



Course report 2025

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.

For information about the performance–talking, which is internally assessed, please refer to the 2024–25 Qualification Verification Summary Report on the [subject page](#) of our website.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 50

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 70

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	36	51.4	51.4	83
B	13	18.6	70.0	71
C	13	18.6	88.6	59
D	4	5.7	94.3	47
No award	4	5.7	100	Not applicable

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 or equal to 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 question papers performed as expected. Markers noted they were positively received by centres and were fair and accessible for candidates. Most candidates understood what was required and completed the papers in the allocated time.

Question paper 1: Reading

The question paper was appropriate for the level. The text was about working at home and was 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 very 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, which some candidates found challenging, and there were a few no responses.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The question paper performed as expected. Candidates had the choice of two stimuli from the contexts of learning and culture, each with six bullet points to address. Most candidates chose scenario 1, about a school or college exchange visit to Nova Scotia. Most candidates addressed all bullet points, although the quality of grammar and syntax varied. This discriminated between A and C candidates.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper consisted of a monologue and a dialogue. The monologue was about young people moving away from rural areas in Scotland and the dialogue was about someone moving back home during the pandemic. Questions varied in level of demand and were well signposted to help candidates locate answers. The question paper performed as expected and discriminated between A and C candidates.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as intended. Candidates produce a piece of discursive writing, using detailed and complex language in response to the stimulus.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper 1: Reading

Many candidates performed better than last year, although there were a few weaker performances. Most candidates achieved more than half of the available marks and answered most of the questions. In the more challenging questions, many candidates achieved a high mark. Dictionary skills occasionally led to incomprehensible answers.

Question 8, the overall purpose question:

- most candidates received marks for this question
- some candidates did not give enough detail in their answers
- a few candidates focused on minor details in the text rather than considering the whole article, and their responses contained irrelevant information and lacked 'detail from the text' to justify their answer
- a few candidates repeated responses from other questions

Question 9, the translation:

- some candidates achieved very high marks; however, only a few received full marks. This can only be achieved if there is a very good translation of the text into English
- most candidates attempted to translate all of the text, although a few did not manage to finish it
- a few candidates did not translate the plural form when required, which is an essential skill at this level
- some candidates chose to do the translation before the comprehension questions. This strategy is often disadvantageous to candidates as they do not yet have the full context of the text

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Most candidates did well in this paper and gave some very good responses.

- many candidates coped very well with the two-part first bullet point in both scenarios
- most candidates covered all bullet points
- some candidates had a high degree of accuracy and used a variety of structures and achieved high marks
- some candidates had difficulty with more basic aspects of grammar, syntax, plurals, and tenses
- some candidates incorrectly used the conditional, for example *bhithinn mi*
- some candidates used a variety of idiomatic expressions
- many candidates were well-prepared with the requirements for this paper
- most candidates who chose scenario 2 wrote well and covered all bullet points
- some essays lacked structure and were written as one paragraph
- some candidates used separate paragraphs for each bullet point; this makes it clearer which bullet points are being addressed

Question paper 2: Listening

The monologue was challenging for some candidates and there was a range of marks.

- a few candidates only attempted one or two questions
- some candidates attempted most questions and gained high marks
- most candidates attempted the questions in the dialogue
- most candidates found the dialogue more accessible than the monologue
- many candidates struggled with qualifiers and numbers

Assignment–writing

- most candidates did well in the assignment–writing, and chose a variety of topics
- most candidates used detailed and complex language and a range of structures
- many candidates correctly used of a range of regular and irregular verbs, and tenses and idioms with a good degree of grammatical accuracy
- some pieces of writing did not refer to the title, were not discursive and had weak content, and candidates missed out on marks
- some of the writing was of a high standard

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
- are aware they can only achieve full marks in the translation when there is a very good translation 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, concise answer with justification from the text, to show an accurate reading of the text
- are not vague in the overall purpose question and do not reuse 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. Candidates can miss out on marks for the omission or mistranslation of these
- are aware of the importance of qualifiers and quantifiers
- leave time to check over their answers at the end of the exam to ensure they make sense

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- practise using forms of reported speech, dative case, conditional, plurals and verbs
- practise word order, verbs and tenses to achieve the higher marks
- know they must address all bullet points. If three or more of the bullet points are not addressed, the mark awarded would be 0, as detailed in the marking instructions
- make use of the productive grammar grid in the [Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) as a guide to the type of language use that is expected at Higher level
- write six distinct paragraphs that address each bullet point in a balanced way
- set aside time in the exam to read over their writing, for example, gender, spelling, adjectival agreements using the dictionary

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- use the time before the recording starts to read the questions to gain a sense of the content of the text
- are aware when the plural is used, and practise numbers, dates, months, modifiers, days and years
- practise listening skills and use Gaelic in class as often as possible to develop their listening skills
- attempt to answer all questions rather than leaving them blank

Assignment–writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- fully understand the requirements of the assignment
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- write in paragraphs and leave a line between paragraphs
- are aware of the discursive nature of this piece of writing, and practise this type of writing throughout the year
- have opportunities for remediation and consolidation of their writing
- practise how to structure a piece of writing and develop techniques to check the accuracy of their writing
- write in a focused and structured way, and write in paragraphs
- practise how to structure a piece of writing
- develop techniques on how to check the accuracy of their writing
- 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
- view examples of discursive writing on our [Understanding Standards web page](#) to better understand the style of writing required in the assignment–writing

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, we aim 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, we hold 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 our 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. We 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.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).