



Course report 2025

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 with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

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: 132

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 148

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	51	34.5	34.5	84
B	54	36.5	70.9	72
C	28	18.9	89.9	60
D	13	8.8	98.6	48
No award	2	1.4	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

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

The passage this year was a short story adapted from an original by Iain Crichton Smith. It focused on a man doing up a house and coming across the names of the previous owners as he scraped the old wallpaper of the wall, prompting him to do something about his relationship with a girl in his office at work.

Most candidates fully engaged with the passage, and this was evident in responses to the questions. The text allowed the usual range of questions to be posed which differentiated between candidates, and these were seen to have been suitably challenging and fair.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Questions provided plenty of scope for candidates to write about the literature studied in their course. Most responses were based on prose and poetry, and these were mostly based on traditional texts which have been the mainstay of courses through the years. These include *Cisteachan Laighe*, *An Eala Bhàn*, *An Roghainn*, *Mairi Iain Mhurch' Chaluim*, *An Coigreach*, *Ann am Bosnia and Bùrn*. There were some texts which are not so commonly seen, such as *Leasachadh*, *Rodhag anns a' Bhliadhna 2000* and the newer text of *Playa de la Suerta*. Poetry was the most popular genre.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

The topic of the listening passage was a personal account of a visit to St Kilda. The question paper was set in line with previous years, and, in the main, candidates engaged well with the passage and questions. The paper was fair and accessible, and there was a range of responses. However, a significant number of candidates did not perform well in this component.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (assignment–writing)

There was a range of different topics presented for the assignment. These ranged from discursive pieces on topics such as zoos, technology, unhealthy foods, high streets dying; VAR, changing the times of the school day, social media, school uniform and vaping, to personal reflective pieces that covered topics such as specific hobbies and interests, family and pieces about other topics close to the candidate's heart. There were also a number of factual pieces about places or people along with creative pieces in the form of short stories.

Còmhradh (Performance–talking)

The performance–talking component performed as expected. A wide range of topics were discussed, with an appropriate approach applied throughout the assessment sample.

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.

The summary question, question 1, was done well by many candidates.

Question 2 which focused on word choice, repetition and onomatopoeia, was also done well by many candidates.

Question 8 which dealt with tone created by alliteration, was also done well by many candidates.

The final question which asked candidates to reflect on the messages from the story supported with evidence, also elicited some good responses, showing the high level of engagement with the paper's subject matter.

Most candidates attempted most questions in the time allocated.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Many candidates produced essays that shaped their knowledge towards the demands of the question. A few wrote quite lengthy, comprehensive responses and clearly demonstrated their knowledge of their chosen texts. Many candidates gave a number of quotations in their responses and analysed these quite effectively.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

Many candidates provided good answers for questions 1, 5 and 7. A few candidates performed very well.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (assignment–writing)

Markers again commented on the overall good quality of most responses and the range of different responses from candidates. Some candidates showed real flair in their writing skills. Some personal candidate responses showed close engagement with the task and conveyed their thoughts and feelings well. Candidates often effectively structured discursive pieces, and their voice and experience were central in their responses. They also made effective use of discursive techniques, such as question and specific word choice to engage the reader.

Còmhradh (Performance–talking)

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

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Some candidates did not answer all questions.

Some candidates did not express ideas clearly when explaining how examples of word choice or imagery worked, or when explaining ideas and feelings. A few candidates did not have the language skills to go beyond basic points, or they repeated the stem of the question without completing any analysis of the quotation or example used.

Some candidates did not give quotations or did not mention techniques for a number of questions, for example, question 4.

Question 5, where the simile of the candle in the darkness was to be explained in full, was not answered well by some candidates.

The explanation of the imagery in question 3 was not answered well by some candidates. Question 6 was similar in this respect, as some candidates did not answer what the question was asking for.

A few candidates quoted from outwith the parameters set of specific questions.

Some candidates missed out on marks as they did not give sufficient examples to match the number of marks being offered in some questions.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Many candidates crafted essays that addressed the demands of the chosen question. However, there were a number who did not do this effectively, or gave the 'guided tour' of a text, or in some cases, did not evaluate techniques and how the text was put together. Some did not effectively express opinions and show how points and evidence worked together, or include an evaluation of techniques and/or ideas. Some candidates selected material from their text that was not the most important or relevant to the question. Most candidates chose texts that worked well in producing an essay at Higher level. Markers had difficulty reading some essays due to illegible handwriting.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

While markers generally agreed that the vocabulary in the questions and passage was accessible, and that questions were clearly signposted, many candidates did not perform well in this component, particularly in questions 2, 6(a), 6(b) and 9.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (assignment–writing)

A few candidates could have proofread their work more effectively for sentence construction, spelling and grammar.

Some candidates submitted factual pieces that needed more of a context for them to stand by themselves and would have benefitted from adding a more personal dimension as to their choice. Markers had one or two queries about authenticity.

