Course report 2026

Gaelic (Learners) Advanced Higher, SCQF level 7

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question papers and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

Copyright © Qualifications Scotland 2026

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 12

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 7

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	2	28.6	28.6	140
B	4	57.1	85.7	120
C	1	14.3	100	100
D	0	0	100	80
No award	0	0	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find statistical reports on our website.

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's 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 make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use 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.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

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.

How the course assessment performed

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The reading and translation paper performed as intended. The paper was fair in terms of course coverage and level of demand.

The article on the context of culture, *Ceòl* (music), was about learning to play musical instruments and was accessible to most candidates.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening and discursive writing paper performed as intended. The listening paper, on the context of society, included a monologue about street food followed by a conversation in which Ruairidh described how he established his street-food business and were relatable to most candidates.

The contexts were appropriate and relevant for the level.

In the discursive writing paper, candidates attempted all four essay questions, and they were accessible to all.

Portfolio

The portfolio performed as expected. It provides candidates opportunities to show their critical and analytical skills in their choice of literature or media.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected and allowed candidates to demonstrate their ability to sustain a conversation with the visiting assessor.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper: Reading and Translation

- questions 2(a) and (b) offered optionality, with candidates gaining the marks in both:
    - question 2(a), any three options for 5 marks: ‘improves memory as more blood flows, goes to the brain, especially the part of the brain which controls different feelings and keeps the mind sharp’ (*canaidh dotairean gu bheil sgilean ciùil a’ leasachadh na cuimhne oir tha barrachd fala a’ dolchun na h-eanchainne — gu sònraichte a’ phàirt a bhios a’ riaghladh fhaireachdainneaneadar-dhealaichte agus a’ cumail na h-inntinn geur*); ‘musicians are better at dealing with stress, responsibility in their lives’ (*tha luchd-ciùil nas fheàrr air dèiligeadh ri uallach a thig nam beatha*); ‘they sleep better at night’ (*gheibh iad cadal nas fheàrr air an oidhche*); ‘it lowers blood pressure and it can help if someone is in pain’ (*tha dotairean cuideachd ag ràdh gun tig ìsleachadh air bruthadh-fala agus uaireannan, gu bheil ceòl a’ cuideachadh nuair a tha neach ann am pian*)
    - question 2(b), two options for 1 mark: ‘it uses each part (of the brain)’ (*tha e a’ cleachdadh gach pàirt den eanchainn*) or ‘such as sight, hearing and movement’ (*mar am fradharc, a’ chlaisneachd agus sgilean gluasaid*)
- question 7, the overall purpose question: candidates who gained the higher marks provided analysis and inference. Many gave a comprehensive overview of the writer’s purpose, which was to consider the overall impact of listening to music and/or playing musical instruments has on our lives
- question 8, the translation: most candidates were well prepared for the translation, for example:
    - sense unit 2, (*agus ’s e sgil dhoirbh, theicnigeach dha-rìribh a tha ann a bhith comasach air ceòl a chluich*): many translated this as ‘and it is a very difficult, technical skill to be able to play music’ or ‘and it is a difficult, technical skill indeed’
    - sense unit 4, *bidh luchd-ciùil ag iarraidh a bhith a’ cur an cèill*: many translated the verb as ‘relay’ or ‘put across’ or ‘convey’

- sense unit 7 (*no, air an làimh eile, a bhios a' toirt ort dannsa*): many translated this as 'or on the other hand, make you dance' or 'compel you to dance'
- sense unit 8 (*nuair a dh'fhàsas tu cleachdte ri òran a tha a' còrdadh riut*): many translated this as 'when you become used to' or 'familiar with'

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening paper, candidates did well in questions that offered optionality and most identified:

