Course Report 2017

Subject	German
Level	National 5

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1 — question paper 1: Reading and Writing

The 2017 National 5 German external examination performed broadly as expected. Feedback received by centres was positive and it was felt to be fair and accessible to candidates. The majority of candidates coped well and were able to complete the exam within the allocated time.

The Grade Boundary for all awards was increased by 3 marks to take into account the accessibility of question 3 in the Reading component and expansion of the Marking Instructions for the Listening component, which candidates found straightforward.

Reading

The Reading component was composed of three texts worth 10 marks on the contexts of Employability, Learning and Culture. There were three supported questions worth a total of 4 marks, and the overall purpose question in Question 3. The texts were relevant and interesting, which engaged the candidates, given the quality of responses. The Reading paper performed as expected and was accessible to candidates while providing the demand and rigour required at National 5.

Overall, candidates performed well in the Reading element of the paper. There was a full range of performances and some candidates were able to attain full marks in the paper.

Item 1 was an article about a young woman who has learnt to fly a plane. Item 2 was an article about outdoor learning at a primary school near Berlin. Item 3 was an online article about the advantages of taking a gap year after school.

Candidates generally performed well throughout. Some candidates did not provide enough detail from the text to access some of the marks. The marking scheme allowed candidates to offer a range of answers to demonstrate their understanding from a range of contexts.

Candidates found Question 1 most challenging and a number of candidates misunderstood that the young woman in the article was born without arms. Candidates found Question 3 straightforward, particularly the last section.

Similar to last year, particular difficulties were the recognition of comparative adjectives (*besser, fokussierter*) and plural forms of the noun (*Arme, Länder, Freunden, Jahren, Träume, Flüge…*). A small number of candidates also found composite nouns (*Segelverein, Lebenserfahrungen*) difficult. A couple of candidates did not choose the correct meaning from the dictionary, which distorted their answer (eg 1b, 2d, 3d), which in turn, did not answer the question.

There were some No Responses, but not an excessive amount, and most candidates made an attempt to answer all questions.

From the overall picture, the vast majority of candidates passed this element or were close to it. Very few candidates scored less than 12.

Writing

The Writing component asked candidates to reply to a job advert for a receptionist at a hotel in Germany. The job application required candidates to respond to six bullet points, four of which were predictable and the final two unpredictable.

Overall, candidates performed as expected in the Writing element of the paper. There was a full range of performances and a good number of candidates were able to achieve a 16 or 20.

Most candidates coped well with the first four bullet points. It was clear that centres had prepared candidates well for the Writing component. Most candidates attempted all six bullet points, but many encountered difficulties in the final two unpredictable bullet points, particularly with using auxiliary and modal verbs, which lead to confusion with conjugations and word order.

Some candidates coped less well with the unpredictable bullet points, particularly bullet point 6. Some candidates had excellent responses in bullet points 1–4 but deteriorated significantly in bullet points 5 and 6, indicating that writing spontaneously seemed to be challenging. Lots of candidates kept the final two bullet points simple, which worked overall.

Component 2 — question paper 2: Listening

The Listening paper consisted of two parts: a monologue worth 8 marks and a dialogue worth 12 marks. There were two supported questions worth three marks, and the overall purpose question was removed from this item as per SQA guidelines.

The context of the Listening paper was life in the town and country from the Society context. The level of challenge in this paper was less demanding than last year's paper due to the widening of the Marking Instructions. Although the paper performed broadly as expected, the changes to the Marking Instructions meant that some candidates did better than expected.

Candidates performed better than expected in the Listening element of the paper. The Listening component was the part of the exam where there was the narrowest spread of marks. There was a range of performances, and the Marking Instructions were sufficiently adapted to ensure that candidates could provide a range of answers. This was the reason for the increase in the grade boundary of two marks. The paper still provided a range of performances. There were a range of topics included in the context of the paper, which sampled from a wide range of vocabulary.

Some candidates struggled with composite nouns (*Verkehrsverbindungen, Jugendklub, Großstadt…*). Most candidates seemed to cope well with the listening overall, others almost got the correct answer but failed to provide sufficient detail required for the point. Item 2 was generally well attempted, some candidates found Item 1 more challenging.

It was clear that a number of candidates had isolated pieces of vocabulary and had then guessed the answer for some questions.

