



Course report 2024

Higher Gàidhlig

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 in conjunction 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: 126

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 132

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	51	Percentage	38.6	Cumulative percentage	38.6	Minimum mark required	84
B	Number of candidates	36	Percentage	27.3	Cumulative percentage	65.9	Minimum mark required	72
C	Number of candidates	28	Percentage	21.2	Cumulative percentage	87.1	Minimum mark required	60
D	Number of candidates	14	Percentage	10.6	Cumulative percentage	97.7	Minimum mark required	48
No award	Number of candidates	3	Percentage	2.3	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 1: Leughadh (Reading)

This year's passage was an article written about the experience of a teacher struggling with technology in the classroom. Most candidates fully engaged with the passage, and this was evident in responses to the questions. The text allowed the usual range of questions to be posed, which differentiated between candidates, and these were seen to have been suitably challenging and fair.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

As in previous years, questions set in this section provided plenty of scope for candidates to demonstrate their ability to write about the literature studied in their course. As in previous years, the vast majority of responses were based on prose and poetry, and these were mostly based on traditional texts that have been the mainstay of courses through the years. These include Cisteachan-Laighe, An Eala Bhàn, An Roghainn, Mairi Iain Mhurch' Chaluim, An Coigreach and Bùrn.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

The topic of the listening passage was the coffee industry. The question paper was set in line with previous years, and, in the main, candidates engaged well with the passage and questions. The paper was seen as being fair and accessible, and there was a range of responses.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (Assignment–writing)

This component was re-introduced this session and saw a range of different topics presented. These ranged from discursive pieces on topics such as video assistant referee (VAR), changing the times of the school day, social media and vaping, to personal reflective pieces that covered topics such as specific hobbies, family matters and pieces about other topics close to the candidate's heart. There were also several creative pieces in the form of short stories.

Còmhradh (Performance–talking)

The performance–talking performed as expected. A wide range of topics was discussed, with an appropriate approach applied throughout the assessment sample.

Centres must ensure that they have strong internal verification processes. We encourage those with a small cohort to work collaboratively with other centres.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Many candidates tackled the range of questions very well.

Question 2, which dealt with word choice and sentence structure, was done well. Question 3, which dealt with irony and imagery, was also done well by many candidates. Most candidates got through most questions in the time allocated.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Most candidates produced essays that shaped their knowledge towards the demands of the question. Some wrote quite lengthy, comprehensive responses to the question chosen and clearly demonstrated their knowledge of their chosen texts. Many candidates gave a number of quotations in their responses and analysed these quite effectively.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

In the listening paper, questions 1, 2, 3 and 5 saw many candidates provide good, solid answers. The listening paper was generally done reasonably well by most candidates, with some candidates performing very well.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (Assignment–writing)

This year saw an improved quality and range of responses from the previous year, when the assignment was part of the course assessment. Some candidates showed real flair in their writing skills, and some personal responses in particular showed close engagement with the task chosen, conveying thoughts and feelings.

Còmhradh (Performance–talking)

Candidate interaction with the teacher or lecturer was an area of strength throughout the samples verified this session. Candidates selected a wide range of topics.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Most candidates got through most of the questions, however, some candidates found time management more challenging.

Some candidates found it difficult to express ideas clearly when explaining how examples of word choice or imagery worked, or when explaining ideas and feelings. In some cases, their language skills made it difficult to go beyond basic points, or they repeated the stem of the question without completing any analysis of the quotation or example used.

Question 7 proved challenging for some, perhaps because of the need to identify the aim with supporting evidence.

As in previous years, in certain questions some candidates did not give sufficient examples to match the number of marks available, and therefore lost out on marks.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

Many candidates crafted essays that addressed the demands of the question. However, there were some who seemed to struggle to do this. Some found it more demanding to express opinions and show how points and evidence worked together. Most candidates chose texts that worked well for writing an essay. Some essays were more challenging for markers because of illegible handwriting.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

Question 4, which focused on the humorous tone used in part of the passage, proved difficult for some candidates. Some also found the final questions, where evidence was needed, more challenging.

Obair shònraichte–sgrìobhadh (Assignment–writing)

A few candidates could have proofread their work more effectively.

Còmhradh (Performance–talking)

Candidates frequently appeared to find it demanding to use specialist vocabulary in the context of their chosen topic.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Leughadh (Reading)

Candidates should gain sufficient experience in dealing with a range of different texts, both fiction and non-fiction. They should be clear about the different types of questions that may come up and how to approach them.

