Course report 2026

Higher Gaelic (Learners), SCQF level 6

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 carried out limited verification for performance–talking this year, so we won't publish a verification summary. You can find summaries from previous years on our website.

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

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Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 70

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 54

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	20	37.0	37.0	84
B	12	22.2	59.3	72
C	16	29.6	88.9	60
D	3	5.6	94.4	48
No award	3	5.6	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 1: Reading

The reading question paper performed as intended. The paper was accessible, and the level was appropriate for Higher. The article on *Còcaireachd* (learning to cook) was relevant and engaging for candidates.

The balance of accessible and more challenging questions, including the overall purpose question and the translation, helped differentiate candidate performance in line with expectations. The overall purpose question tested candidates' inferential skills. Most candidates attempted all questions.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

The directed writing question paper performed as intended. Candidates had a choice of two scenarios on the contexts of employability (work experience in a visitor centre) and culture (a sporting event), each with six bullet points to address. The contexts were accessible to candidates and performed as expected.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper performed as intended. The paper was on the context of society. Item 1 was a monologue about a screen time report, and item 2 was a conversation about content creation.

The questions varied in level of demand and were well-signposted to help candidates locate answers. The questions provided effective differentiation and levels of demand.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as expected, allowing candidates the opportunity to give ideas and opinions, different viewpoints and draw conclusions.

Candidates used a variety of topics from the contexts: society, learning, employability, culture. The assignment offers an element of personalisation and choice and gives candidates opportunities to write on topics that interest them.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper 1: Reading

- many candidates performed well, especially in questions that offered optionality, for example:
    - question 3: most identified two from three options: ‘it is cheaper’ (*tha e nas saoire*); ‘it is usually healthier’ (*mar as trice tha e nas fhallaine*), or ‘you can choose what and when you eat’ (*faodaidh tu taghadh dè dh’itheas tu agus cuin a dh’itheas tu*)
    - question 4: most identified two from three options: ‘wash vegetables’ (*faodaidh iad glasraich a nighe*); ‘mix things in a bowl’ (*stuthan a mheasgachadh ann am bobhla*) or ‘taste the things they make’ (*gheibh iad blasad de na rudan a nì iad*)
- in question 10, the overall purpose question: most candidates gained marks for this question, identifying that the author was presenting a positive view on learning to cook from a young age
- in question 11, the translation: most candidates did well in the translation, and some gained the higher marks:
    - sense unit 1, *tha sinn air ar cuairteachadh le roghainnean bìdh a h-uile latha*: most candidates wrote ‘we are surrounded by food choices every day’
    - sense unit 5, *the e soilleir gu bheil sinn cho dèidheil air biadh a tha faisg air làimh*: most candidates translated this as ‘it is clear that we are so fond of food which is nearby’

Question paper 1: Directed writing

- some candidates gained high marks for accurate responses using a variety of structures, demonstrating good content, grammatical accuracy, and language resource appropriate to the level
- most candidates addressed all the bullet points in a full and balanced way
- most candidates coped well with the two-part first bullet point in both scenarios

Question paper 2: Listening

Some candidates gained high marks in both items. In questions that offered optionality, most candidates identified the main points, for example:

- question 1(c), any two from three: ‘tired eyes’ (*faodaidh cus ùine air sgrion do shùilean a dhèanamh sgìth*) ‘sore heads’ (*do cheann fhàgail goirt*); ‘sleep problems’ (*cuideachd, faodaidh trioblaidean cadail a bhith agad*)
- question 1(d), any one from four: ‘psychology’ (*eòlas-inntinn*); ‘(modern) art’ (*nuadh-ealain*); ‘health’ or ‘fitness’ (*fallaineachd*); ‘knitting’ (*fighe*)
- question 1(e), any two from three: ‘cut down on the time you are in front of screen’ (*geàrr sìos air an ùine atha thu air beulaibh sgrion*); ‘when you are on screen take breaks often’ (gabh fois gu tric); ‘make sure that you are also getting out for exercise’ (*dèan cinnteach gu bheil thu cuideachd*)
- question 2(c): any two from four: ‘what you want to say or show’ (*feumaidh tu smaoineachadh air dè tha thu airson a ràdh*); ‘who will be interested’ (*cò aig a bhios ùidh ann*); ‘your video is appealing’ (*dean cinnteach gu bheil do bhidio tarraingeach*); ‘strong start’ (*deumaidh toiseach làidir a bhith agad*)
- question 2(g): any two from four: ‘people enjoy new Gaelic content’ (*tha susbaint ùr sa Ghàidhlig a’ còrdadh ri daoine*); ‘not many people post in Gaelic’ (*chan eil mòran dhaoine a’ postadh ann an Gàidhlig*); ‘always uses the hashtag Gaelic’ (*cuideachd, bidh mi an-còmhnaidh a’ cleachdadh hashtag Gàidhlig*); ‘people searching for Gaelic content will find him’ (*ma tha duine a’ coimhead airson stuth Gàidhlig, gheibh iad na bhidiothan agam*)

Assignment–writing

- many candidates structured their writing to provide different viewpoints and to draw conclusions
- many candidates used detailed and complex language and a wide range of tenses and structures
- most candidates’ assignments showed a good level of accuracy, with clear evidence of structure and the use of discursive and organisational language