Component 3 — performance: Talking

This internally-assessed course component consists of two elements: a presentation on a topic of candidates' choice, and a follow-up discussion.

All centres verified this year used the SQA guidelines for the Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment — National 5 Performance: Talking. Where there are large numbers of candidates, care must be taken to provide candidates with every opportunity for personalisation in their choice of topic.

In the externally-verified sample of performances, the Marking Instructions for the presentation and conversation were, in the majority of centres, used appropriately.

Many centres provided commentaries on candidate performances with specific reference to aspects of the pegged mark commentaries from the Marking Instructions, eg comment on fluency, accuracy, range of vocabulary etc.

Many centres used the Modern Languages Performance 'Assessment Record' document to detail commentaries about the sections of each of their candidates' performances. In terms of the recommended duration of the talking performance, centres are advised to refer to the 'Modern Languages Coursework Assessment Task document.

All centres provided audio recordings of the performances as appropriate to the task.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1 — question paper 1: Reading and Writing

Reading

Item 1 – Context Employability: This question proved the most challenging for candidates. Overall, most candidates coped relatively well with the majority of questions in this first text, providing sufficient detail to attain most of the marks.

♦ Question 1(a) was well done with most candidates getting the adjective and the nouns.
♦ Question 1(d) was relatively well attempted with most candidates getting at least one mark. Some candidates provided lots of detail.
♦ In Question 1(e), most candidates got at least 1 mark, with almost half of candidates achieving full marks.
♦ Questions 1(f) was particularly well done.

Item 2 – Context Learning: Overall, candidates coped with the range of questions in the second text.

♦ Almost two-thirds of candidates were able to pick out the adjective *benachbart* required for the mark.

- In Question 2(d), most candidates got at least one mark, with more than half getting both marks.
- Question 2(e) was generally well done, with two-thirds of candidates picking up at least one mark.
- Question 2(f), almost all candidates recognised that *nicht immer zuverlässig* was the correct answer.

Item 3 – Context Culture: Candidates found this question the most straightforward. The majority of candidates provided sufficient detail to achieve most of the marks.

- Question 3(a) was well done, as most candidates recognised the fraction.
- Question 3(b) allowed candidates to choose from a range of answers with three quarters achieving at least one mark and over half getting both points available.
- Most candidates (70%) were able to pick out *Herausforderungen* as the correct answer.
- Question 3(f) was particularly accessible with 93% of candidates getting at least two marks.

Writing

Virtually all candidates attempted the first four predictable bullet points, displaying a good range of vocabulary, grammatical structures and tenses. The majority of candidates seemed well prepared and confident in their writing.

Component 2 — question paper 2: Listening

Item 1: Monologue
- Question 1(a), almost all candidates were able to choose the correct answer from the multiple choice question.
- Question 1(b), most candidates were able to identify why living on a farm was important to Max.
- Question 1(f), most candidates were able to recognise *Kino* and *Jugendklub*.

Item 2: Dialogue
- Question 2(a): virtually all candidates were able to identify *seit drei Jahren*.
- Question 2(c): Most candidates provided sufficient detail to get at least one mark, with 80% getting both marks.
- Question 2(d): the majority of candidates got at least one mark.
- Question 2(h): Most candidates got at least one mark in the supported question.

Component 3 — performance: Talking

Generally speaking, candidates performed well in the talking performance.

Presentation

In most cases, candidates performed more confidently in this section of the talking performance, with many well-structured and fluent performances. Generally, this section of the talking performance provided an opportunity for candidates to show control of the language.

Conversation

In general, candidates performed well in the conversation section and were able to sustain an interaction based on the same or related topic in relation to the presentation context.

Where interlocutors used a wide variety of questions in the conversation section, this often helped candidates to avoid recycling the same language and structures from their presentations into their conversations.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1 — question paper 1: Reading and Writing

Reading
Question 1:

- Question 1(a): Some candidates did not provide sufficient detail or missed out *der Welt*. Some candidates just wrote 'it was the best feeling', which was deemed insufficient.
- Question 1(b): Some candidates were unable to identify that Jessica had no arms. Some candidates implied that Jessica had one arm, which was also incorrect.
- Question 1(c): Most candidates achieved at least one mark in this question, however there seemed to be some dictionary misuse with a number of candidates mistranslating *Sorgen.*
- Question 1(d): Most candidates achieved at least one mark in this question, but a considerable number did not provide sufficient detail to gain the marks, eg 'she went climbing' with no mention of friends. There was some misreading of *jedes zweite Wochenende* and *am Meer*.
- Question 1(e): A number of candidates mentioned interviews but missed out 'on TV'. Some thought that she had her own talk show. Some candidates did not recognise that she went to her 'old' school to talk about her adventures and others missed out adventures completely.

