# Course report 2026

## National 5 Gaelic (Learners), SCQF level 5

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: 163

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 151

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

| Course award | Number of candidates | Percentage | Cumulative percentage | Minimum mark required |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 51 | 33.8 | 33.8 | 84 |
| B | 18 | 11.9 | 45.7 | 72 |
| C | 31 | 20.5 | 66.2 | 60 |
| D | 31 | 20.5 | 86.8 | 48 |
| No award | 20 | 13.2 | 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

The course assessments performed as intended and were fair and accessible to all candidates. Centres, teachers and lecturers gave positive feedback on the level and challenge of the assessment. The assessment sampled language from all contexts and the content was relevant. Most candidates completed assessments within the allocated time.

There was a similar number of entries this year.

## Question paper 1: Reading

The reading question paper included three texts on the contexts of society (NC500), learning (school and future plans) and culture (a festival). There were two supported questions. Question 1(a) was a multiple choice question and question 1(e) was a complete the sentence question. There was optionality in questions 1(c), (d), 3(c) and (e). The question paper was accessible to all candidates while providing the demand required at National 5.

There were fewer responses than in 2025 and most candidates attempted to answer all questions. There was a range of marks across the paper.

## Question paper 1: Writing

In this question paper, candidates reply by email to a job advert for a tourist office. In the email, candidates have to include the information in the four predictable bullet points and two unpredictable bullet points. The two unpredictable bullet points asked candidates to give their opinion of the area and discuss their interest in travel.

Some candidates did not attempt the two unpredictable bullet points.

## Question paper 2: Listening

The question paper was on the context of employability, and both listening texts sampled vocabulary from all contexts. The language was accessible and the vocabulary was appropriate to the level.

The question paper has two parts: a monologue (a person talking about their job in a restaurant) and a conversation (a discussion with a teacher about work experience for pupils). There was a supported question in 2(g). There was optionality in questions 1(d), (e), (f), and 2(c) and (e).

There were a high number of no responses in certain questions.

## Assignment–writing

Most candidates produced very good pieces of work from the three contexts of society, learning and culture.

This aspect of the course allows for personalisation and choice. Candidates chose a range of topics appropriate to the level, for example school, technology, healthy living, free-time, holidays and hometown.

The assignment–writing allowed candidates to write in depth and provide opinions and give reasons.

# How candidates performed

## Areas where candidates performed well

### Question paper 1: Reading

#### Text 1 (society)

- question 1(b): most candidates identified that it was a circular route or used the word ‘loop’ (*cearcall*)
- question 1(d): offered optionality, any two from four: most candidates identified ‘beautiful views’, ‘white beaches’, ‘fishing towns’, or ’tall mountains’. (*Bidh mòran luchd-turais bho air feadh an t-saoghail a’ tadhal air gach bliadhna — chì iad seallaidhean àlainn, tràighean geala, bailtean-iasgaich agus beanntan àrda*) and gained the marks
- question 1(e): supported question, fill the gaps. Most candidates identified ‘rural communities’ (*choimhearsnachdan dùthchail*) and gained the marks
- question 1(f): most candidates identified the first answer ‘leaving rubbish’ (*bidh daoine a’ fàgail sgudail*)

#### Text 2 (learning)

- question 2(c): most candidates identified the answers ‘history of South Africa’ (*mun eachdraidh ann an Afraga a Deas*) and ‘American politics’ (*poileataigs Ameireaganach*)
- question 2(d)(ii): most candidates identified ‘helpful and understanding’ (*Tha mo thidsear cuideachail agus tuigseach*)

#### Text 3 (culture)

- question 3(c): offered optionality, identify two countries from Wales (*A’ Chuimrìgh*), Isle of Man (*Eilean Mhanainn*) or Northern Ireland (*Èirinn a Tuath*). Most candidates gained the mark
- question 3(d): this question was well-signposted and most candidates gained 2 or 3 marks for ‘face painting’ (*peantadh-aghaidh*), ‘traditional games’ (*geamannan traidiseanta*), or ‘listening to stories’ (*ag èisteachd ri sgeulachdan*)

