



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	German
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

Feedback from markers and practitioners about the 2013 exam was very positive. The vast majority of candidates seem to have been presented at the appropriate level.

The examining team was pleased at the continuing high level of candidates' performance this year, with the overall average score of 72.1%, up 1.8% on 2012. There was a consequential rise in the A–C pass rate from 93.5% to 94.4%. Candidates appeared to be more able and better prepared for the examination than in previous years. However, the number of No Awards also rose slightly from 3.2% to 3.8%.

The component average mark in Reading rose by 0.6 to 21.6, but this was matched by a fall of 0.6 in Listening to 11.2. Both Writing and Speaking showed an improvement and this is to be welcomed.

In 2013 there were 979 candidates at Intermediate 2 level (a rise of 80 over 2012), and this is encouraging, given the declining numbers of German candidates in Scottish schools. Those progressing from Standard Grade fell from 25.7% to 16%, whilst those with no previous German experience rose from 64.4% to 73.7%. The majority of candidates came from S4, but here was a large increase in the number of candidates being presented at S3 from 0.6% to 11.7%.

As has been the custom for many years, the Intermediate 1 and 2 and Higher teams work together in the preparation of all three examinations, and this approach allows for a very clear progression across the three levels.

Areas in which candidates performed well

In Reading all four texts were appropriate, relevant, interesting, and covered the requisite topics well. Candidates were able to access the texts relatively well, and the opening text proved to be extremely straightforward, which gave candidates a boost to cope with the rest of the paper.

In Listening, some candidates did well, extracting only relevant points. Candidates are always challenged by the Listening, but the paper was constructed in such a way that, after a particularly challenging question, there then came a much more straightforward one. Candidates always recovered well, and there were some very solid performances in some centres where listening skills had obviously been practised more than in other centres.

In Writing, there were many examples of very good practice and the candidates coped well with the task on the whole. The majority of centres had prepared the candidates well and they were able to write a convincing job application.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In the Reading paper, many candidates lost marks for failing to note the comparative in question 3(a) *selbstständiger* (more independent), which is a common enough item at this level. The texts only proved problematic in what can only be considered as 'A' grade questions:

- ◆ In question 4d (Why did he find it difficult to get used to life at the boarding school?) candidates found difficulty in *weil ich mit den Regeln nicht zurecht kam* (because he couldn't cope with the rules).
- ◆ Question 4g (What is an advantage of living in the boarding school?) was very poorly done, even though the answer was indicated in the text: *Das ist ein Vorteil: ich habe einen sehr kurzen Schulweg* (very short walk to school).

The Listening paper, as always, challenged many candidates. Previous exams threw up a total ignorance of the words *Sparkasse* in 2011 and *Brötchen* in 2012. In 2013, the equivalent expressions were '*eine Schule fürs Leben und für den Beruf*' (a school for life and for work) and '*Südinself*' (South Island) in the context of New Zealand. Even without a knowledge of New Zealand being formed primarily of two islands, neither *Süd* nor *Inself* is beyond the understanding of a C Grade Intermediate 2 candidate. Other items that were relatively poorly understood were in question 1(c) *Geschäftsreisen* (Business trips), question 2(d) *von 16 Uhr bis Mitternacht* (from 4 pm till midnight) and question 3(d) *Linksverkehr* (Driving on the left).

In Writing, a minority of candidates appear still to be very poorly prepared for this highly predictable test. They know little about balance of content, the need to cover the main five bullet points, the dangers of addressing these five points in a different order to that in which they are listed on the exam paper, and of writing too much in the optional areas to the detriment of the main five points.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

In Reading, candidates should be encouraged to ensure they read the text thoroughly before looking at the questions. They should also be advised that the questions need to be read carefully and that they ensure their answers give the detail required.

Although performance in Listening continues to challenge candidates, they need to take the time to read the questions thoroughly in the minute preceding the first reading of the passage. By doing so, candidates can build up a clear idea of the areas which are going to feature in the passage. They can focus on the question words to ensure that they know exactly what type of information they are going to have to provide and the number of marks available indicates how much information they will require. By the time the CD is started, well-prepared candidates will be in control of what they are about to hear.

In Writing, centres should ensure that after the Prelims the writing task is revisited regularly in the run-up to the May exam. Centres need to work with candidates to give them positive feedback on how they can improve their performance between the prelims and the actual exam. Evidence from appeals strongly indicates that many centres do not do so and that the

candidates who do not receive good feedback on their prelims actually give a worse performance in the final exam. Some centres are also too prescriptive, with nearly all candidates memorising the exact same essay rather than personalising their work. This formulaic approach led to some candidates not coping with the task accurately.

The word *Mitarbeiter* in the advert continues to baffle candidates. Centres are advised to spend a little time in the course of the year analysing the jobs across all the papers since 2000, thereby equipping their candidates better for the task.

There is also a need for centres to insist on there being a balance in the approach to each bullet point. Sometimes candidates skim over Bullet Points 1 to 3 very thinly and then concentrate on the other two bullet points or even the additional ones. Each of the five compulsory bullet points needs to be equally addressed to ensure candidates achieve a good mark.

Centres are also advised to consider the advice given in previous reports, all of which is still relevant today, to improve candidates' performance across the board.

Overall, the standard achieved in this year's examination was very good and centres are to be commended on the excellent work they are doing.

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 2**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	912
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	993
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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	55.7%	55.7%	553	70
B	25.3%	81.0%	251	60
C	12.3%	93.3%	122	50
D	2.1%	95.4%	21	45
No award	4.6%	100.0%	46	-

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.