



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	German
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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 2014 Intermediate 2 German exam included texts and sources which were selected as being appropriate to the level. Feedback from markers and practitioners about the exam itself was very positive. The vast majority of candidates seem to have been presented at the appropriate level.

The performance of candidates overall was disappointing compared to previous years, though it appears that the 2014 cohort was not typical of previous cohorts, as many candidates in German at this level had made the move to National 5. As a result, only 375 candidates were presented for Intermediate 2 this year, compared to 979 in 2013. The number of early presentations in S3 fell from 11.7% to 1.6% of the cohort, although this was to be expected with the advent of Curriculum for Excellence. The percentage of candidates in S5 being presented almost doubled.

The overall average score was 65.7%, down 6.4% on 2013. There was a consequential fall in the A–C pass rate from 94.4% to 85.3%. Candidates appeared to be less well prepared for the examination than in previous years, and the proportion of No Awards also rose from 3.8% to 7.1%.

The component average marks in three of the skills fell. Reading fell by 3.0 to 18.6, Listening from 11.2 to 8.9 and Writing by 1.5 to 13.8. The latter is particularly disappointing given the predictable nature of the Writing format each year. Only Speaking showed a slight improvement (24.0 to 24.4) and this is to be welcomed. These changes were reflected in the grade boundaries for the exam.

As has been the custom for many years, 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

The four Reading texts selected by the setting team were appropriate, relevant and interesting and covered the requisite topics well. Candidates were able to access the texts relatively well. Text 3 on the World of Work was very well done.

In Listening, some candidates did well, remembering to listen and extract the relevant information details.

In Writing, there were a good number of examples of very good practice and the candidates coped well with the task on the whole. A great many centres had prepared the candidates well and they were able to write a convincing job application.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Reading

In the Reading paper, markers commented on the lack of detail given by candidates. For example, in the Text 1(c) they required the fact that 'a coin is needed' (...*braucht man eine Münze*) as part of the answer, and many did not include this.

In question 4(h) they needed the comparative (the rooms were smaller — *Obwohl die Zimmer kleiner sind*). In question 2 (b) the expression *Schluss machen* was misunderstood by quite a few weaker candidates.

Question 2(c) was very poorly done and yet *Schulstunden* (school lessons) should not be challenging to most candidates.

In the long text, four of the last five questions were poorly done, but these were the demanding 'A' questions towards the end of the paper and candidates required accuracy and detail, which was not forthcoming. However, well over 90% of candidates got the last question correct. Within the text, some candidates struggled with the language, which suggests that a number may have been presented at too high a level. No question was beyond the ability of well-prepared candidates. Again the lack of detail given by candidates, especially when asked to give **exact** details, was noted.

Listening

The Listening paper, as has been the case in previous years, challenged a great many candidates. Despite the encouragement in previous reports that centres should practise listening more frequently in class and the resultant improvements made in the last few years, it was disappointing to see the listening marks drop back. Candidates appeared less well prepared than in previous years, with many making basic mistakes and not giving full answers.

Candidates did not give enough details, eg in question 1(a) candidates were asked how long Lena had been in Canada. The answer was *über einem Monat* (**more than** a month), but many wrote just 'a month'. In question 1(g) they were required to give '(they cost) **more than** \$1000' (*mehr als 1000 Dollar kosten*) and this lack of detail from candidates happened in other questions too.

In text 2, the concept of a bi-lingual Spanish/German person was difficult for some candidates to comprehend, as well as the Spanish custom of being out and eating out late in the evening.

In text 3, candidates again did not give enough details in their answers, eg in question 3(c) *Klavier- und Tanzunterricht* (piano and dance lessons) they did not include the lessons, thereby resulting in losing the mark. Nevertheless, every opportunity was provided to give candidates credit where this was at all possible.

Writing

In Writing, a minority of candidates appear still to be poorly prepared for this predictable test. They need to balance the content and cover the main five compulsory bullet points, and not write too much in the optional areas to the detriment of the main five points.

A sizeable number of candidates lost 2 marks for not including where they lived in the first bullet point. Some candidates were also unclear which job they were applying for. Centres should take time to ensure that candidates are able to work out the job involved and careful perusal of past papers by the class would help.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

In Reading, candidates should take time to read and understand the text thoroughly before looking at the questions. They should also be advised that the questions need to be read carefully, as they give clear clues as to where the information can be found. Above all, they should ensure their answers give all the detail required.

Although Listening continues to challenge candidates, they need to take the time to prepare for what they are about to hear by reading the questions thoroughly in the minute preceding the first playing of the passage. By doing so, candidates can pick up on clues about what is to feature in the passage. They can also be more aware of the number of marks available as this indicates how much information they will require.

In Writing, centres should ensure that the writing task is revisited regularly in the run-up to the May exam. Some candidates had been prepared at some time during the session but struggled in their remembrance of their prepared essay, missing out words, which caused the sense of what they were writing to be lost. Centres need to work with candidates to give them positive feedback on how they can improve their performance right up to the time of the actual exam. As in previous years, centres are advised not to be too prescriptive, and to encourage candidates to personalise their essay in their own way. It was evident that where candidates had memorised essays, some did not understand properly what they were writing, and thus could not access the full range of marks.

It is also important for candidates to balance the content of each bullet point. Sometimes candidates spend an inordinate amount of time writing on Bullet Points 1 to 3 and then adding the last two, and sometimes the additional points, as an afterthought; or they skim over the first three Bullet Points very thinly and then concentrate on the other two bullet points or even the additional ones. To ensure they get a good pass mark, candidates must address each of the five compulsory bullet points equally.

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 good and centres are to be commended on the very good work they are doing.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	993
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	375
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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	46.1%	46.1%	173	68
B	23.2%	69.3%	87	57
C	15.5%	84.8%	58	47
D	7.2%	92.0%	27	42
No award	8.0%	-	30	-

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.