- question 1(a), any two from three: 'they sold unhealthy food' (*bhanaichean a' reic biadh mì-fhallain*); 'such as greasy breakfast' (*leithid bracaist làn ola*) or 'food with too much salt' (*biadh le cus salainn*)
- question 1(b), any two from three: 'it is expected to grow to £1.6 billion before 2028' (*thathar an dùil gum fàs seo gu £1.6 billean ro 2028*); 'there are more than 7000 vans today' (*an-diugh, tha còrr is 7000 bhan ann*) or 'the number increases by around 20% each year' (*tha an àireamh seo a' fàs mu 20% (fichead sa cheud) gach bliadhna*)
- question 2(b)(i): any two from three: 'register the business with the local council' (*b' fheudar dhomh an gnìomhachas a chlàradh leis a' chomhairle ionadail*); 'organise parking places' (*àiteachan-pàircidh a chur air dòigh*); 'he got the cooking equipment he needed: kettle, fridge and oven' (*fhuair mi na h-innealan a* dh'fheumainn airson còcaireachd, mar coire, frids agus àmhainn)
- question 2(c), any two from three: 'making food that people enjoy' (*a' reic ach is fìor thoigh leam a bhith a' dèanamh biadh a tha a' còrdadh ri daoine*); 'he can change the menu depending on the food that is fresh or easy to get' (*tha e math oir 's urrainn dhomh an clàr-bìdh atharrachadh a rèir dè am biadh a tha ùr no furasta fhaighinn*); 'he can decide what food he wants to make himself that day' (*no dè am biadh a tha mi fhìn ag iarraidh ullachadh an latha sin*)
- question 2(d): any two from three: 'they like getting a quick snack' (*is toigh leotha grèim-bìdh luath fhaighinn*); 'they do not have to book a table in advance (by phone or online)' (*gun feum air bòrd a chur air dòigh ro-làimh air fòn no air-loidhne*); 'they can sit and eat in the sun on a good day' (*faodaidh daoine suidhe is ithe anns a' ghrèin nuair a tha latha math ann*)

- question 2(g), any two from four: ‘there are strict rules about where he can go with the van’ (*tha riaghailtean teann ann far am faod thu a dhol leis a’ bhan*); ‘there are strict rules about the hours he can sell food’ (*na h-uairean as urrainn dhut a bhith a’ reic a’ bhìdh*); ‘it was difficult to get enough customers to earn money at first’ (*nuair a thòisich mi, bha e doirbh a bhith a’ faighinn luchd-ceannach gu leòr airson airgead a chosnadh*); ‘it is a long day if he is working at the beach in the morning and at a wedding at night’ (*tha an latha fada nuair a tha mi ag obair aig an tràigh anns a’ mhadainn agus aig banais air an oidhche*)
- question 2(h): any one from two: ‘they are so important to him and give him confidence’ (*tha teachdaireachdan snoga air-loidhne cho cudromach dhomh. Nuair a chì mi moladh mar seo, bheir e misneachd dhomh*) or ‘he knows his business is successful’ (*tha fios agam gu bheil an gnìomhachas a’ soirbheachadh*)

In the discursive writing paper:

- all four discursive essays were attempted, and many candidates made good use of learned material, adapting it to answer the questions
- essays that achieved the upper range of marks:
    - used idiomatic language and a high level of accuracy in grammar and vocabulary choice appropriate to the level
    - had a clear structure that enables the reader to identify the points that would be discussed
    - demonstrated a strong conclusion, which summarised the arguments presented in their essay

Portfolio

- where candidates achieved the higher marks they:
    - used a good selection of sources
    - chose a question that led to critical analysis, for example ‘To what extent is the author and/or director successful in...’ and provided several considered examples to back up their position
    - proofread their submissions and took an analytical and/or critical approach, with reasoned and relevant arguments
    - often used background materials on their focus of study and integrated the findings of these into their essays
- most candidates’ portfolios included a bibliography

Performance–talking

- many candidates prepared well and incorporated learned material skilfully
- many candidates engaged and interacted meaningfully with the interlocutor, which led to some very good performances
- candidates that achieved the upper range of marks:
    - completed the Subject Topic List (STL) form well, and included clear starting points for discussion that allowed the visiting assessors to go beyond the topics listed
    - asked for help in Gaelic if they were having difficulty understanding
    - used learned material but maintained a natural flow
    - attempted to answer questions fully and did not give many short answers
- discussion of their portfolio allowed most candidates opportunities to talk about a topic they studied in depth during the course