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper 1: Reading

- there was occasional dictionary misuse, which led to unclear answers
- some candidates did not give enough detail in their responses, and did not gain the mark, for example:
    - question 1(c): some candidates did not write the verb 'growing' (*àireamh ag èirigh gu*); a few did not include 'almost' or 'about' (*tha i a' fàs gu mu chairteal*)
    - question 3: some candidates did not include 'usually' (*mar as trice tha e nas fhallaine*)
    - question 7: some candidates missed 'easier' in (*tha e nas fhasa*)
- in question 10, the overall purpose question:
    - some candidates' answers lacked detail from the text to justify the answer, and they missed out on marks
    - a few candidates focused on minor points in the text rather than considering the article as a whole, which resulted in irrelevant information or repeating answers
    - some candidates only gave one answer, and missed out on marks
- in question 11, the translation:
    - a few candidates did not complete the translation
    - a small number of candidates did not translate plural forms, for example:
    - sense unit 1, *tha sinn air ar cuairteachadh le roghainnean bìdh a h-uile latha*: some candidates did not include 'food choices'
    - sense unit 2, *cha robh e a-riamh cho furasta biadh òrdachadh le companaidhean mar Just Eat agus Deliveroo*: some candidates did not include 'companies'
    - sense unit 4, *tha cafaidhean, taighean-bìdh agus bùthan-bìdh air gach oisean anns na bailtean mòra*: some candidates missed the plurals in 'there are cafes, restaurants and food shops on every corner in the big towns or cities'

Question paper 1: Directed writing

- a few candidates missed out on marks as they did not address one or more bullet points
- a few candidates did not cover the bullet points fully (sometimes covering two bullet points in a single sentence) and could not access the higher pegged marks
- some candidates had difficulty with aspects of grammar, syntax, plurals and tenses, which made sentences difficult to understand

Question paper 2: Listening

- question 1(b): some candidates had difficulty giving the statistical information 'half of adults are on screens for more than 10 hours'; (*bidh leth de dh'inbhich a' coimhead air sgrionaichean airson barrachd air deich uairean a thìde agus*); 'quarter of adults are on screens for more than 14 hours' (*bidh cairteal de dh'inbhich,a' coimhead orra airson barrachd air ceithir uairean deug*)
- question 2(a): some candidates mistranslated *uill, thòisich mi a' clàradh bhidiothan air fòn mo mhàthar o chionn ochd bliadhna* as 'eight years old' instead of 'eight years ago'
- question 2(b): some candidates wrote 'surf' or 'skateboarding' for *a bhith a' dol a-mach air bòrd-seasamh* (stand-up paddle boarding)

Assignment–writing

- a few essay titles did not give candidates enough opportunities to write a balanced argument or to draw a conclusion
- some candidates had difficulty keeping their assignment relevant to the title
- a few candidates did not provide a title, making relevance difficult to evaluate
- some candidates wrote from a personal point of view with mostly personal ideas and opinions, and little discussion of different viewpoints
- some candidates did not provide enough analysis or include different points of view, and they missed out on marks

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

You should ensure candidates:

- use the dictionary carefully and do not always choose the first definition listed
- are aware of modifiers when answering some of the questions
- read each question carefully so they fully understand what is being asked
- are guided by the number of marks for each question and give as much detail in their response as they have understood
- regularly practise the overall purpose question and draw inferences from the text rather than repeating factual information or earlier comprehension answers
- know that, in the overall purpose question, they must provide enough evidence or justification to gain full marks
- allocate time for the translation question, using their dictionary skills to support accuracy
- check their translation to ensure it makes sense in English

Question paper 1: Directed writing

You should ensure candidates:

- give a balanced response to each bullet point
- know that for the first bullet point, they must address two pieces of information
- read the scenarios and bullet points carefully and ensure they give all the required information
- know to use a variety of tenses and structures to achieve the higher pegged marks
- refer to the marking instructions and the productive grammar grid in the Higher Modern Languages Course Specification so they are fully prepared for what is required at Higher level
- know they must address each bullet point
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines

Question paper 2: Listening

You should ensure candidates:

- regularly practise listening skills and note-taking in class
- use the time before the recording starts to read the questions
- try to identify or highlight key words in each question
- know that if a question says, ‘state any one thing’, there is more than one possible correct answer
- give as much detail as they can in their answers, including qualifiers and quantifiers
- practise common vocabulary on a regular basis. This includes vocabulary covered before starting the Higher course, for example days of the week, time, numbers, months of the year, food, shopping, travel, holidays, weather and family
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines

Assignment–writing

You should ensure candidates:

- refer to the specific marking instructions for the assignment–writing, and that they must use these separately from the marking instructions for directed writing
- structure their writing
- provide different arguments or viewpoints
- provide a title that prompts a discursive essay
- refer to the marking instructions to help prepare for this question paper
- refer to examples of discursive writing on our Understanding Standards web page to better understand the style of writing required for the assignment–writing
- have a choice of stimuli at the start of the drafting process to help them write discursively about a topic
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- if typing responses, use double spaces between lines