



# **Case Study: Good Practice in Assessment**

## **Scots Language Award (SCQF Level 5) – Smithycroft Secondary School**

### **Background**

In 2016/17 we started delivering the Scots Language Award (SCQF Level 5) to 20 candidates in S5 and S6. This group of candidates had also chosen Scottish Studies as their social subject option from their timetables.

### **Why did we choose to deliver the Scots Language Award?**

We had introduced the Scottish Studies Award in the same year. As part of this Award we offered a Language component “The History and Development of Scots”. We selected this because it fitted in with the expertise of the members of staff teaching the class and complimented the other component units of the Scottish Studies Award.

We felt that offering the Scots Language Award broadened the choice available to senior candidates. The benefits of studying Scots were, in our view, far reaching. It provides the candidate with a set of transferable linguistic skills which can be applied to the study of English and other languages; studying Scots develops linguistic confidence, providing candidates with the opportunity to freely express themselves in their mother tongue; and a sense of identity and self-worth and citizenship can be fostered for candidates.

### **Delivering and Assessing the Scots Language Award**

Using materials from Education Scotland we created courses to cover both the required units – Scots Language: History and Development (SCQF level 5) and Scots Language: Understanding and Communicating (SCQF level 5).

We delivered the award on a unit-by-unit approach, tackling Scots Language: History and Development (SCQF level 5) in term one, and Scots Language: Understanding and Communicating (SCQF level 5) after Christmas.

We chose this approach because it was felt that Scots Language: History and Development (SCQF level 5) provided candidates with essential information about factors which have influenced the contemporary Scots Language, the relationship between Scots and other Languages and the status Scots had prior to the Treaty of Union in 1707. We found that being aware of these factors, among others, helped candidates to view Scots as a legitimate language and not a “slang” version of English.

This meant that when we delivered the Scots Language: Understanding and Communicating (SCQF level 5), candidates were much more aware of and engaged with Scots Language.

They could understand the origins and history of the language, and this gave them greater confidence when writing in Scots.

Before implementing the award, we discussed fully the mandatory course coverage as well as the unit outcomes and assessment standards. Throughout the year, we were in regular contact with Education Scotland's Scots Language Coordinator, who helped us to plan stimulating activities which provided knowledge and understanding at the appropriate level.

The assessment tasks for both units were based on existing examples from the SQA Understanding Standards materials.

It was important for us to ensure that our own assessment judgements were accurate and in line with the national standard. To encourage this, both teachers delivering the Scottish Studies course took part in cross-marking activities. We also made contact with other local schools who were delivering the Scots Language Award and shared resources and good practice with our colleagues through a GLOW Group and visits to other schools.

### **Benefits of Delivering the Award**

Studying Scots enables schools to acknowledge and celebrate the linguistic and cultural heritage of their candidates and the land in which they are growing up. By offering an SQA Award for senior candidates, the profile of Scots Language has been raised within the school – for both candidates and staff.

As a result of this we have greatly increased our teaching of Scots in the junior phase, particularly during S1-3 English classes and have also introduced an elective class in creative writing in Scots which has proved to be a popular choice. We are also planning to run intergenerational events in the school, which will be based on Scots Language.

### **Specific Benefit for Candidates**

Offering the Scots Language Award alongside the Scottish Studies Award meant that candidates have the opportunity to achieve two SQA Awards within one timetabled class. The courses complement each other extremely well and there was a natural cross over with the topics taught.

Studying Scots Language has also had a benefit to candidates in other subjects. National 5 and Higher English both have a mandatory Scottish Literature component. The course covered in the Scots Language Award can support candidates in this area and provide useful background knowledge, as well as increasing engagement and enthusiasm towards the texts chosen by the English Department.

We have also worked with the Modern Language Department when creating resources for the Scots Language: History and Development (SCQF level 5) unit. By examining the links between Scots and French, candidates have reported an increased enthusiasm for Modern Languages.

### **Specific Benefits for Staff**

Although creating a new course involved some time, it encouraged a dialogue and colligate approach, where staff across the whole school have worked together to assist with producing materials. There has been input from Modern Languages, Science, Social Subjects and English.

As a result of this, members of staff with an interest in Scots Language have had the opportunity to incorporate Scots into their own subjects. For example, a member of the Science Faculty has worked with the English Department on an S2 Interdisciplinary Learning project, based on the Scottish Scientists resources provided by Education Scotland.

S1 French classes now include work on the Auld Alliance, and the influence of French on Scots Language. This also fits in with the S1 History course which looks at the Scottish Wars of Independence and this offers our candidates opportunities to meaningfully link their learning across a range of subjects.

The teacher responsible for delivering the Scots Language Award has also set up a national Scots Language/Scottish Studies GLOW group to share resources, information, ideas and good practice. The group is well-used and steadily growing in contributors.