



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	German
Level	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 setting team once again selected with thoroughness reading texts which were of a good quality and covered all Units of the Course. The Listening paper also covered a wide range of topics, both personal and transactional, which were short and specific, but allowed for some extraneous material to set the topic in a more realistic setting. Feedback from Markers about the exam itself was very positive.

The number of candidates sitting German at Intermediate 1 level saw an 82% increase this year, from 214 to 389. This is very pleasing and seems to reflect an increasing confidence by centres in the appropriate demands of the exam for S4 candidates. 77% of the candidates were in S4, with 17.9% in S3, up from 11.5% in 2009.

The average mark in Reading rose from 19.6 out of 35 to 20.4, the highest ever score, indicating that candidates are being prepared better for this element. In Listening, the average mark rose from 11 to 11.5 out of 20, which is below the high point of 12.9 in 2007, but is nevertheless a positive change.

In Writing, there was a drop in the average score from 10 to 9.2 out of 15, which causes concern. Examiners felt that some candidates should have been presented for Access 3 rather than Intermediate 1, given their performance in Writing. There was also a slight drop in Speaking marks from 24.6 to 24.2 out of 30. However, overall the average score in the examination increased by 0.1 to 65.3%.

The improvement in the mean marks for the unseen elements of Reading and Listening gives a clear indication that the 2010 cohort of candidates was somewhat better prepared than that of 2009. However, they could on the whole have been better prepared for Writing, considering that it does not change from one year to the next and is in the public domain.

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

Candidates performed well in all areas of the examination, particularly in Reading.

Areas which candidates found demanding

The content of all three papers was seen to be very fair, with a good range of vocabulary and topics. However, there were basic items of vocabulary which were lacking in many candidates' knowledge.

In Reading, the first three passages were very well done. There were few problems with vocabulary and structures. In passage 2, which dealt with two sisters giving their opinion of where they live, a number of candidates did struggle with *weil wir dort ein eigenes Haus haben*.

Passage 3, which deals normally with the world of work, was unusually well done this year and suggests that centres have taken on board the advice given in earlier reports. One question for 4 marks was supported and involved gap-filling of sentences from the text. This did improve candidates' ability to access to the passage and their consequent performance.

However, the longer fourth passage proved challenging for many candidates, as it is intended to be, but the topic of daily routine should not have been problematic; many candidates appeared not to have been taught basic vocabulary related to this topic. *Freizeitaktivität, Staub wischen, den Müll runter bringen* and, even for a few candidates, *einkaufen gehen* were found to be difficult.

Many candidates also lost points by not reading the text thoroughly enough. In answer to the question, 'How long does Karen spend doing her homework?' they immediately saw in the text: *45 Minuten nach Unterrichtsschluss bin ich wieder zu Hause* and assumed '45 minutes' was the answer. They appeared not to have read the next sentence, which contained the correct answer: *Dann habe ich noch eine halbe Stunde Hausaufgaben zu schreiben*.

Candidates should be told that marks are not given for obvious answers like 45 minutes. Other aspects which seemed challenging for candidates were the concepts of *lernen*, talking to your parents about your day whilst having the evening meal, the need for ten hours' sleep (*damit ich zehn Stunden Schlaf bekomme*) and also telling the time (*Viertel vor neun*).

In Listening, candidates struggled with some basic vocabulary items. In response to the question, 'What does she say about (her home town)?' many candidates found *eine schöne Stadt* difficult. It was surprising that *eine ältere Schwester, keine Kinder* (often rendered as 'small children') and *müde* were also rarely seen in answers.

Tankstelle was not understood by a large number of the candidates. Of concern were the candidates' responses to Question 8, which concerned presents the girl had bought for her family: *Pralinen, Krawatte and Oma* were the target words and all were rendered poorly.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The examination again highlights the need for teachers 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.

With regard to Writing, there are still a very few centres who do not prepare candidates well for this task. Although the format is unchanged from year to year, it is important that candidates get good practice in the assessment and are given appropriate and robust feedback on their attempts, in order to improve their performance in the final examination. In addition, there are a number of centres where candidates are still not writing three sentences for each section, resulting in a deduction of 2 marks for each section. When this happens in three sections, the candidate has to be awarded 0.

Centres must stress to their candidates the importance of having three verbs in each section, otherwise they will be penalised. To boost the chances of candidates attaining 15, teachers should encourage them to develop some variety in word order and possibly the use of one or two relative or subordinate clauses.

The examining team continues to be a little concerned about the fact that candidates lose marks across all three external papers because they do not pay attention to detail, for example by giving only one piece of information when it states that two are required.

The detailed marking instructions for the examination are available on the SQA website. The examining team encourages all presenting centres to download these, analyse them to see what core information is required within the Reading and Listening papers, and pass this on to candidates.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	214
Number of resulted entries in 2010	389

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	38.3%	38.3%	149	70
B	26.5%	64.8%	103	60
C	17.7%	82.5%	69	50
D	8.5%	91.0%	33	45
No award	9.0%	100.0%	35	–

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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.