



Case Study: Good Practice in Assessment

Scots Language Award (SCQF Level 6) – Kirkwall Grammar School

Introduction

This case study looks at the delivery of the Scots Language Award in Kirkwall Grammar School, Orkney. The award was offered as an elective option during the school's short course time, and was delivered over one year during a double period timetabled on Thursday afternoons.

The candidates who opted to take the award were all in S5, and all were also sitting Higher English. We felt that as the candidates were working at Higher level in English, it would be a good opportunity to put them forward for the Scots Language Award at SCQF level 6, with the option of dropping to level 5 or 4 if necessary. In the event, six candidates took part, and all six achieved the award at level 6.

Why did we choose to deliver the Scots Language Award (SCQF Level 6)

We saw the Scots Language Award as a clear opportunity to deliver breadth in the areas of language, history, and creative writing. The award very much enhances and complements work being done in English, and some candidates were able to work on pieces of writing in Scots that were then submitted as folio pieces for Higher English. Scots is used in the Orkney community, and in the wider school community, so the learning was relevant and personalised.

Delivering and assessing the Scots Language Award (SCQF Level 6)

The award was delivered to a small class. Some material was taught, candidates undertook personal research, and we had input from visiting speakers. Most candidates opted for traditional style essay-type answers for the History and Development unit, while short stories, poems, and Scots/Orcadian translations from classic literature were produced for the Understanding and Communicating unit. One candidate was assessed orally for the History and Development unit. We made use of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Education Scotland support materials that are tailored specifically for the award, including Education Scotland materials that served as assessments for the Understanding and Communicating unit at:

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/AUSNScotsLangSCQF3456.pdf
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/SQA%20Scots%20Language%20Award>
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/History%20of%20Scots>

All links were active at the time of publication

We were able to bring in one visiting expert from the University of the Highlands and Islands, who told the candidates about Norse influences on Orkney language, and about linguistic diversity in contemporary Norway.

Benefits of delivering the award

This award enables us to teach our candidates about aspects of Scots language and history that are not taught in other parts of the Senior Phase Curriculum. It also facilitated broader learning, learning with community links, and making connections between learning and community language and history.

Specific benefit for candidates

It is a relaxed atmosphere without pressure of an end of course exam, and led to genuine enjoyment of learning for learning's sake.

Here are comments from two candidates who achieved the Scots Language Award:

Candidate evaluation 1:

In terms of the Scots writing course, I found it to not only be surprisingly enjoyable, but an insightful and helpful course as well. As someone who has grown up knowing bits and pieces of Scots language, it was a very good experience to finally expand and elaborate upon the knowledge I had prior. The final writing task in Scots seemed daunting at the start of the course, but by the end I found writing it to be relatively easy, and even quite fun (I even used this piece as part of my Higher English folio). This writing task was my personal favourite part of the course, but the history of the language was also very interesting to look at. The Scots course can help with other academic areas like History and English.

Candidate evaluation 2:

The Scots Language Award allowed us to analyse and fully and better understand hundreds of years of Scots poetry and prose. I feel it's important for people to be taught the Scots Language so that these many great texts can continue to be understood and appreciated by a modern audience, and so modern/future Scots texts can also be appreciated by a broader audience. Overall, I enjoyed as well as learnt from this course. It allowed me to gain a better understanding of the Scottish perspective through history.

Specific benefits for staff

It has provided the opportunity for teachers to teach to personal enthusiasms and given short course time a real focus and purpose. It has also provided more breadth for Senior Phase learners and opportunities to try out new resources from Education Scotland.