



## External Assessment Report 2012

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

Overall the results were comparable with those of previous years. However, the examiners did note an increased bunching of candidates in the middle range in both of the written papers, with fewer stellar performances and some that were notably poor.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

As has invariably been the case since the advent of Advanced Higher, some of the best performances are to be found in the Speaking Test. The Visiting Assessors noted how positive the experience of examining was, with candidates readily engaging in genuine conversation and an exchange of ideas. This is not to say that there were not instances of candidates relying excessively on pre-learned material and thereby not demonstrating the degree of linguistic flexibility and adaptability that is required at this level.

In Paper 1, the inferential question (Question 7) was generally tackled well, although there were still instances of candidates providing minimal responses, as well as candidates not attempting to answer the question at all. Similarly, the translation was reasonably well accomplished, although there are still issues concerning candidates' approach to the task of translation.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

The examiners continue to express concern at the level of linguistic and intellectual competence that is demonstrated in Discursive Writing. A significant number of candidates show very little familiarity with even the most basic rules of German grammar, write in a style that shows heavy linguistic interference from English, and on occasion write in such an oblique fashion as to be unintelligible. There are still many instances of candidates reproducing a prepared answer and paying no heed to the specific points raised by the question.

While the Translation in Paper 1 was handled satisfactorily, there still remains a tendency for some candidates to produce gist translations that do not meet the criteria for accurate translations. In particular, there is a tendency to omit words such as articles. Dictionary misuse is also a matter for concern.

In Paper 2 Part B, given the closeness of the subject matter to many candidates' general experience, there was a tendency for a number of candidates to base answers on experience/good practice rather than on the specifics of the dialogue.

# **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

## **Speaking Test**

Candidates should be encouraged to understand that, ideally, this test should be a real conversation. They should be prepared to engage flexibly in dialogue and not to depend on rote-learned material.

## **Folio**

Despite the guidance given in previous reports, there are still many candidates who are being disadvantaged by the choice and/or formulation of the titles for the Folio pieces. Titles that invite narrative or descriptive responses are almost by definition self-penalising.

Many bibliographies amount to no more than a citation of the primary text.

Candidates should be encouraged to engage with critical literature to stimulate a more sophisticated appreciation of literary texts. The use of 'Jugendliteratur' as primary texts should be carefully considered since such texts generally eschew the complexities and ambiguities of more complex texts.

## **Paper 1**

Candidates should be well prepared for the skill of translation, including intelligent use of dictionaries. In particular candidates should focus on detail and accuracy rather than on loose rendering.

## **Paper 2**

In Discursive Writing candidates need to pay heed to the basics of German grammar as well as those of German idiom, and should be discouraged from viewing this as an extended exercise in translation from English to German. All the questions will relate to the underlying themes, but they need to be answered in response to the specific aspects of those themes that inform the question.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	160
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	127
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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	35.4%	35.4%	45	139
B	23.6%	59.1%	30	118
C	17.3%	76.4%	22	98
D	14.2%	90.6%	18	88
No award	9.4%	100.0%	12	-

## 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.