



# **Course report 2024**

## **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 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: 116

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 184

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

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

<b>A</b>	Number of candidates	100	Percentage	54.3	Cumulative percentage	54.3	Minimum mark required	84
<b>B</b>	Number of candidates	32	Percentage	17.4	Cumulative percentage	71.7	Minimum mark required	72
<b>C</b>	Number of candidates	19	Percentage	10.3	Cumulative percentage	82.1	Minimum mark required	60
<b>D</b>	Number of candidates	21	Percentage	11.4	Cumulative percentage	93.5	Minimum mark required	48
<b>No award</b>	Number of candidates	12	Percentage	6.5	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**

Overall, the 2024 National 5 Gaelic (Learners) course assessment performed as expected and was fair and accessible to all candidates. Feedback from centres was positive about the level and challenge of the assessment. The assessments sampled language from all contexts and the content was relevant. Most candidates coped well with the level and were able to complete the assessments within the allocated time.

There was a range of candidate performances, but it was clear that most candidates were well prepared for assessment. This year, there was an increase in the number of candidates entered.

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

The reading question paper was accessible to all candidates, providing the level of demand required at National 5. The assessment performed as expected. There was a range of performances, and some candidates gained full marks. Some candidates did not provide enough detail from the text to access all the available marks. The marking instructions allowed candidates to offer a range of answers to demonstrate their understanding from a range of contexts.

Text 1, healthy lifestyle, was a topic that most candidates could relate to. Text 2, on the context of employability, is covered extensively in centres as it forms the basis of the writing question paper. Text 3, Highland Games, was culturally specific. This text had some misinterpretation due to some candidates not being familiar with the Highland Games.

There were less no responses than in 2023 and most candidates tried to answer all questions. More candidates achieved above 15 marks than in previous years.

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

The writing paper performed as expected. Candidates had to reply to a job advert for a nursery 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 skills working with children, and state when they could start 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 level in advance. Many candidates achieved 12 marks or above with an increase in those gaining full marks. There was a fall in the number of candidates achieving 0 or 4 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 learning. Learning is covered extensively by centres and both listening texts sampled vocabulary from all contexts. The language was accessible and habitually found in previous papers at this level.

The monologue was about a person's experience of school and the conversation discussed the life of a working parent during Covid 19 lockdown. There were three supported questions 1(c), 2(a) and (g). There was optionality in questions 1(f) and 2(e). All questions were worth 1 or 2 marks.

The question paper performed as expected. The paper was appropriately demanding, with questions accessible to most candidates, and some that were more challenging. There was good signposting towards the answers throughout. There were less no responses than in 2023, with most candidates attempting all questions.

## **Assignment–writing**

The assignment–writing was reinstated this session. Candidates had to complete a written task of 120–200 words on a topic of their choice, from the contexts of society, learning and culture.

The assignment–writing performed as expected, with most candidates producing high quality pieces of work that achieved 16 or 20 marks. There were some interesting and creative examples of stimuli from some centres, although some other centres used the same stimuli for their cohort and scaffolded the assignment to a very high level.

This aspect of the course allows for personalisation and choice. Candidates chose a range of topics appropriate to the level, for example school, technology, family, healthy living, free time, holidays. There were a range of performances and candidates generally did very well. Most candidates chose an appropriate title and chose the correct context box.

The assignment allowed candidates to write about a topic in depth, and they had to provide opinions and give reasons. Most assignments were well structured using a range of verbs and verb forms, time phrases and connectives.

## **Performance–talking**

The course component performed as expected. Both elements of the performance, the presentation and the conversation, functioned as expected.

## Section 2: comments on candidate performance

### Areas that candidates performed well in

#### Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, candidates performed well in the reading question paper. Candidates engaged well with the texts and performance was consistent over all three sections, indicating that candidates managed their time well and had a good grasp of exam technique.

