

Guidance on allocation to Gàidhlig or Gaelic (Learners) programmes of study and qualifications

Introduction

Separate Courses for fluent speakers and learners are offered, with those for fluent speakers entitled 'Gàidhlig'. SQA regards it as the responsibility of the presenting authority to allocate candidates to Gàidhlig or Gaelic (Learners) courses and examinations.

Guidelines on allocation

Allocation of pupils to specific programmes of study should be the outcome of a cumulative process incorporating:

- observation and evaluation by the primary school
- observation and evaluation by Gaelic teachers on entry to secondary school
- consultation between primary and secondary school staff
- consultation between schools and parents

The following pupils should be allocated to Gàidhlig courses on entry to S1:

- pupils who have been educated wholly through the medium of Gaelic in primary school
- pupils who have been educated mainly through the medium of Gaelic in primary school
- pupils who have had sustained experience of bilingual education programmes in primary school
- pupils who come from a Gaelic-speaking background and are able to speak Gaelic though they may have had little, or no, exposure to the language in primary school

The following pupils should be allocated to Gaelic (Learners) courses on entry to S1:

- pupils who have followed Gaelic learners' programmes of study in primary school
- pupils with little, or no, prior knowledge of the language

Pupils' oral competence in the language can be a valuable indicator of their linguistic ability but any assessment of spoken skills must be undertaken in light of information on their linguistic status, which should be included in information transferred from primary schools to receiving secondary schools. The final decision on allocation to one Course or another rests with the secondary school, due account being taken of the primary school's appraisal. When there has been a gap in exposure to the language, for example in a situation where candidates have been educated through the medium of Gaelic in primary school but not received Gaelic-medium education in S1–S3/4, they should still be considered as appropriate candidates for the Gàidhlig courses, although possibly requiring additional support in the earlier stages. Entry at an appropriate level should be agreed in discussion with the presenting centre.

It should be emphasised that, in the vast majority of cases, allocation at S1 will be clear and straightforward. In cases where doubt arises, it is recommended that allocation should take account of observation and evaluation by Gaelic teachers on entry to S1, and tentative allocation of candidates to the Gàidhlig Course should be made. Such a process would provide for any necessary re-allocation, which should take place as soon as possible in S1. Experience shows that candidates would not be disadvantaged by being placed in the Gàidhlig course for a limited period.

Candidates who have gained a Gaelic (Learners) qualification may progress to qualifications in Gàidhlig. However, candidates who have followed a sustained programme of study in Gàidhlig should not be presented for Gaelic (Learners) qualifications, which have not been developed as a default or more accessible option for candidates who have sufficient existing language competencies in the language.

Communication with parents

Parents should be kept informed of the candidate's linguistic status at all stages. This should be done from the beginning of primary education in the context of Curriculum for Excellence. Parents should be made aware of the educational advantages to the candidates of correct allocation in light of the differing expectations of the two courses.

Entry for examinations

It will be assumed by SQA that candidates entered for Gàidhlig and Gaelic (Learners) examinations have been allocated appropriately by presenting authorities in accordance with the guidance in this document.