Question 2:

- Question 2(a): Some candidates did not convey the meaning of *benachbart*.
- Question 2(b): A considerable number of candidates did not accurately convey *kennen lernen* as 'to get to know' which is different from 'to know' or 'to learn'.
- Question 2(c): Some candidates did not provide sufficient details to gain the marks.
- Question 2(d): Some candidates chose the wrong meaning of some of the nouns from the dictionary.
- Question 2(e): Most candidates did well here, but those who did not achieve the marks missed out details like *regelmäßig* and *besser*.

Question 3:

- Question 3(a): Lots of candidates did not include the 'fast' which was originally required for the mark. In the end, it was decided that the 'fast' was not essential to gain the mark.
- Question 3(b): Some candidates were unable to identify the infinitive clauses and it was clear that some candidates were guessing.

♦ Question 3(e): Some candidates did not render *interessant* in their answers; others were unable to identify either CVs or applications.

Writing

Most candidates attempted bullet points five and six in the writing. Accuracy deteriorated in the last two bullet points and some candidates were unable to form basic sentences using two verbs.

In bullet points 1–4, it was evident that a small number of candidates had not adequately prepared for these, despite the predictability. Some candidates did not provide a range of tenses and some had particular difficulty in forming the past tense. Other points of difficulty for some candidates were adjective endings, word order and verb agreement.

A small number of candidates had also over-prepared bullet points 1–4 and it was clear that they did not always understand what they were writing.

Some centres are still encouraging pupils to write a formal introduction, which is no longer necessary. Markers give credit to the pupils where it is well done, but ignore it if not well done.

In bullet point 2, a number of candidates are writing about how they hate school and which subjects they dislike. It may be worth remembering the context of the writing is a job application. Teachers may wish consider making this clear to candidates when preparing for the writing.

In bullet point 3, a small number of candidates were still writing about free-time activities with no mention of skills and qualities. Free-time activities are often mentioned without any relevance to the job.

Component 2 — question paper 2: Listening

Item 1: Monologue
♦ Question 1(c): Some candidates found this question challenging and were unable to recognise *sauber, ruhig, wunderschön* or the word *Aussicht*. Some candidates misunderstood *wunderschön* as wonderful and not beautiful.
♦ Question 1(d): Some candidates missed out the proximity in this question. The Marking Instructions were looking for his friends live far away/not near him. Some candidates were too generic with answers such as 'he doesn't always see his friends.'
♦ Question 1(e): This question proved most challenging for candidates with many candidates unable to recognise the required vocabulary *selbstständig.*

Item 2: Dialogue
♦ Question 2(b): Some candidates misunderstood *Grenze* and *Dorf* and thought these were place names.
♦ Question 2(e): A surprising number of candidates could not identify *keine.*
♦ Question 2(g): Two fifths of candidates were unable to pick out that her mum was able to find a job quickly.

Component 3 — performance: Talking

In the presentation, a small number of candidates seemed to struggle with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen. Centres should provide advice to candidates as to what level of language they should be able to cope with, and should ensure that candidates understand their presentation in preparation for delivering it.

Suggested topics for this part of the performance should are available in the Appendix 3: Contexts, topics and topic development of the Course Specification available on the Modern Languages homepage of the SQA website.

A few presentations were significantly long or short, and this affected the candidates' performances.

As with the presentations, a few conversations were unnecessarily prolonged or significantly short and this affected the candidates' performances. Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the presentation and the conversation, to allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5 as provided in the Course Specification.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1 — question paper 1: Reading and Writing

Reading

As with the Listening paper, some candidates did not provide sufficient detail to gain the marks on offer. Candidates should be guided by the marks awarded for each question and should provide as much detail as they have understood. It is important to note that it is rare for a single-word answer to be sufficient detail at National 5 level. It may be worth advising candidates to look at what comes before and what comes after to ensure that all the necessary detail is included.

