



External Assessment Report 2012

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

In setting the 2012 exam, the Examining Team ensured that the articles used were relevant and accessible, and would cover all the topics required for Intermediate 2. They were all from current and reliable sources including newspapers, internet articles and blogs. All the topics covered should not have come as a surprise to candidates, as they are typical of what is expected at this level. Feedback from markers and practitioners on the exam itself was very positive.

The examining team was pleased at the continuing level of candidates' performance this year. The overall average score was 70.3% and, consequently, the pass rate (A–C) was 92.5%, indicating that the cohort had been well-prepared for the examination.

The component average mark in Reading was 21.0 (out of 30) but it is the improvement in Listening marks, from 10.0 to 11.8, which accounts for most of the overall improvement, and this is very pleasing. Centres have obviously ensured they covered listening skills in class. This must continue, but not to the detriment of writing and speaking — centres must ensure they cover all four skills equally.

In 2012 there were 899 candidates at Intermediate 2 level, which included a large number of new and returning centres, although the overall number of presenting centres rose by just two. The number of candidates in S4 and S6 decreased, whilst the number in S5 increased. 65.6% of candidates were in S4. It is interesting to note that only 25.7% of candidates had progressed from Standard Grade, while the number of candidates progressing from Intermediate 1 rose from 5.4% to 9.1%. 64.4% had no previous SQA progress record in German, which is encouraging.

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 Listening candidates generally performed well across the board. In Reading, all texts were found to be very accessible. The first three texts were very well done by all candidates, and the third text, dealing with the world of work, was particularly well done. As usual, the longer fourth passage was challenging to some candidates, but accessible to most. Questions towards the end of text 4 are designed to be challenging, and they worked particularly well this year. Candidates clearly were able to relate to the context of all four texts, and it was good to find no text too challenging.

In Listening, some candidates did well, remembering to listen and extract the relevant information. Passage three on healthy eating was found to be the most challenging. Almost

all candidates took the exam seriously, and almost all gave an answer to each question, which is encouraging.

In Writing, candidates are being well prepared, resulting in many examples of excellence. The majority of candidates handled the task well and were able to personalise the task using the job advert. There was a full range of responses, but the overwhelming majority were at 20, 16 or 12. Very few candidates' responses were awarded zero.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In the Reading paper, the wording of the questions was clear, but candidates should ensure they do mention two things when this is required, rather than just one. There was a lack of attention to sufficient detail. It must be stressed to candidates how important detail is in their answers at Intermediate 2. Examples of this include question 1(c), where candidates often missed out the 'never/always' required in the answer; in question 4(h) where the 'sehr' was required; or in question 4(m) where a large number confused 'fünften' for 'fünfzehnten' or even 'fünfzigsten'.

Candidates should remember that the questions follow the order of the passage. If candidates finish the paper well within the time allocated, they should take the time to read the German clearly, to avoid making mistakes around who did what and when. A good example of this is question 3(b) about the neighbours asking the young people to be babysitters, rather than the young people asking them if they can babysit.

The fourth text is a more testing task for candidates. Candidates struggled with the concept of Wednesday morning school from class 5 upwards, but the language was not beyond what is expected of an Intermediate 2 candidate. Answers to questions 4(i) onwards showed that candidates were particularly challenged by these particular questions.

Candidates' performance in the Listening paper was good, although there is still room for further improvement in this skill. Candidates answered most questions well, and the texts increased in challenge as the paper progressed.

However, it was surprising that many candidates did not seem to know 'Brötchen', a word which should be known at Intermediate 2, which occurred in the first text where a Russian girl compared life in Germany to that in Russia.

In the second text, 'Deutsches Rotes Kreuz' also was challenging but was designed as such; nonetheless, many candidates coped with it. The final question of Text 2 was also challenging ('Why does he think he would like to be a primary school teacher later on ... dass die Chancen für Männer in diesem Beruf noch relativ gut sind) but a satisfactory number of candidates answered it correctly.

In the final text, dealing with healthy living, candidates were asked what Svenja eats when she is very hungry. The answer was 'Obst' (fruit) but many candidates had difficulty with the word.

In Writing, it is clear that most centres have read and taken on board advice in previous reports. However, it is a concern that some centres have taught their candidates to gloss over the compulsory bullet points in 70–80 words and then to double the length with the optional sixth and seventh bullet points. This does not help the candidates, and in some cases resulted in their achieving lower marks than they might have, had they concentrated on the five compulsory bullet points.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

In Reading, centres need ensure that candidates read the questions asked, give appropriate details, and take time at the end of the exam to check their answers.

Although performance in Listening has improved, centres still need to ensure this skill is covered well in class. Centres must train candidates to listen for salient details, usually signposted in the questions, and ignore redundant material. They should also be aware that more difficult language in any text will be explained as part of the question and will not be a targeted answer.

In Writing there are still some candidates who show a lack of understanding of the requirements of this task. Some candidates are prepared for bullet points 6 and 7, but not so for bullet points 2 and 3. It is really important that candidates address all five compulsory bullet points, before perhaps attempting the two optional ones. At bullet point 4, it is important that candidates are more explicit about their reasons for applying for the job, eg 'Ich bewerbe mich um diese Stelle, weil ... / um ...'

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 satisfactory 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 2011	891
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	912
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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	53.2%	53.2%	485	70
B	22.7%	75.9%	207	60
C	15.1%	91.0%	138	50
D	4.2%	95.2%	38	45
No award	4.8%	100.0%	44	-

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.