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper: Reading and Translation

- question 2(a): some candidates missed ‘at night’ from *gheibh iad cadal nas fheàrr air an oidhche*, and did not gain the mark
- question 7, overall purpose question:
  - some candidates repeated information from the passage rather than focusing on the overall purpose and missed out on marks
  - many had difficulty going beyond giving a summary of the text
  - a few did not give an introductory statement to answer the question, ‘What was the author’s purpose in writing this text?’
  - some presented a list of stylistic features or quotations without drawing inferences from these in relation to the text
- question 8, translation:
  - sense unit 1, ’*s e saidheans agus ealain a tha ann an ceòl*: some candidates found the first sentence in the translation challenging and did not understand the use of *’S e* at the beginning
  - a few candidates chose to answer this question at the start of the paper
  - there was occasional dictionary misuse

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening paper, some candidates did not give enough detail and missed out on marks, for example:

- question 1(c)(i): they did not identify: ‘it is more useful’ or ‘convenient when they are too busy’ and ‘and have not got enough time to go to a shop’ (*tha e feumail do luchd-obrach a bhith a’ ceannach à bhan nuair a tha iad cho trang agus chan eil ùine gu leòr aca a dhol gu bùth*)
- question 1(d)(i): they did not identify ‘prices are lower’ or ‘street food is cheaper’ (*tha biadh-sràide nas saoire a dhèanamh na biadh ann an taigh-bìdh agus tha seo a’ ciallachadh gu bheil prìsean nas ìsle airson luchd-ceannach*)
- question 1(d)(ii), they did not give both: ‘people are so careful about the money they are spending’ and ‘people are trying to save (money)’ (*is beag an t-iongnadh ged a bhiodh daoine cho measail air biadh-sràide oir tha iad cho faiceallach*

an-diugh mun airgead a tha iad a' cosg agus tha iad a' feuchainn ri airgead a shàbhaladh)

- question 2(a): they did not identify 'he wanted to cook different things (such as international food from countries like Mexico and Italy)' and 'he wanted to cook food he likes himself and not be restricted by a restaurant menu' (*bha sin gu mòr a' còrdadh ri luchd-turais ach bha mise airson a bhith a' còcaireachd rudan diofraichte — biadh eadar-nàiseanta à dùthchannan mar Meagsago agus an Eadailt. Thug a' bhan cothrom dhomh a bhith a' còcaireachd biadh as toigh leam fhìn agus cha robh mi air mo chuingealachadh le clàr-bìdh an taigh-bìdh*)
- question 2(b)(ii): they did not identify all three points, 'gas and electricity'; 'health and safety' and 'food preparation' (*rinn mi cinnteach gun robh mi eòlach air laghan agus riaghailtean a thaobh gas agus dealain, slàinte agus sàbhailteachd, agus deasachadh-bìdh*)
- question 2(d)(i): they did not identify: 'he runs competitions on the website each month' and 'he puts up new photos of his food' for both marks (*bidh mi a' ruith fharpaisean air an làrach-lìn gach mìos agus a' postadh dhealbhan ùra den bhiadh agam*)
- question 2(e), offered optionality: they did not identify enough detail in the three points, 'they like getting a quick snack'; 'they do not have to book a table in advance (by phone or online)'; 'they can sit and eat in the sun on a good day' (*is toigh leotha grèim-bìdh luath fhaighinn, gun feum air bòrd a chur air dòigh ro-làimh air fòn no air-loidhne. Agus faodaidh daoine suidhe is ithe anns a' ghrèin nuair a tha latha math ann*)
- question 2(f): they did not identify the three points, 'they see clearly that he is preparing'; 'handling the food' and 'in a correct, clean or hygienic way' (*chì iad gu soilleir gu bheil mi ag ullachadh agus a' làimhseachadh a' bhìdh ann an dòigh ghlan, cheart*)
- question 1(b): they had difficulty providing statistical information for 'it is expected to grow to £1.6 billion before 2028' (*thathar an dùil gum fàs seo gu £1.6 billean ro 2028*); 'there are more than 7000 vans today' (*an-diugh, tha còrr is 7000 bhan ann*) or 'the number increases by around 20% each year' (*tha an àireamh seo a' fàs mu 20% (fichead sa cheud) gach bliadhna*)