Centres should encourage dictionary skill practice to allow candidates to select the most appropriate translations in the context of the text. It is also important that candidates answer the question being asked. It may be worthwhile reminding them that the information comes in chronological order. and the questions include hooks to support the candidate throughout the text.

Candidates should be familiar with a range of grammatical structures as outlined in the Grammar Grid at National 5. This should assist them in identifying the relationship between the words in the sentence, including the tense and if there is more than one verb in the sentence. Comparative adjectives and composite nouns are common features at National 5 level. The tense of the question should give candidates a good idea of the tense they should be using.

Although the extraneous rule no longer applies, candidates should be discouraged from giving additional information that is not related to the text or the question, as this could

negate any correction information and they could therefore lose the marks gained for correct information.

Candidates should be encouraged to read each question carefully and highlight/underline key words to help them find the correct answer in the text. They should also be encouraged to write the relevant information in bullet points. It may be useful to encourage candidates to read over the questions and their answers at the end of the paper to ensure that the question has been answered fully and that what they have written in English makes sense.

Writing

It should be made clear to candidates that no formal introduction or conclusion is required — many candidates struggled to learn these accurately.

Candidates should be advised that, for bullet point three, the information should be relevant to the job. A number of candidates had written about their free time but not mentioned any skills. It is important to remember the context of the paper, ie that it is a job application.

In bullet point four, some candidates chose to write in the present tense, which limited the range of tenses in the piece overall. Candidates should try and showcase a range of tense accurately to achieve the best possible mark.

For the unpredictable bullet points, candidates should have the opportunity to practice a range of these and it may be worthwhile looking to other languages for ideas.

It is important that candidates attempt all six bullet points to ensure that enough is written, as this can have an impact on their overall mark.

Candidates should check that all bullet points have been covered and use their dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written. Centres should concentrate on a range of productive grammar skills, including how to form questions. Centres should also make candidates aware of the marking criteria so candidates know what is expected of them in this paper to achieve a satisfactory result.

Component 2 — question paper 2: Listening

In the Listening paper, candidates should be guided by the number of marks awarded for each question to ensure that sufficient detail is provided. It is important to note that it is rare for a single-word answer to be sufficient detail at National 5 — eg a country on its own would not be sufficient detail. In relation to the 2017 paper, candidates should revisit some basic vocabulary, such as countries, numbers, weather expressions, question words to ensure that sufficient detail is provided.

Candidates should be discouraged from providing a range of alternative answers using the slash or solidus (/) — some candidates lost marks if it was not clear what their answer was or if the two answers contradicted each other.

Candidates should read the questions carefully, highlighting key words which can help them structure the text. Centres should also encourage candidates to write in bullet points and to score out any notes with a single line. Some candidates took extensive notes, and this practice should be encouraged through continued practice in class. Notes should be

confined to the side of the paper. Some candidates drew a line down the middle of the paper which made it more difficult for Markers to find the correct answers.

Candidates hear both the monologue and the dialogue three times, and should be encouraged to use the third time to check the accuracy of what they have written.

Component 3 — performance: Talking

Interlocutors should ask questions in the conversation which follow on naturally from the presentation topic chosen by candidates, as recommended in the *National 5 Modern Languages performance: talking assessment task* document. Making a natural link between the topic chosen by the candidate for the presentation and the beginning of the conversation is good practice. Interlocutors should start the conversation with a question related to the presentation, as this can aid the natural flow of the performance.

Referring to other topics in the course of the conversation allows for personalisation and choice. Interlocutors should move on naturally to other topics, thereby allowing the candidates to demonstrate a variety of language. Interlocutors should ensure they do not ask questions which lead to candidates repeating parts of their presentation in their answers. Interlocutors should therefore try to avoid asking questions about items that candidates have already addressed in the presentation.

Centres should ensure they are not overly prescriptive in preparing candidates for the conversation. Conversations should be as spontaneous as possible for the level assessed. It is recommended that centres ask a range of questions of each candidate, rather than asking the same questions to the whole cohort. A wider variety of questions in the conversation can aid candidates to develop strategies to cope with the unexpected (in line with Appendix 1 of the *Modern Languages performance: talking, General assessment information*, which is available from SQA's website).

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	2025

Number of resulted entries in 2017	1899

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	56.3%	56.3%	1069	73
B	18.0%	74.2%	341	63
C	13.9%	88.2%	264	53
D	3.8%	92.0%	73	48
No award	8.0%	-	152	-

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.