##### Text 1 (society)

- ◆ question 1(a): supported question, tick the correct statement. Most candidates were able to identify 'it's not cheaper'
- ◆ question 1(b): optionality, any two from four. Most candidates were able to identify the different types of food with appropriate detail. The most common answers were 'green vegetables' and 'white fish'
- ◆ question 1(c): complete the sentence. Most candidates were able to complete the sentence - if you do exercise regularly, you will 'feel better'

##### Text 2 (employability)

- ◆ question 2(a): most candidates were able to identify *obair pairt-ùine* (part-time work)
- ◆ question 2(d): optionality, any three from four. Most candidates were able to identify and answer with the appropriate amount of detail
- ◆ question 2(e): most candidates were able to correctly translate *ùine shaor* (free time) with some variations in English expression
- ◆ question 2(f): optionality, any two from three. The most common answers were *a dhol a-mach airson cuairt* (go for a walk or trip) and *geammanan coimpiutair a chluich* (play computer games or gaming)

##### Text 3 (culture)

- ◆ question 3(c): optionality, any two from three. Most candidates were able to gain 2 marks in this question. There was some mistranslation of *farpaisich* (competitors) as 'competitions'
- ◆ question 3(d): most candidates correctly translated *toileachais agus spòrs* and gained the mark

#### 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 skills working with children was tackled well by most candidates.

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

## Question paper 2: Listening

### Item 1 (monologue)

- ◆ question 1(b): most candidates were able to gain the mark by using the scaffolding in the question
- ◆ question 1(c): supported question, tick two boxes. Most candidates gained 2 marks
- ◆ question 1(e): there was a range of English answers for this question and most candidates gained the mark

### Item 2 (conversation)

- ◆ question 2(a): supported question, tick one correct statement. Most candidates were correctly able to identify 'thin and tall' as the description
- ◆ question 2(d): most candidates performed well and gained at least 1 mark
- ◆ question 2(e): optionality, any two from four. Most candidates performed well in this question and gained 2 marks. Some candidates misinterpreted the family members. The most common answer was 'riding bikes' (*a' dol a-mach air baidhsagalan*)
- ◆ question 2(h): most candidates were correctly able to identify 'guitar' and 'accordion' as the correct instruments

## Assignment–writing

Overall, candidates performed well in the assignment–writing. There was a range of interesting topics, and most candidates were able to write in depth about their chosen topic with a good element of personalisation and choice.

Most candidates were able to write to and beyond the word count and provide a structured text.

Most candidates were able to use conjunctions to help structure their texts and give opinions as well as justifying them. There was an appropriate range of language and grammatical structures. Candidates mostly 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, with a good level of grammatical accuracy.

Some centres opted for all candidates to do the same topic, whereas other centres allowed candidates free choice.

## Performance–talking

Most candidates performed well in the presentation element of the performance–talking. Most ensured that they covered at least two different contexts across the two elements of the performance. Candidates spoke clearly and recovered from errors, which did not detract from the overall impression.

## Areas that candidates found challenging

### Question paper 1: Reading

#### Text 1 (society)

- ◆ question 1(d)(i): most candidates correctly identified the first point about why hillwalking is a good hobby with 'you don't need to pay'. However, some candidates didn't provide enough detail for the second point 'good for your health'. The most common answer was 'it is good for you' or 'healthy for you'
- ◆ question 1(d)(ii): some candidates did not provide enough detail. *Bidh do chasan glè ghoirt* needs to have the qualifier 'very' in the answer, 'your legs will be very sore'
- ◆ question 1(e): some candidates missed the detail necessary to gain the 3 marks. Most candidates were able to identify the words within the answers but there was misinterpretation in their expression in English. In the first point *Cadal airson seachd gu naoi uairean a thìde gach oidhche* (sleep for 7 to 9 hours) some candidates translated this as 'go to sleep between 7 and 9 o'clock'. *Còisich deich mìle ceum a h-uile latha* (walk 10,000 steps) some candidates missed the word *ceum* (steps) and translated the point as 'walk 10 miles'. *Na òl cus cofaidh no tì* (don't drink too much coffee or tea) some candidates missed the negative and others missed the word *cus* (too much)

#### Text 2 (employability)

- ◆ question 2(b): optionality, any two from three. Some candidates missed the detail required to gain the marks, *taighean-bidh anns a' bhaile* (restaurants in town), *bùthan anns a' choimhearsnachd* (community shops) and *taighean-dhealbh ionadail* (local cinemas). Some candidates mentioned the places only
- ◆ question 2(c): some candidates struggled with the dictionary skill involved in finding the answer to the hyphenated word *cunntas-beatha* (curriculum vitae)

