



## External Assessment Report 2015

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

As has been the custom over the duration of Intermediate 2 German, the 2015 exam included texts and sources which were selected as being entirely 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 majority of the 42 candidates presented this year were in S4, which was surprising given National 5 is in its second year. The percentage of candidates in S6 being presented almost tripled. Although the 2015 cohort was not typical of previous cohorts because of the small number of presentations, the performance of candidates overall was an improvement on 2014.

The overall average score was 66.7%, up 1% on 2014. The percentage of passes at A rose to 56.9%, well above the 2014 level of 47.2% (375 candidates), but comparable to 56.9% in 2013, when there were 979 candidates. The A–C pass rate, however, fell from 85.3% to 83.3%. The proportion of No Awards again rose, from 7.2% to 11.9%, but this consisted of actually only 5 candidates.

The component average marks in Reading fell by 1.5 to 17.1. Listening remained at the same level as last year at 8.9. However, writing rose by 0.8 to 14.6, ahead of the 2012 score. This was very pleasing given that the nature of the Writing format is replicated in the new National 5 exam. Speaking also showed an improvement of 1.7 to 26.1, the highest ever score and this is to be welcomed.

## 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 three shorter texts extremely well. Text 3 on the World of Work was also well done.

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

In Writing, there were a large 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.

The longer text 4 proved, as usual, to be challenging for many candidates. The article reported on where three young people saw themselves being when they are 30. In question (b), candidates were asked what the girl is doing this month to help achieve her dream job. The target language (*..mache ich diesen Monat ein Praktikum bei einer Tageszeitung* — a placement at a (daily) paper) was surprisingly poorly attempted.

Attempts to render the answer to question (c) — ‘Why is it important for her to live in a village?’, resulted in ‘*denn ich bin auf dem Land aufgewachsen*’ being rendered in various strange forms, including being ‘washed on land’!

In question (h) despite being given part of the target language in English in the question ‘What does she not know at this point?’ (*Ich weiss aber noch nicht, wie ich die Kinder mit meiner Karriere vereinen könnte*), many candidates found this particularly difficult.

As candidates approached the last stages of the paper, one more question (j) caused a few issues, but this was a proper A grade question: ‘What would Sophia like to do every day?’ The ‘every day’ was included in the target area for translation: *Ich möchte die reine Meeresluft jeden Tag riechen können*, (breathe/smell the sea/ocean (air)) but nonetheless candidates went widely adrift. The last two questions, however, did allow pupils the opportunity to gain marks, and many did so.

## Listening

The Listening paper was found challenging by a significant number of 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, the listening marks remain static. Candidates again made basic mistakes and many did not give full answers.

Text 1 was done well in the initial stages, but the second last question taxed many candidates. In question (f) candidates were asked: ‘What did they do the following day?’ (during their holiday in Istanbul). This was an A-grade question and involved translating *Am Tag danach sind wir über die Bosphorus-Brücke von der europäischen Seite auf die asiatische Seite der Stadt gefahren*. (On the following day we went over the Bosphorus Bridge from the European to the Asian side).

Text 2 concerned a podcast by Mayuko, who was Japanese. This was relatively well done, although question (b) was not so well done. ‘Why was working in an office not for her?’ Candidates were asked to state any one thing. The German was quite clear and was supported by the question: *Die Arbeit im Büro war aber gar nichts für mich, weil ich schon immer Floristin werden wollte. Ich wollte viel über Blumen erfahren* (... always wanted to be a florist OR wanted to learn about flowers).

Candidates did not perform well in text 3, which was an older speaker talking about spending time with his grandmother. Candidates found this particularly hard, although the vocabulary should have been well within their reach. All markers felt that candidates often lacked the necessary detail to get a point, eg in question 3(b) they were required to say how often the grandmother did her ironing. The required answer (*fast jeden Tag bügelte sie*) was **almost** every day, but very many missed the ‘almost’ out. Many candidates did not know in question (d) that the speaker sat down to eat his sweet *gegenüber von meiner Oma*, opposite his grandmother.

## **Writing**

Overall in Writing, the vast majority of candidates were well prepared for the exercise, although a very small minority of candidates appear still to be poorly prepared for this predictable test. They needed 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.

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

For those sitting the parallel new National 5, which has been assessed in comparison with Intermediate 2 over the last two years, much of the general advice given over previous Intermediate 2 reports is equally relevant to that level, too.

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, the parallels with National 5 are very strong, and the exercise is extremely similar. Centres are also advised to consider the advice given in previous Intermediate 2 reports, all of which is still relevant today to improve candidates' performance across the board.

Centres should ensure that the writing task is revisited regularly in the run-up to the May exam. Teachers 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. Centres are advised not to be too prescriptive, and to encourage candidates to personalise their essay in their own way.

It is also important for candidates to balance the content of each bullet point and not spend too much time writing on particular bullet points. To ensure they get a good pass mark, candidates must address each of the bullet points equally.

Overall, the standard achieved in this year's Intermediate 2 examination was good, and centres are to be commended on achieving a very good standard and success for the 2015 candidates.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	375
Number of resulted entries in 2015	43

## 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	39.5%	39.5%	17	69
B	25.6%	65.1%	11	59
C	18.6%	83.7%	8	49
D	4.7%	88.4%	2	44
No award	11.6%	-	5	-

Overall the course assessment proved to be slightly more difficult than intended, resulting in a downward adjustment of 1 mark across all levels.

## 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.