## Question paper 1: Writing

- most candidates used a range of vocabulary, grammatical structures and tenses when addressing the predictable bullet points
- most candidates were well-prepared and had good time management and exam technique
- most candidates addressed the unpredictable bullet point about the opinion of the area well
- candidates who achieved high marks in the writing paper:
    - coped well with both unpredictable bullet points
    - used accuracy and variety of language in the predictable bullet points, which is an element that candidates can prepare for
- some candidates' responses used language more consistent with Higher level

## Question paper 2: Listening

### Item 1 (monologue)

- question 1(b): most candidates identified 'going to university' and a few identified 'Strathclyde'(*Oilthigh Srath Chluaidh*)
- question 1(c): most candidates identified the time as '2pm' (*aig dà uair feasgar*)
- question 1(f): offered optionality, and most candidates identified two from the three options of: 'very hardworking' (*feumaidh tu a bhith gu math dìcheallach*), 'good at talking' (*math air bruidhinn*), or 'polite to people' (*modhail ri daoine*). Some candidates combined two bullet points by identifying 'good at speaking to people'

### Item 2 (conversation)

- question 2(b): most candidates gained the mark for 'everyone' (*Tha eòlas obrach uabhasach cudromach airson a h-uile duine*)
- question 2(c): optionality, any three from four. Most candidates gained at least 2 marks for 'hairdresser' or 'hairdressing' (*le gruagaire ionadail*), 'coffee shops' (*bùthan cofaidh*), 'RBS' (*banca rìoghail na h-Alba*) or 'climbing centre' (*ionad sreap*)

## Assignment–writing

Most candidates performed well in the assignment–writing. There were a range of interesting topics, and most candidates wrote in depth about their chosen topic.

- most candidates chose an appropriate title and ticked the correct context box
- most candidates wrote to and beyond the word count
- most candidates used conjunctions to help structure their texts and gave opinions as well as justifying them
- most candidates used a range of language and grammatical structures appropriate to the level
- most candidates used detailed and complex language and a range of structures
- most candidates used a range of regular and irregular verbs and tenses, time phrases and connectives, with a good degree of grammatical accuracy

# Areas where candidates did not perform well

## Question paper 1: Reading

### Text 1 (society)

- question 1(a): supported question, one answer out of three. Many candidates chose the wrong answer instead of box 3: more than 500 miles
- question 1(c): optionality, any two from three. Where candidates chose the third answer (don't drive too fast or slow), there was a high number of inaccuracies as they often missed *na* (don't) and *ro* (too)
- question 1(d): some candidates misread *bailtean* as *bàtaichean* (towns as boats)
- question 1(d): a few candidates mixed up neighbourhoods with neighbours

### Text 2 (learning)

- question 2(a): candidates did not identify '6 subjects at National 5' from *Air a' cheathramh bliadhna anns an sgoil fhuair mi sia cuspairean aig Nàiseanta a còig*
- question 2(b): some candidates wrote where she went, instead of when for 'first week' and 'October last year' (*anns a' chiad seachdain den Dàmhair an-uiridh*)
- question 2(c): some candidates left out 'south' in South Africa and did not gain the mark
- question 2(d)(i): some candidates mixed up 'literature' and 'literacy', and *nas fhasa* (easier) *with nas fheàrr* (better)
- question 2(d)(ii): a few candidates misread *cuideachail* (helpful)) as *cuideachdail* (sociable) and did not gain the mark
- question 2(e): some candidates missed out on marks as they had difficulty understanding the word *saor,* which can have multiple meanings in isolation, including 'cheap' and 'joiner', but when hyphenated in this case (*obair saor-thoileach a dhèanamh)* meant 'to do volunteering' or 'voluntary work'

