

External Assessment Report 2013 – Higher Gaelic (Learners)

Overall Performance

Most candidates performed well this year, with a few outstanding performances.

Reading and Translation

- Responses were generally of a high standard, despite misunderstandings by some candidates.
- In question 1, ‘Teisteanas’ caused problems for some candidates, resulting in a variety of responses to this question
- Although, most candidates understood the passage well and responded to the questions accordingly, in some cases there was insufficient attention to detail. Examples:
 - Q3: A number of candidates failed to provide ‘much more/more’ in their answer.
 - Q8: Candidates often failed to give sufficient detail to fully demonstrate their understanding.
 - Q 12a): Some inadequate responses were given here.
 - Q15: As for Q12a.

Listening

- This remains the weakest section of the exam with many candidates struggling to respond and a number not attempting some of the questions.
- Examples of difficulties:
 - Q1: Most candidates recognised ‘slàinte’ as relating to health, but some did not pick up on ‘bodhaige’ and ‘inntinne’.
 - Q2: ‘Deugairean’ seemed to be a problem for some candidates.
 - Q6: Most candidates recognised ‘Dèanaibh e cho luath ’s a thilleas sibh bhon sgoil’, but some did not include ‘Chan eil e math ... a dhèanamh anmoch air an oidhche’ as being relevant to the question.
 - Q14: Some candidates had difficulty in identifying ‘smaoinichibh air rudan ciùin, cofhurtail’.
 - Q16: Many candidates identified ‘sàmhach’ etc, but not many recognised ‘duvet’, ‘pillows’ ‘curtains’ etc. Several did not recognise ‘na leig solas a-steach’ which should not have represented any vocabulary difficulties at this level.
 - Q17: A number of candidates did not understand ‘a’ chòigeamh agus an t-siathamh bliadhna’

Writing

- Despite mixed performances, there was continued improvement in the Writing section.
- Particular improvement was noticed with regard to orthography – it was evident that candidates continue to become more familiar with the orthographic recommendations of Gaelic Orthographic Conventions.
- Most candidates wrote on the theme of Holidays with evidence of good preparation. There was quite a variety in the length of writing in this section, but with some good usage of idiomatic phrases in some pieces.

Literature

- Most candidates attempted the question on poetry, while a significant number responded to the short story question.
- Very few candidates responded to the question about the novel and drama.
- Generally, literature responses showed evidence of extensive preparation, and at times the impression was that some candidates went into the examination with prepared responses.
- Candidates in one or two centres wrote about the same text in a very similar manner, but generally responses showed that candidates had had exposure to a commendably wide range of texts throughout their course.

Advice to centres for the preparation of future candidates

- Greater emphasis must be placed on preparing candidates for the Listening. It might be that many candidates have insufficient exposure to the language, and they should be encouraged to use a variety of media to increase their familiarity with the spoken word.
- In reading comprehension, some candidates could benefit from paying greater attention to detail, and to some extent being guided by the number of marks on offer for various questions.
- While the Reading section was well done, candidates can gain more marks by looking closely at the questions and responding with according levels of detail.
- In writing, confusion between the verbal noun and the infinitive should be avoided. Particular care should be paid to tenses when writing about specific themes. Candidates should respond to the questions as set in order to maximise their performance.
- Literature:
 - While the thorough preparation of candidates is to be commended, many centres' candidates produced similar essays on the same text, giving the impression that responses are prepared with the intention of being reproduced on the answer page.
 - It is important that the set question is answered without too much focus on re-telling the poem or short story.
 - There should be greater focus on analysing and evaluating the author's work in responses to the short story question.
 - Quotations should be used effectively as support for points raised in responses, and not at random — quotations must be relevant to points being made.