In the discursive writing paper:

- some candidates did not use a range of discursive terminology in their essays
- some candidates did not use reported speech consistently
- some candidates had difficulty with basic grammatical structures and a lack of accuracy in spelling

Portfolio

- some candidates did not use a clear, focused title, or they used a conversational rather than formal register, and could not access the higher marks
- some candidates found it difficult to compare two works, which led to repetition and general statements not backed up by appropriate evidence
- some candidates chose essay titles that did not lend themselves to an analytical approach and instead led to a retelling of the plot, and they could only access the lower marks in the range
- some candidates selected quotations that had some relevance to the title of the essay but led to a plot description and not to analysis

Performance–talking

Where candidates did not access the higher marks:

- they did not complete their Subject Topic List (STL) forms with enough detail for the chosen contexts or were overly prescriptive (for example a list of questions, or very narrow and specific topics)
- they found it hard to talk in some detail or could not express ideas and opinions on more general themes within the context
- some topics did not allow enough discussion at the level required

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

You should ensure candidates:

- make full use of our Advanced Higher Modern Languages web page, including course reports, marking instructions for Advanced Higher Gaelic (Learners) and past papers
- practise their dictionary skills, thinking about the context of the passage and selecting the most appropriate meaning and not always choosing the first definition listed
- read each question carefully so they fully understand what is being asked
- use the number of marks available for each question as a guide to the amount of detail required, and to help them manage their time effectively
- regularly practise the overall purpose question
- draw inferences from the text rather than repeating factual information or earlier comprehension responses
- complete the translation question after the comprehension questions
- attempt the translation question using their dictionary skills to support accuracy
- check their translation to ensure it makes sense in English

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

You should ensure candidates:

- regularly practise listening tasks
- pay close attention to numbers, dates, comparatives, superlatives, singular and plural forms, and days and months
- develop their grammar and syntax
- are aware of the importance of relevance and accuracy in their discursive writing
- practise the tenses, cases, plurals, and reported speech
- practise using a dictionary
- leave time at the end of the exam to proofread their essay

Portfolio

You should ensure candidates:

- ensure that their topic or title leads to a discursive approach, allowing candidates to present analysis that incorporates different points of view
- select a title that enables them to research and develop the subject matter at an appropriate depth
- include an introduction and conclusion
- proofread their essay, paying attention to spelling, punctuation, typing errors, and accuracy when quoting from literary texts
- choose suitable and compatible sources and check the factual accuracy of their work
- read this course report to identify areas for improvement
- write in paragraphs and leave a space between paragraphs
- include a bibliography
- avoid including films and books in translation in the bibliography if these are the only sources, as this gives the impression that these have been used in translation only
- are aware of our current position statement on the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in assessments
- write the same essay title on the flyleaf and their essay
- keep the essay title short and to the point, and avoid long complex titles

Performance–talking

You should ensure candidates:

- regularly practise their conversational Gaelic in class to develop natural interaction, helping them respond confidently to questions that go beyond their area of study
- speak Gaelic as often as possible throughout the year, as this supports both listening and talking skills and prepares them for the assessment
- fill in the STL form in a comprehensive way, by identifying topics and sub-topics they would like to discuss. They should not include a list of questions or overly-specific sub-topics, but should give enough detail about the main themes they want to discuss
- have a choice of topics they can select for discussion that allow them to expand their answers as required at Advanced Higher level
- can adapt pre-learned material to the conversation, while ensuring that it is not a scripted dialogue
- have a bank of phrases that they can use to elevate their performance–talking to a more sophisticated level, as well as ones that they can use to seek clarification in Gaelic