–talking
- ◆ ensure candidates practise the recommended timings for the performance. An extended performance will not help candidates who find the performance demanding
- ◆ ensure candidates know the number of words they can use as heading prompts

## 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.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).