Some discursive essays, particularly on familiar topics, lacked anything that made them stand out and were somewhat basic.

Some creative essays lacked a satisfactory storyline which was often evident in their ending or a storyline which required re-reading.

Còmhradh (Performance–talking)

Candidates frequently did not make use of specialist vocabulary in the context of their chosen topic.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Candidates should get experience with fiction and non-fiction texts, and understand the different types of questions they may be asked and how to approach them.

Candidates must carefully read each question to avoid incorrect answers. This may seem simple, but under the pressure of time in the examination it can be easy to misinterpret what a particular question requires. Candidates do not need to repeat the question itself in their responses, and may wish to consider how clear, bulleted answers can be effective.

A few candidates used evidence from outwith the parameters of questions. They should use the line references as a guide to help them through the paper.

Candidates should ensure their handwriting and answers are clear in all questions. At times the legibility of answers can be a problem for markers.

Candidates should note the number of marks available for each question and try to give full examples and explanations to achieve these. They must give clear explanations as to how chosen quotations 'work' and focus on connotation and ideas suggested.

Candidates must develop the necessary breadth of language skills and vocabulary. Candidates should also mention techniques, for example, repetition, ellipsis or metaphor or word choice, where this is appropriate. They should also give examples when signposted by words such as 'Seall'.

Candidates should give the key part of quotations where necessary in answers. Some candidates did not clearly isolate specific words in quotations; or dealt with multiple quotations with one comment or brief analysis; or quoted the first and last words of a quotation without being specific as to what they were looking at in their

answer. Candidates should deal with each quotation separately, as merging quotations together into one answer often does not gain marks.

Candidates should answer questions on 'effectiveness', or those that ask for opinions on ideas, messages or themes, by linking to textual evidence. Candidates should answer questions that focus on specific features of the whole passage, such as question 12 in this paper, with this in mind. Candidates may need to connect to ideas or images or language earlier in the passage. They should also deal with techniques such as extended metaphor, and how to describe how endings of passages are effective.

Candidates should balance language skills against the demands of the Higher, along with time management of working through the paper.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

In literature essays, candidates should aim for a clear and polished writing style, providing sufficient detailed analysis and evaluation of effectiveness. Essays should flow smoothly as a whole, rather than reading as separate individual paragraphs. They should give personal appreciation and evaluation of examples and of the whole text. Candidates should avoid formulaic prepared essays and ensure their essays are written for the question set. They should avoid wasting time on long introductions, summaries, background information and long conclusions, and instead focus on adding to the body of the essay.

When writing about poetry, candidates should consider the effect of style and shape of 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.

Candidates should make sure they cover the key important areas of texts and deal with the whole text and not just select quotations they know. The quotations they select should advance the points they are making. Candidates should also ensure that crucial aspects of texts are covered, for example, the irony and ending of the short story *Burn* is important in showing the ideas within the story as a whole; or the

idea of coffins in the poem *Cisteachan Laighe*. Leaving out elements such as these can lead to an imbalance or a lack of depth in essays.

Some candidates use techniques to drive the essay. Where this can be appropriate on a specifically linked question, candidates must illustrate what the central ideas are in the text in any question.

Candidates, teachers and lecturers must ensure that texts used in essays are suitably challenging. Texts must have some substance to allow candidates to give sufficient depth to an essay at Higher level. This gives them the best chance of success.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

Candidates must read questions carefully, particularly those that require considered opinion and supporting evidence. They should take note of these types of questions in the time available to read through beforehand, to prepare them for answering. They should also note the number of marks for individual questions and any specific requirements that are set out. Candidates must give clear answers to questions rather than just writing down key words they have heard. Some candidates wrote down everything they heard but did not demonstrate understanding of what the question was asking. Good understanding of complex Gàidhlig is crucial, and practising listening skills helps candidate to prepare for this component.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (assignment–writing)

Successful assignments were characterised by an effective connection between the writer and the piece itself and consequently that important connection with the reader was made. Pieces of writing that had the writer's persona come through were effective. This was true not just for personal reflective pieces but also discursive pieces.

In creative pieces such as short stories, candidates should shape the narrative along with character and setting. They could, for example, create an episode or chapter of

a longer story. They should also consider how they make ideas in the story clear at first reading.

Factual pieces that have a personal connection or element to candidates are usually more successful. A piece that has a personal connection to the place, or demonstrates an interest in a topic, creates the connection with the reader more effectively, than a piece that just relates the history of a particular place.

Candidates should know how the techniques they learn in other elements of the course can be employed in their own writing to effect.

Candidates should check accuracy in the whole piece not just part of it. They should be aware of the authenticity of the piece and how pieces exhibit the style and ability of the writer.

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

Centres must ensure that they have strong internal verification processes and those with a small cohort should work collaboratively with other centres.

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](#).