



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	German
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

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 2013 examination was regarded by markers and other interested parties as a very fair and balanced one, with the content being appropriate to the level and the topics covered. The performance of the candidates was overall better than in previous years, although the number of candidates fell by 33% from 492 to 331, indicative of the recent trend in uptake of German in Scottish schools.

Overall, the performance of candidates achieving a pass (A–C) rose to 94% from 86.9% last year. ‘A’ passes rose from 39.8% to 54.7%, and the examining team was impressed by the high standard at this level in many schools. The percentage of candidates achieving a No Award fell from 7.9% to 2.7%.

The average candidate score in the examination was 69% — just one mark short of the A/B interface, and one mark above the 2011 average; this reflected the improved performance of candidates. This was up 4.4 marks from 2012, and this improvement was reflected in all four skills. Reading scores were up by 2.6 marks, although still slightly short of the 2011 average Reading mark. Listening reached its highest average score ever (13.3 out of 20 marks), and this indicates that centres have taken on board the encouragement in last year’s report to prepare candidates better for the listening exam. Both speaking and writing grades also showed a slight improvement.

Areas in which candidates performed well

In Reading, text 1 (Holidays) and text 2 (How people like to enjoy the summer) were very well done. It was also most encouraging to see a sustained improvement to candidates’ ability to engage with the third text (the World of Work), which featured two boys’ work experience in a cosmetics shop. Centres have clearly read and followed advice in last year’s report. Overall, it was regarded as a fair paper which allowed candidates to demonstrate their understanding of German.

In Listening, questions 1a, 2b and 5 were very well done, with over 90% of candidates supplying the correct answer. Most had been well prepared for this paper and were able to understand the majority of vocabulary used. Centres had listened to the advice from last year’s report indicating more time needed to be spent on listening skills.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In Reading, there were some unexpected surprises in candidates’ responses. In text 2, question 2(a) candidates were asked where the people like to spend their summer holidays. One of the answers, *draußen am Rhein*, was poorly done.

The early questions in the longer text 4, where three young people from Germany talk about how they get on with their siblings, posed no problems in general, but as the text progressed the questions became more challenging for many candidates, which is to be expected.

However, in answer to question (i) ‘How does her mother react?’ candidates struggled with *aber meine Mutter sagt nichts dazu*. In question (j), which asked how old Marie-Joëlle’s brother was, many candidates omitted the last word from *sieben Jahre jünger*, thus throwing away a mark. In question (k) ‘When do they play badminton?’ a large number of candidates did not recognise *in den Sommerferien* as the required answer. Most candidates also seemed to be unaware of the meaning of *gemein* which was the answer to question (n) ‘How does he react?’ but this was certainly more demanding, as can be expected at the end of a long reading paper.

In the Listening paper, lexical items such as *Hochhaus*, *Elektroniker*, and *Schuhgeschäft* all caused problems, and should have been within the understanding of most candidates. In question 8, candidates were asked to mention any two things Theresa says about her neighbours. The sentence *Ein Mädchen in der Wohnung nebenan ist unser Babysitter* was poorly understood by many candidates and was repeated in various forms. Responses to the final question, which included how she travels to work (*Ich fahre mit der Straßenbahn*, rendered as train, bus and car) disappointed the examiners, as this is an item one would expect to be covered in any German class at this level.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Over the last three years centres have been advised to continue to focus more rigorously on listening skills in the classroom and on the drilling of basic vocabulary learning in order to prepare their candidates more fully for the demands of the external assessment in this skill. It is very encouraging to see that this approach has been taken up and also that it has been done without detriment to the three other skills. All four skills have shown an improvement this year, and centres are encouraged to continue to ensure that all four skills are appropriately covered during the teaching and learning of the course.

However, candidates continue to lose marks in both the Reading and Listening papers for failing to give two pieces of information when required to do so — supplying only one piece of information and thus penalising themselves. Candidates still need to be reminded by teachers to read the questions carefully.

In writing, the majority of centres had prepared the candidates properly, and they could write three sentences under each of the main headings. A range of verbs were evident in most scripts, showing that verb work has improved. However, sometimes the work was let down by the number of other mistakes in gender, case, spelling, and word-order. A lot of work was ‘safe’, and not many candidates attempted *weil/dass* clauses which make the difference in the complexity of the work, especially for a mark of 15. A few centres are still under-preparing their candidates for the writing paper and there were a number of very poor quality responses.

It concerns the examiners that perhaps some candidates are being given minimal practice in writing in the final three months of the course, and thus they simply do not have the capacity to cope in the final examination without the regular practice of the task, at least every two weeks. This has been underlined by the examining team’s experience at Appeals where, in some centres, it seems little feedback is given to the candidates between their prelim and

the actual exam. Positive constructive feedback on their practice performance would certainly help candidates improve their performance in May.

It is hoped that centres and candidates will be able to act on the advice being offered in this report to ensure that they enjoy success in the 2014 German examination at Intermediate 1 level. This is a very accessible qualification and this is confirmed by the quality of passes attained in 2013. Congratulations to all the candidates involved and to the teachers at the centres who helped and prepared them so to do.

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 1**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	509
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	343
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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 100				
A	52.5%	52.5%	180	70
B	22.7%	75.2%	78	60
C	15.7%	91.0%	54	50
D	3.2%	94.2%	11	45
No award	5.8%	100.0%	20	-

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.