**Text 3 (culture)**

- question 3 (a): some candidates had difficulty with *iomadh* (many) and interpreted it as *iomain* (shinty) and wrote 'the festival took place on a shinty pitch'. Some candidates had difficulty with the plural *sgìrean* and others confused *air taobh siar* (on the west) with *ri taobh siar* (beside the west)
- question 3(b): some candidates missed out the word *eadar* (between). A few had difficulty with the days of the week 'Thursday afternoon or evening' and 'Saturday night'
- question 3(e): optionality, and two from three. Some candidates interpreted *Gàidhealach* as 'Gaelic' rather than 'Highland' and missed out the verb 'watched'. In the first option, some candidates missed the qualifier *glè* (very) from 'very lively'
- question 3(f): a few candidates mixed up *seachdad* (70) with *seasgad* (60)

## Question paper 1: Writing

- some candidates wrote a formal introduction or described their hometown, which is not required, and some did not do this well
- some candidates did not provide a range of tenses or different verb forms
- some candidates labelled their paragraphs and added the word count, which is not required
- in the first four bullet points, some candidates were not well-prepared for these, despite the predictability
- most candidates attempted all six bullet points
- bullet point 1 (personal details) and 2 (school and college or education experience until now):
    - some candidates only understood the language in the first two bullet points
    - some candidates listed their subjects without further information
    - some candidates wrote about what they want to do in the future with their education; however, it was school and college experience up until now that was needed
- bullet point 3 (skills/interests):
    - a few candidates wrote about free-time activities with no mention of skills or qualities

- bullet point 4 (work experience):
    - some candidates chose to write in the present tense, which limited the range of tenses in the piece overall
- bullet point 5 (opinion of the area) and bullet point 6 (interest in travel):
    - many candidates did not attempt the final two bullet points
- dictionary misuse was higher in the unpredictable bullet points, particularly identifying the differences between nouns, verbs and adjectives
- there were some instances of illegible handwriting

## Question paper 2: Listening

### Item 1 (monologue)

- question 1(a): some candidates mixed up *taigh-bìdh* (restaurant) and *taigh-òsta* (hotel), and did not gain the mark
- question 1(d): optionality, any two from three. Some candidates had difficulty in the second option between *uinneagan* (windows) and *uinneanan* (onions)
- question 1(f): some candidates missed the qualifier in the first bullet point (very hard working)

### Item 2 (conversation)

- question 2(a): some candidates missed the qualifier *mu* (about), and did not gain the mark
- question 2(d): some candidates wrote the same answers for this question and question 2(c) as they mixed up ‘when’ and ‘where’
- question 2(e): optionality, any two from three (useful skills; a little money; team work). Most candidates gained the mark, and ‘teamwork’ was the most popular answer
- question 2(f): most candidates gained 1 mark for the first answer (tired in school). For the second answer, some candidates wrote ‘won’t’ instead of ‘don’t’ (don’t do homework) and did not gain the mark
- question 2(g): supported question, fill the gaps, identify two elements to gain the mark. Most candidates did not identify *cur-seachadan* (hobbies)

## Assignment–writing

- some candidates discussed topics that were irrelevant to the title and context
- some candidates who chose the title ‘personal profile’ had difficulty keeping to the topic and expressing a range of ideas and opinions
- some candidates put questions into their assignment–writing and included an introduction which is not appropriate for the writing element
- there were many instances of illegible handwriting
- some typed assignments had auto-correct English turned on and had a lack of accents
- many candidates used good content and accuracy but did not use the language resource required across all three bullets, and could not access the full range of marks

# Preparing candidates for assessment

## Question paper 1: Reading

You should ensure candidates:

