



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>German</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 2</b>

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 examining team was pleased at the continued high level of candidates' performance this year. The overall average score was 69.4%, which is down from last year's 72.3% but is still the second highest recorded. Consequently, the pass rate (A–C) fell slightly from 92.7% to 89.3%.

Although component averages in all external papers fell, this was partly balanced by the Speaking component average rising by 0.3 on the previous best of 2009, from 23.2 to 23.5 out of 30. There were slight decreases in the average scores for Reading and Writing, 0.3 and 0.4 respectively, but it was fall in the average score for Listening by 2.5 marks, from 14.4 to 11.9 out of 30, that stands out. This highlights the importance of teachers ensuring that they cover the training of this skill thoroughly in class.

Within both the Reading and the Listening papers, candidates were presented with a good range of texts which sampled from all Units of the Course. The setting team had taken particular care to ensure all the texts were accessible and of interest and relevance to all candidates. The vast majority of candidates seem to have been presented at the appropriate level.

In 2010 there were slightly fewer candidates at Intermediate 2 level (927 as opposed to 957 in 2009), but with a large number of new and returning centres. The number of candidates in S4 rose, whilst the number in S5 and S6 decreased. 63.7% of candidates were in S4.

The feedback from Markers was positive. Overall, the response of candidates was good; most candidates seem to have been entered at the appropriate level.

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 both Reading and Writing, candidates generally performed well across the board. In Reading, candidates found the shorter texts very accessible. The second text, dealing with the world of work, was particularly well done, and the use of a grid to focus attention on the required detail was beneficial to candidates.

The longer passage was, as usual, challenging for some candidates, but very accessible to most candidates. In Writing, some candidates are being well prepared for this area, resulting in many examples of excellence.

In Listening, some candidates achieved well, but it is noted that there was overall a poorer response this year.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

In Listening, there was a lack of knowledge of basic vocabulary. Very few candidates knew the word *Sparkasse*, even though there is one on every German high street; neither did candidates know such vocabulary as health centre, spa, hospital and ice cream parlour. *Wichtig, Kultur, Freiheit, Sicherheit* and *historische Städte* also caused problems.

Some candidates got the girl's age wrong in the first question (*sechzehn*), which is usually the easy starter. Candidates also struggled with other phrases such as *ich möchte hier meine Deutschkenntnisse verbessern* (which many use in their writing exam), *mit einem Schulfreund, in der achten Klasse... hatte ich genug von Kindern*. The lack of attention to detail on the part of many candidates was also disappointing.

Candidates' lack of precision, sometimes due to poor English expression or spelling, was also noted in the Reading paper. The word *vorbekraft* was an example of this; many candidates obviously understood the concept but struggled to express it in English.

In the longer passage, which is far more challenging, there was a lot of misinterpretation or lack of detail. Phrases in this passage which candidates found difficult included: *die Eltern von meiner Oma, ans Herz gewachsen, habe ich meine Freundin in meiner ehemaligen Heimat besucht* and *ich fühle mich hier zu Hause*. These are suitable phrases for inclusion at this level and it was expected that candidates would cope with them.

With regard to the Writing task, it again needs to be stressed that centres need to teach candidates how to incorporate — correctly — the job for which they are applying. Candidates need to be taught to look at the advert and make sure that they are applying for the correct job. It is important to note that, if candidates are clearly applying for a different job from that in the examination paper, the maximum award which can be given is 8/20, in line with the graded criteria.

With regard to the reasons for the job, it was noted that many candidates widened their response here. However, many candidates are still addressing the request for more information for the job in too vague and thin a manner.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Again this year in Reading, candidates' performance in the three shorter texts was very good, and the longer fourth passage was well attempted. Centres should continue to ensure that candidates have sufficient practice in both short and long texts. It should be impressed on candidates that the little words do matter, as small details, such as the use of the comparative and words such as *zu, so* and *sehr*, make all the difference and, if ignored, can result in marks being lost.

In Listening, centres need to ensure that candidates gain sufficient practice in this skill, which was disappointingly done this year and which remains the weakest skill. The Listening exam is usually very accessible to all candidates, and the questions set by the examiners focus on specific vocabulary and phrases which should not pose continuous challenges to the average candidate. Basic vocabulary, such as places in towns, daily routine and numbers, needs to be known by candidates.

With regard to the writing task, centres need to teach candidates to write a balanced response, incorporating all five mandatory bullet points plus, **if desired**, the two additional ones. Centres should not require their candidates to write about these two extra points, unless they are individual and relevant. An example of this might be with younger candidates who cannot write about subjects they took in S3/4 but who can write about a previous visit to Germany.

Some candidates address the five compulsory bullet points quite thinly but then go on to write extensive pre-learned supplementary points. For some candidates this results in a lower grade, because they cope satisfactorily with the main five bullet points but then cannot remember all the details of the extra points and do not have a sufficient command of German to write everything correctly.

For other candidates, who have managed to achieve 12 in the mandatory bullet points, the effort required in the extra points often proves too much and results in them tumbling to 8. Centres are advised to ensure that candidates write 120 to 150 words on the core tasks, as opposed to under 100 words on these with the optional tasks being used to top up the word count.

In some centres all candidates seem to write identical responses, with the only differences coming in adjectives or the subjects they are studying. These candidates had little clear understanding of what they were doing, and subsequently lost marks.

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

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	957
Number of resulted entries in 2010	927

## 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	51.6%	51.6%	478	70
B	20.8%	72.4%	193	60
C	16.9%	89.3%	157	50
D	4.7%	94.1%	44	45
No award	5.9%	100.0%	55	—

### 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.