

External Assessment Report 2013 – Gaelic (Learners)

Overall Performance

85.7% of candidates this year had no previous qualifications in Gaelic (Learners) but 50% of candidates gained a grade A–C. Performance was felt to be disappointing in all three externally-assessed elements of the course, especially in the writing element.

In general, the data suggests that many candidates had not been prepared adequately for the demands of Intermediate 1.

Reading/Listening

- Many candidates failed to translate accurately basic vocabulary or contain sufficient detail in their answers:

Reading:

- Question 1b): detail was missing in answers. Candidates should listen for phrases like ‘about’.
- Question 2c): many candidates wrote ‘to see’ instead of ‘to climb’.
- Question 3a): very few translated ‘Castle Road’ correctly.

Listening:

- Question 1: A common greeting, which very few managed to answer correctly.
- Question 2a): Italy — place names were poorly answered.
- Question 6: the weather, was poorly answered.
- Question 8b): detail was missing in answers. Candidates should listen for phrases like ‘close to’.
- Question 10a): names were incorrectly translated and should always be answered in English.
- Question 12b): **no candidates** gave the correct answer of ‘ice-cream’.

Writing

- Despite the predictable nature of the task, performance in the Writing paper was generally weak. This is both extremely disappointing and worrying given that Writing is compulsory in the new National qualifications.
- Some responses were very limited and did not allow candidates to demonstrate an appropriate range of language structures.
- This year, there were some candidates who **did not attempt to write anything** in the writing paper.

Advice to centres on the preparation of future candidates

- Centres should encourage candidates to ensure that handwriting is legible and to distinguish clearly between rough notes and what they wish to be considered as final answers.
- Centres are encouraged to make effective use of all the guidance issued by the SQA so that candidates can be presented at the correct level relative to their ability.
- In Reading/Listening:
 - Candidates should be guided by the number of points awarded for each question. The question itself usually indicates the amount of information required by stating guidance in bold e.g. **'Give a detailed answer'**.
 - Centres should ensure candidates are familiar with the common areas of vocabulary topics for Intermediate 1: time, months, days, money, numbers, place-names, countries, weather, common adjectives, comparatives etc.
 - Many candidates would also benefit from more focused practice of dictionary skills to avoid common errors.
 - Centres should ensure that candidates have enough time to refine their exam technique by working through past papers, particularly for the Listening Paper, and attention should be drawn to the availability of past papers on the SQA website.
 - In listening, Candidates hear the recording three times, and should be encouraged to make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers.
- In Writing:
 - Candidates need further guidance on what constitutes an adequate amount of writing, with sufficient variety in vocabulary and language structures appropriate to this level.
 - Candidates should be given guidance to avoid unnecessary repetition and the use of excessive English in their writing pieces.
 - Candidates need training on how to write in different formats, e.g. a letter, a report and a diary extract. They must respond appropriately to the question that is before them, e.g. if the question asks for a letter, it should be set out in the correct format with address, etc.