#### Text 3 (culture)

- ◆ question 3(a): some candidates missed the plural in *ceudan de bhliadhnaichean* (hundreds of years). The most common answers were 'a hundred years' and 'over a hundred years'
- ◆ question 3(b): some candidates missed *eadar* (between) and some mistranslated the months
- ◆ question 3(e): optionality, any three from four. Some candidates mistranslated *dannsa Gàidhealach* as 'Gaelic dancing' rather than 'Highland dancing'. There was a range of interpretations for *cabar a thionndaidh* (cabers) due to dictionary misuse and not understanding the culturally specific element of this text
- ◆ question 3(f): some candidates missed the irregular superlative as *motha* (biggest)
- ◆ question 3(g): some candidates missed the adjective in *ceangal mòr aca ri Alba* (a big connection to Scotland)

## Question paper 1: Writing

- ◆ some candidates are writing a formal introduction or discussing their hometown, which is not required, and some struggled to do this well
- ◆ some candidates did not provide a range of tenses or different verb forms
- ◆ the language was complicated in parts and some candidates made errors that detracted from the overall impression, particularly where chunks of learned material were missed out
- ◆ some candidates are labelling their paragraphs and adding a word count, which is not required
- ◆ some candidates were not well-prepared for the first four bullet points, despite the predictability

### Bullet point 1 (personal details)

### Bullet point 2 (school, college, education experience)

- ◆ some candidates only coped with the language in the first two bullet points
- ◆ some candidates wrote about what they want to do in the future with their education, which is not required

### Bullet point 3 (skills and interests)

- ◆ a few candidates wrote about free-time activities, with no mention of skills or qualities

### Bullet point 4 (work experience)

- ◆ some candidates wrote in the present tense, which limited the range of tenses in the piece overall

### Bullet point 5 (skills working with children)

### Bullet point 6 (when you can start the job)

- ◆ most candidates attempted bullet points 5 and 6
- ◆ the accuracy of the bullet points deteriorated significantly in the last two bullet points and a considerable number of candidates were unable to form basic sentences
- ◆ most candidates attempted all six bullet points. Many encountered difficulties in the final two unpredictable bullet points, particularly number 6, indicating that writing spontaneously was challenging
- ◆ many candidates kept the final two bullet points simple, which worked overall

## Question paper 2: Listening

### Item 1 (monologue)

- ◆ question 1(a): some candidates struggled to identify *Creideamh* (religion)
- ◆ question 1(d): some candidates missed the qualifier *a h-uile* (every) and some candidates mistranslated the day of the week
- ◆ question 1(f): optionality, any two from four. Some candidates mistranslated *seasgad sgoilear 's a h-ochd* (68 pupils) as '78 pupils'. Some candidates missed the directional work *faisg air* (near) in *faisg air an Òban* (near Oban). Some candidates missed the qualifier *gu mòr* (a lot) in *is toigh leam m' obair gu mòr* (I like my work a lot)



## Item 2 (conversation)

- ◆ question 2(b): some candidates missed the qualifier *meadhan* (middle) so did not gain the mark
- ◆ question 2(c): some candidates misinterpreted *garradh* (garden) as 'garage' in *garradh mòr* (big garden)
- ◆ question 2(f): some candidates misread the word 'when' and instead provided an answer for 'where the speaker worked'
- ◆ question 2(g): supported question, complete the sentence. Some candidates struggled to write the times correctly, particularly quarter to and quarter past. We remind candidates and centres that writing  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 11 is just as acceptable as 10.45. This may help some candidates

## Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing was developed to allow candidates to write in depth about one topic.

A small number of candidates wrote about a range of topics, which did not allow them to provide sufficient detail about a particular topic.

More personalisation and choice in the stimuli from centres would have further enhanced candidates' marks.

Some assignments were almost identical in presentation. This high degree of scaffolding can hinder candidates' opportunity to express their own ideas and reasons and give a range of structures.

A few candidates did not provide a title, or provided a title that was not suitable for their piece of writing.

Centres should follow the advice given in the Understanding Standard packs on SQA's secure site, and refer to the assignment–writing marking instructions in the [National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification](#) to ensure that the assignments adhere to the correct standards.

## Performance–talking

A few candidates found the conversation demanding. While the conversation is usually more demanding than the performance, it was evident that some candidates struggled as they had not prepared.

A few candidates who had not prepared enough, or attempted to use language outwith their capabilities, struggled with the presentation.

## Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

### Question paper 1: Reading

Techers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ practise reading the key words in the questions as signposts for where the answers are in the passages
- ◆ read each question carefully and highlight or underline the correct answer in the text
- ◆ are aware that questions and answers are in chronological order
- ◆ do not write in sentences in the reading paper
- ◆ are aware that two words are required for 1 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 required information for an answer
- ◆ only answer the question that is being asked
- ◆ are familiar with qualifiers, for example *cus, glè mòran, tòrr, mu, a h-uile*
- ◆ practise 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. Candidates should be able to find hyphenated words
- ◆ 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, plurals and time. Vocabulary such as time and directional words can appear in any context
- ◆ practise the reading paper in conjunction with writing papers 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

Examples of common errors:

- ◆ missing *h* or *d* from the end of words
- ◆ *còig-deug bliadhna a dh'aois*: 'Gaelic Orthographic Conventions' dictates that with a noun it should be *còig bliadhna deug a dh'aois*
- ◆ *a' cheathramh bliadhna* was spelt incorrectly
- ◆ the structure *tha...a' cordadh rium* was inconsistent at times
- ◆ the subject 'maths' does not have an *s* on the end in Gaelic: *Matamataig* not *Matamataigs*
- ◆ the use of apostrophes was inconsistent

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ prepare and practice 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
- ◆ know that all information provided must be relevant for a job application, for example it is not necessary to provide a description of their home area
- ◆ give concise answers. Some candidates this year wrote extensively about education experience
- ◆ 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
- ◆ if typing their answers, turn off English auto-correct
- ◆ are strongly encouraged to showcase a range of structures, tenses, regular and irregular verbs and verb structures, where appropriate
- ◆ are aware of prepositional pronouns and idiom suitable to the level
- ◆ with regards to the unpredictable bullet points, know they may encounter a bullet point they have not seen in a previous question paper
- ◆ know 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 the Modern Languages question papers 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
- ◆ do the writing paper in the first exam followed by the reading

## Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ read the introduction and questions carefully, particularly looking out for words such as where and when
- ◆ 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, including adjective modifiers
- ◆ are aware that two words are required for 1 mark at National 5
- ◆ if they have provided multiple answers to a question, remember to indicate which answer they are choosing. If answers are contradictory and no clear preference has been made, they will not gain the mark
- ◆ do not write in sentences
- ◆ have regular opportunities to develop their listening skills
- ◆ maximise their exposure to Gaelic by listening to Gaelic being spoken in their centres, media and community (if applicable) as this helps to understand common language that could arise in a question paper
- ◆ practise past papers available on [SQA's website](#)

## Assignment–writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ are aware that the task is on the context of society, learning or culture
- ◆ know that the assignment–writing must not be the same as their job application for the writing exam
- ◆ keep to their chosen title or choose a title that reflects their work
- ◆ read the marking instructions to ensure their assignments demonstrate the correct amount of detail required. Particularly the language resource section, which asks for a range of opinions, ideas and reasons
- ◆ show the range of their ability and knowledge in the language and avoid repetition of structures, verbs and verb forms
- ◆ do not produce a discursive piece of writing at this level
- ◆ if typing their assignment, should pay attention to spacing, apostrophes and English auto-corrections

Teachers and lecturers should:

- ◆ be careful not to overly rely on providing extensive scaffolding for candidates as it removes the element of personalisation and choice. Open topics, such as holidays tended to do well
- ◆ be cautious of overcorrecting candidates' work, and use SQA's writing improvement code, or their own code, when returning the draft to candidates

## Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should:

- ◆ provide candidates with weekly talking practice. 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, where needed, to choose contexts that allow them to use a range of language resource. Topics, for example discussing family, may not provide enough opportunity to use any other tense than the present
- ◆ ensure candidates understand and use a range of tenses in both presentation and conversation
- ◆ give candidates more advice around the language that is suitable for the level. Some candidates attempted to use language more suitable for Advanced Higher while finding some aspects of National 5 language demanding
- ◆ always read the course documentation on the [Modern Languages National 5 web page](#)
- ◆ know the assessment conditions for the performance:
  - the performance, both presentation and conversation, should be delivered and recorded as one performance
  - the conversation should follow naturally from the presentation, ensuring that the conversation covers another context from the presentation
- ◆ remind candidates of the assessment conditions for the performance–talking
- ◆ ensure candidates practise the recommended timings for the two elements of 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](#).