



External Assessment Report 2012

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

As has been the custom over many years, the Setting Team carefully selected reading texts that were of a good quality and covered all areas of the course. This was also the case with the Listening paper, in which a wide range of topics, both personal and transactional, were chosen. Feedback from markers and from practitioners about the exam itself was very positive.

The number of candidates sitting German at Intermediate 1 level this year rose by 10%. This is very pleasing and continues the pattern which has seen almost a 150% increase in the number of candidates since 2009. 82% of the candidates were in S4, up 4% from 2011, with 11.8% in S3, down 5% from 2010. There was also a slight increase in the numbers of S5 and S6 candidates sitting the exam. It was also good to see 13 new centres presenting, although the number of centres only increased overall by 5.

The overall performance of candidates this year showed a slight deterioration on last year's with the numbers gaining an A–C pass going down from 89.9% to 86.9%, although this is still ahead of the 2010 figure. 39.8% of candidates gained A passes (again in line with 2009, but down over 11% from 2011). There was a corresponding rise of 8% in B passes and of 1% in C passes. Unfortunately, the percentage of No Awards also rose, from 5.3% to 7.9%, which indicates that some candidates may have been better presented for Access 3.

Overall, the average score in the examination decreased by 3.4 to 64.6%. Reading and writing both saw a fall to their lowest average marks for 4 years, whilst speaking fell by 0.5 to equal the 2009 score, still however above the 2010 figure. Conversely, the average mark in listening rose from 11.2 to 12.3, which is very pleasing and indicates centres are preparing candidates better in this skill.

Centres should consider carefully the level of presentation for each individual candidate. Elements of the performance this year suggests that some candidates may have been better placed at Access 3 level. However, it may be that some very good candidates previously inappropriately presented for Intermediate 1 have this year been correctly presented for Intermediate 2, resulting in a lowering of the average marks. As in last year's report, centres are encouraged to look carefully at the level of German that candidates are producing and present them accordingly in order that they achieve the best they can.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates performed well in listening. It was a very straightforward paper, and candidates had every opportunity to achieve good scores. In writing, there were some very good examples of quality.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In Reading a number of candidates found the paper challenging and some candidates did not cope well with some very basic vocabulary, such as Hausaufgaben (often confused for Hausarbeit), für den nächsten Tag, sortieren, 1 bis 1,5 Stunden and Schulfächer. All these lexical items should be within the ken of most Intermediate 1 candidates.

Other questions that caused difficulty were usually those designed to separate the 'A' candidates from the rest and they did so successfully, particularly in the fourth text. Examiners also noted incorrect English spelling in a significant minority of candidate responses

In the Listening paper, many questions were extremely well done. However, it is concerning that some very common words were not recognised by candidates, such as 'Burg', 'Wochenende', 'pünktlich', 'lange schlafen' and 'müde'. In the last two years, Tankstelle and Bahnhof were also not understood by a large number of the candidates. It is hoped that centres will make basic vocabulary a priority this year in order to ensure that candidates are better prepared to succeed in this exam.

Candidates should also be prepared to answer questions as fully as possible, including all information surrounding the main idea, eg in question 5 they needed to say not just 'loud' but 'loud in the evenings'; in question 8 they needed 'good atmosphere' rather than just one of these words.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

As in previous years, candidates lost marks in both the Reading and Listening papers for failing to give two pieces of information when required to do so. Candidates should be reminded to read the questions carefully.

In Reading at question 3d (i), too many candidates ticked two boxes, rather than the one required. Candidates also need to be aware that any difficult German is translated for them in the question on many occasions.

The detailed Marking Instructions for the examination are available on the SQA website and the examining team encourages all presenting centres to download these and analyse them to see what core information is required in the Reading and Listening papers, and share this with candidates.

The improvement in the listening average mark indicates that centres have taken note of the concern voiced in the last two years' reports about the deteriorating performance of candidates in this skill. This is heartening, and centres are to be commended on their work in this area. Centres should continue their good preparation in Listening by focusing more rigorously on listening skills in the classroom and on the drilling of basic vocabulary learning

to prepare their candidates more fully for the demands of the external assessment. This should be done without detriment to the three other skills.

Following the improvement in writing last year, it was disappointing to see this reversed this year. As this paper is a constant, it suggests that candidates in the 2012 diet have weaker ability in writing than last year's cohort.

There were still some instances this year where candidates did not write three sentences for each section, resulting in a deduction of 2 marks for each section. To avoid losing marks, candidates need to have three verbs in each section. Centres are strongly advised to make it clear to candidates, that, when this happens in three sections out of the four, the candidate has to be awarded 0.

Although many candidates had been well prepared for the writing task, and coped well with the demands of the paper, examiners noted that there were a significant number of candidates being marked at 6 and 9. Centres are advised to work with their candidates and make it clear to them that no complexity is required to attain 12, so candidates would not be taking a huge risk in aiming to produce 12 sentences using nine or ten different verbs, rather than the repetitive work we have seen this year, as in this example for the final section on 'Freizeitbeschäftigungen: Ich spiele Fußball. Ich spiele Federball. Ich spiele Basketball in der Schule'.

If candidates aspire to 15, then they must be made aware that they need to write accurately, with an element of complexity and sophistication. The addition of a learned subordinate clause (eg *Ich habe einen Bruder, der Mark heißt* or *Ich wohne in einem Stadtteil, der X heißt*) or inversion plus some TMP (eg *Am Wochenende gehe ich manchmal mit dem Hund im Wald spazieren*) would raise their writing to this level, provided the rest of the task is accurate and relevant.

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 future German examinations at Intermediate 1 level.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	446
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	509
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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	38.9%	38.9%	198	70
B	26.5%	65.4%	135	60
C	18.7%	84.1%	95	50
D	5.3%	89.4%	27	45
No award	10.6%	100.0%	54	-

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.