



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	German
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The general impression recorded by the Examiners was of a slightly improved performance this year, and this is supported by the numerical results and awards. In the upper ranges, candidates continue to demonstrate genuine achievement with work of a very high standard. At the other end of the scale there is evidence of significant weakness in knowledge and understanding, naive judgement and lack of preparation.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The Visiting Assessors continue to be impressed by the willingness of candidates to engage in what is recognised as a demanding event. This year many of the Assessors noted an improved performance overall, and this is borne out by an increase in the average mark for the Speaking Test, which had remained virtually static over many years.

The Examiners also noted an improved performance in Paper 1, Reading and Translation, again borne out by the average mark, although the exercise of Translation continues to pose considerable challenge for many candidates, as is reflected in an average mark of below 50% for this component.

Areas which candidates found demanding

As noted above, the exercise of Translation continues to pose a challenge for many candidates, even though they have access to a dictionary. This exercise requires accuracy, not gist-rendering, and many candidates do not take care with detail. Examples of this include inaccuracy in translating tenses, omission of words, confusion of singular and plural and difficulty with German word order.

The other area in which the results disappoint is Discursive Writing. The average mark for this section of the assessment in 2013 is below the 'Satisfactory' threshold for reasons that are manifest. As reported in previous years, many candidates pay little attention to the specific question that has been asked and simply reproduce a piece of writing that has no relevance to the question. Linguistically many candidates show a lack of command of the basics of German grammar, ranging from a lack of understanding of the convention of writing German nouns with a capital letter to the basics of agreement, word order, gender, conjugation and spelling.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

As noted above, candidates need more and specific training in the art of Translation, including instruction in the appropriate use of a dictionary, attention to detail and accuracy, and adaptive and flexible use of English.

Candidates clearly need more experience in writing German at an acceptable level for this level of examination. Basic knowledge of the fundamentals of German grammar needs reinforcement. The availability of resources relevant to the various topics is such that candidates should be encouraged to engage with these topics with a degree of sophistication that transcends the everyday or the mundane.

While the examiners noted a slightly improved response in the Folio, issues identified in previous years continue to appear. Given the limitations imposed by the word-count, the formulation of the question is crucial. There are still many instances of titles that effectively preclude a critical or an analytical response and force the candidates into descriptive and narrative responses. As with Discursive Writing, the range of resources available to candidates to explore the chosen text or topic is immense, yet there are so many instances, as evidenced by the bibliographies, of candidates failing to engage with external discourse that would allow them to formulate their own ideas and understandings in a more sophisticated and reflective way.

In centres with multiple candidates there are still many instances of all candidates writing Folio pieces on the same topic, which defeats the objective of encouraging individual exploration of a text or topic with the consequent title negotiated on an individual basis.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	127
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	138
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 200				
A	40.6%	40.6%	56	142
B	20.3%	60.9%	28	122
C	24.6%	85.5%	34	102
D	4.3%	89.9%	6	92
No award	10.1%	100.0%	14	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.