- practice reading the key words in the questions as signposts for where the answers are in the texts
- read each question carefully and underline or highlight the key word or words in the question that should lead them to the answer in the text
- know that questions and answers are in chronological order
- do not write in sentences in the reading paper
- do not include words that are in the question in their answers
- are aware that two words are normally required for 1 mark at National 5. They should look at the surrounding text to ensure all relevant detail is included
- read to the end of sentences to make sure they have all the information for an answer
- use commas, *agus* and full stops to differentiate where different answers start and finish especially when there are multiple answers
- make a line through errors or answers they are not using rather than blocking them out
- are familiar with qualifiers such as *cus, glè, mòran, tòrr, barrachd, mu, a h-uile, gach, eadar and bho*
- practise their dictionary skills so they can use this 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 text
- know how to find hyphenated words in the dictionary
- read texts and test them on a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary appropriate to the level
- practise common context vocabulary and grammatical structures, adjectives, comparatives, plurals and time words to help save time in the exam
- are aware that vocabulary can appear in any context and is not context specific
- practise the reading paper with writing papers to replicate the time of the exam
- practise past papers on our website to develop their skills

## Question paper 1: Writing

As the writing is in the form of an email, there is no requirement for candidates to use formal beginning and endings. Many candidates who include formal beginnings and endings often make errors in these.

You 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
- complete the four predictable bullet points in a full and balanced way, starting a new paragraph for each one
- know they should keep the content of each bullet point appropriate to the job application and the context of the task, for example it is not necessary to provide a description of their home area
- expand on bullet point 2 and include some reasons and opinions
- know they do not need to count their words
- turn off English auto-correct if typing answers
- know the difference between accents and apostrophes in their writing
- show a range of structures, tenses, regular and irregular verbs and verb structures where appropriate
- are aware of prepositional pronouns and idiom
- are aware that for bullet point 4, they do not need to use the past tense. This bullet point provides a natural opportunity to demonstrate accurate use of a range of tenses, in line with the productive grammar grid
- attempt all six bullet points, and complete the work experience bullet point in the past tense to show a range of tenses and verbs in their writing
- for the unpredictable bullet points, are aware there may be a bullet point that has not been in a previous question paper
- know that it is possible for them to adapt a sentence structure used in the predictable bullet points to answer the unpredictable bullet points
- practise a range of unpredictable answers
- practice dictionary skills to understand the difference between nouns and verbs when looking up words for the unpredictable bullet points

- do the writing paper first before the reading
- practise the writing paper with reading papers to replicate the time of the exam

## Question paper 2: Listening

You should ensure candidates:

- read all the questions carefully and underline or highlight the key words so that they can listen for the correct answer
- particularly question words such as ‘where’ and ‘when’
- practice reading the key words in the questions as signposts of answers they will hear in the passages, and use the silence in the recording to note the types of vocab they expect to hear
- regularly practise vocabulary, including countries, numbers, weather expressions, transport and question words to improve accuracy and understanding
- are aware that vocabulary can appear in any context and is not context specific
- are aware that two words are normally required for 1 mark at National 5
- if they provide multiple answers to a question, they must indicate which answer they are choosing. If answers are contradictory and they make no clear preference, they will not gain the mark
- make a line through errors or answers they are not using rather than blocking them out
- regularly practise listening skills
- maximise their exposure to Gaelic by listening to Gaelic being spoken in their centres, media and community (if applicable) as this helps understand common language that could be in a question paper
- practise past papers on our website to develop their skills

## Assignment–writing

You 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
- include a title and context
- keep to their chosen title or choose a title that reflects their work
- do not include personal details, rhetorical questions, or the weather in their hometown if it is not connected to their title
- show the range of their ability and knowledge in the language and avoid repetitive of structures, verbs and verb forms
- have legible handwriting and if not, make alternative arrangements
- if typing their assignment, they should pay attention to spacing, accents, apostrophes and English auto-corrections
- include capital letters at the beginning of sentences and in proper nouns and use punctuation
- refer to the marking instructions so that they're fully aware of what is required, particularly the language resource section, which asks for a range of opinions, ideas and reasons

You should:

- refer to the Understanding Standards packs on our secure site and the marking instructions in our National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification for what is required at National 5
- use our correction code or similar when returning the draft to candidates