



Course report 2024

Advanced Higher Gaelic (Learners)

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 10

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 13

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	10	Percentage	76.9	Cumulative percentage	76.9	Minimum mark required	140
B	Number of candidates	2	Percentage	15.4	Cumulative percentage	92.3	Minimum mark required	120
C	Number of candidates	0	Percentage	0	Cumulative percentage	92.3	Minimum mark required	100
D	Number of candidates	1	Percentage	7.7	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	80
No award	Number of candidates	0	Percentage	0	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates performed well in the reading and translation paper. The context was accessible to all candidates and the subject of coffee was topical.

The question paper performed as expected, with some candidates submitting responses of a high standard. Some candidates found the overall purpose question challenging. Many performed well, giving a comprehensive overview of the writer's purpose.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening section of this question paper presented candidates with a monologue about alternative jobs, and a dialogue that was an interview with someone who has moved to Scotland and started working as a crofter. The assessment contexts were appropriate and relevant to the level. Most candidates found the paper very accessible; however, a few candidates found it more challenging.

In the discursive essay, candidates chose to write about a variety of topics and the level of the writing was high. The paper performed in line with expectation and was accessible to all candidates.

Portfolio

The portfolio provided candidates with personalisation and choice. Candidates chose a wide range of areas and topics, which they clearly engaged with. Most candidates' performance was of a high standard.

Performance–talking

Most candidates were well-prepared and gave a good account of their speaking skills. The assessment provides a good opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their speaking skills.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates gave good responses to most of the set questions. There was occasional evidence of dictionary misuse, but overall candidates did well in answering the set questions.

Many candidates provided appropriate answers to the overall purpose question with an analytical approach gaining the highest marks. Some candidates did not focus on the overall purpose and tended to repeat the information that was in the passage.

Most candidates were well-prepared for the translation and several candidates answered this question at the start of the exam. Not all candidates completed the translation, which affected their overall mark.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Most candidates performed well in the listening paper while some found it challenging. There were some very good examples of discursive writing this year.

Most candidates chose the society and learning questions. All candidates found the topics accessible, and their writing was of a high standard. Some candidates used idioms and proverbs very effectively, which enhanced the writing. Basic grammar mistakes continue to weaken the writing of a few candidates, for example using different tenses in a sentence.

Portfolio

Some candidates performed well in the portfolio. Candidates focused on a wide range of topics in their portfolios this year, which they clearly engaged with. The higher marks were awarded when the title or question led to candidates presenting an analytical approach where they could explore two sides of an argument or give different perspectives to the topic. Candidates who showed they were evaluating and analysing the topic from different perspectives did very well.

Some candidates did not understand the nature of the task and teachers and lecturers should provide more guidance to candidates. A few candidates missed marks as they chose topics that were not suitable, or the writing had no relation to the title or had very little analysis. The best examples had an evaluative and analytical approach.

Performance–talking

Most candidates performed very well in the discussion. There were some very good examples of candidates using a level of Gaelic that allowed them to sustain detailed discussions with the visiting assessor and demonstrate a high level of accuracy, while using complex and sophisticated language. Fluency and readily taking the initiative were features of good performances with a number of candidates achieving full marks. In general, candidates were enthusiastic and well prepared. These discussions were natural and authentic throughout.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ continue to develop dictionary skills, reminding them not to choose the first word that appears in the dictionary without considering the context of the passage and selecting the most appropriate meaning
- ◆ study the questions carefully to fully understand what the question is asking
- ◆ look at the marks allocated per question to guide them to the level of information required
- ◆ practise the overall purpose question
- ◆ seek to draw inferences from the text and not only provide information or repeat the answers they provide in the comprehension questions
- ◆ always attempt the translation, and know this is where dictionary skills can be very helpful
- ◆ read and review their translation once they complete it to ensure it makes sense and reads well in English

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ practise listening exercises
- ◆ pay particular attention to any numbers and dates, comparatives, or superlatives, singular and plurals, days and months
- ◆ continue to develop their grammar and syntax
- ◆ aim to write correct sentences, as simple errors continue to weaken the standard of writing
- ◆ know the basic points of tenses, cases, plurals and reported speech
- ◆ practise using a dictionary during the discursive writing
- ◆ allocate time in the exam to proofread their essay after they have finished

Portfolio

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ are supported to develop and choose an appropriate title or focus that allows them to use a critical and analytical approach to the discursive portfolio
- ◆ choose a title that allows them to develop and research the subject matter at an appropriate depth
- ◆ think carefully about their introduction and conclusion as these are crucial in framing the essay and informing the reader of the candidate's intentions

- ◆ carefully proofread the use of English, spelling, typing errors and punctuation as well as accuracy in quotation from literary texts
- ◆ address the choice of suitable and compatible sources and check the factual accuracy of their essay

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ take part in regular talking activities in class to help develop the natural element of interaction
- ◆ speak Gaelic as often as possible in class throughout the year, as this greatly benefits their listening and talking skills and prepares them for the performance–talking

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims 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 is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA 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.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

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.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).