Candidates should ensure they read each question carefully to avoid incorrect answers. This may seem simple, but under the time pressure of the examination it can be easy to misinterpret what a particular question requires. Candidates do not need to repeat the question in their response, and they should be aware of how clear, bulleted answers can be effective.

A few candidates used evidence from outwith the parameters of the question. The line references are set to guide and help candidates through the paper and should be used as such.

Candidates should ensure their handwriting and answers are clear in all question papers. The legibility of answers can be a problem for markers.

Candidates should note the number of marks available for each question and attempt to give full examples and explanations to achieve these. They should be aware that they need to give clear explanations as to how chosen quotations 'work', and focus on connotation and ideas suggested. Some candidates should work on developing the necessary breadth of language skills and vocabulary required to do this effectively. Candidates should also mention techniques — for example, repetition, metaphor or word choice — where appropriate. They should be aware of the requirement to give examples, which is signposted by words such as 'Seall'. Candidates should ensure that the key part of quotations is given where necessary for explanations in answers. Some candidates this year did not clearly isolate specific words in quotations, or dealt with a number of quotations with one comment or brief analysis. Candidates should also be aware that they should deal with each quotation separately, as merging quotations together into one answer often prevents them achieving full marks.

Candidates should answer questions on 'effectiveness' by linking to textual evidence. Questions that focus on specific features of the passage as a whole, such as question 12 in this paper, should be answered with this in mind. Candidates should be aware that they may need to connect to ideas, images or language used earlier in the passage. They should also be aware of how to deal with techniques such as extended metaphor, and be able to describe how endings of passages are effective.

The balancing of language skills against the demand of the paper at Higher, along with the time management of working through the paper, is a further skill candidates should work at.

Question paper 1: Litreachas (Literature)

In literature essays, candidates should consider their writing style and work towards a well-constructed, polished essay. It is important to give sufficient detailed analysis along with evaluation of effectiveness. This should be done so that the essay reads as a whole, rather than separate, individual paragraphs. Considered personal appreciation and evaluation of examples and of the text as a whole should also be evident. Candidates should avoid formulaic prepared essays and ensure that essays are shaped towards the question set. They should avoid wasting time on long introductions, summaries and, in particular, long conclusions. It is better to use this time to add to the body of the essay.

When writing about poetry, candidates should consider the effect of the style and shape of poems. They should consider how this has a bearing on the tone, message and effect of the poem in addition to imagery and other stylistic features.

Candidates should make sure they cover the key important areas of texts and deal with the text as a whole, and not just select particular quotations they know. The quotations selected should advance the points the candidate is making. Some candidates use techniques to drive the essay. While this can be appropriate in a specifically linked question, candidates should be aware that they need to illustrate the central ideas of the text in every question.

Candidates, and teachers and lecturers should be aware of the need for texts used in essays to be suitably challenging for Higher and be of some substance to allow candidates to provide sufficient depth to an essay at this level. This gives them the best chance of success.

Question paper 2: Èisteachd (Listening)

Candidates should ensure that they read questions carefully, particularly those that require considered opinion and supporting evidence. They should take particular note of these types of questions in the time available to read through them beforehand, to prepare them for answering. They should also be aware of the number of marks for individual questions and any specific requirements set out. Candidates must give clear answers to questions rather than just writing down key words they have heard. Some candidates wrote down everything they heard but failed to demonstrate understanding of what the question was asking. Good understanding of complex Gàidhlig is crucial, and practising listening skills helps to prepare candidates for this component.

Obair shònraichte–sgriobhadh (Assignment–writing)

Successful assignments were characterised by an effective connection between the writer and the piece. Pieces of writing that allowed the writer's persona to come through were effective. This was true not just for personal reflective pieces but also for discursive pieces.

In creative pieces such as short stories, candidates should be aware of the need for the narrative to be shaped along with character and setting. They should be aware that they could, for example, create an episode or chapter of a longer story.

Factual pieces that have a personal connection or element to them are usually more successful. Rather than, for example, relating the history of a particular place, a piece that

shows a personal connection to the place or demonstrates interest in a topic can create a more effective connection with the reader.

Candidates should be aware that they need to check the accuracy of the whole piece, not just part of it. They should be aware of the authenticity of the piece and how pieces demonstrate the style and ability of the writer.

Còmhradh (Performance–talking)

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ have knowledge of and can apply detailed vocabulary that is specific to their chosen topic, in a natural manner
- ◆ choose topics that allow them to fully demonstrate their broad understanding of and ability to use the language

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](#).