



Course Report 2016

Subject	Gaelic (Learners)
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Translation

The Reading and Translation paper presented candidates with an article that sampled the context of Society. The topic of mobile phone usage was accessible to this year's candidates. Candidates were required to answer comprehension questions on the text in English, including an overall purpose question. The last question required candidates to translate a section of the text.

The Translation was straightforward and most candidates were able to apply their translation skills and knowledge of language successfully. The comprehension questions were worth 30 marks, which included 7 marks for the overall purpose question. The translation question was worth 20 marks.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Discursive Writing

The Listening paper presented candidates with a monologue about the development of the Gaelic college, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and a dialogue, which was an interview with one of the first students to have attended the college. The context for the assessment was well chosen and was relevant to students studying at this level.

The Discursive Writing paper required candidates to write an essay of 250–300 words on one statement from a choice of four. One question on each context studied as part of the course. Most candidates opted for the question on Learning.

Component 3: portfolio

The portfolio provides candidates with personalisation and choice at Advanced Higher level. Candidates complete an analysis of literature, media or language in work.

The portfolio is completed in class as part of the course and is marked externally. This paper is worth 30 marks.

Component 4: performance: talking

The performance requires candidates to take part in a discussion with a visiting assessor. During the discussion the candidate will talk about themes or topics related to at least one context studied and the candidate's specialist study. The performance is worth 50 marks of the total 200 marks.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Translation

Most candidates coped very well with the Reading paper this year, and the paper performed as expected. Candidates provided good answers to question 10 (the overall purpose question) and had been prepared well by centres for this aspect of the exam. Candidates displayed very good time management skills. Centres are to be commended for encouraging candidates to analyse the comprehension questions and the reading passage, and to distinguish between relevant and redundant vocabulary.

Candidates coped well with question 11, the translation question. Some very good translations have been marked this year.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Discursive Writing

Many candidates did not perform as well in the Listening paper as would be expected. Centres ought to ensure that candidates working at this level are hearing Gaelic spoken frequently within lessons to seek to improve their performance in Listening assessments.

The Discursive Writing responses were of a high standard and candidates performed well in this aspect of the assessment. The introduction of pegged marking ensures that the full range of marks available is accessible to candidates.

Component 3: portfolio

Most candidates performed very well in the portfolio component of the assessment. Candidates focused on a good range of topics in their portfolios. A good range of literature texts were selected by candidates and there were some portfolios focusing on Media and Language in Work.

Component 4: performance: talking

Most candidates performed well. There were some very good examples of learners who had attained a level of Gaelic which allowed them to sustain discussions with the Visiting Assessor and demonstrate a high level of accuracy while using complex and sophisticated language.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Translation

A number of candidates did not achieve the available marks for question 6 as they did not provide sufficient detail to achieve the marks available.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Discursive Writing

- ◆ Question 1 (d) did not generate the expected responses. Candidates may have found the language demanding.
- ◆ Question 2 (f) (3 marks) generated fewer correct responses than expected, and similarly Question 2 (g) (2 marks) did not generate the expected responses. It is surprising that so few candidates recognised 'Foghlam' or 'Cànan'.

There were examples where the candidate had not engaged with the questions in the Discursive Writing paper and had produced an essay which did not discuss any of the statements provided in the exam paper.

Component 3: portfolio

Candidates from some centres produced portfolios that shared a common focus. Each candidate ought to select their own individual focus for their study and portfolio.

Some portfolios did not include an appropriate bibliography and the upper pegged marks could not be awarded.

Some of the candidates did not clearly state the focus of their study.

Component 4: performance: talking

There were some candidates who did not cope with the demands of the performance at this level and who were unable to sustain conversations with the visiting assessors. In some instances, candidates were relying on pre-learned material and were unable to sustain a natural discussion beyond their pre-learned material.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper 1: Reading and Translation

Candidates displayed very good time management skills. Centres are to be commended for encouraging candidates to analyse the comprehension questions and the reading passage, and to distinguish between relevant and redundant vocabulary. This practice should continue.

Component 2: question paper 2: Listening and Discursive Writing

There were a number of candidates who achieved very low marks in the Listening paper. Centres ought to focus on this area in preparing candidates for assessment in future.

Centres ought to ensure that candidates are exposed to sufficient Gaelic within the classroom and that they are able to cope with the demands of the Listening paper.

Candidates ought to write about one of the statements provided in the Writing paper.

Component 3: Portfolio

Candidates ought to select an individual focus for their study — the centre should not teach texts as the focus for the study.

Ensure that the focus of the study is clearly stated.

Ensure that candidates provide a suitable bibliography.

Component 4: Performance-talking

Centres are advised to implement regular talking activities in the Gaelic classroom to develop the natural element of interaction. By doing this, candidates might show more confidence in using spoken Gaelic.

Centres ought to ensure that candidates are entered at the correct level; it was evident that some candidates were not performing at Advanced Higher level.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	0
------------------------------------	---

Number of resulted entries in 2016	24
------------------------------------	----

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark:				
A	45.8%	45.8%	11	140
B	29.2%	75.0%	7	120
C	12.5%	87.5%	3	100
D	8.3%	95.8%	2	90
No award	4.2%	-	1	0

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.