



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>German</b>
Level	<b>Advanced Higher</b>

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

Overall the level of performance was much in line with previous years. The cohort of candidates represents a wide spectrum of ability and preparedness, ranging from some very accomplished work to a level of attainment that suggests that the candidate finds the required standard very challenging.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

As is the case every year, the Visiting Assessors spoke very favourably about the willingness of candidates to engage in conversation and sustain that conversation over the twenty minutes of the test. All the Visiting Assessors appreciate how stressful this part of the assessment can be, and praise the way that candidates rise to the occasion.

The Examiners noted a better performance in Paper 1 than in recent years. In particular, the Translation and Question 7 (Inferential Question) were much better accomplished.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

Once again Discursive Writing proved to be particularly challenging for a significant number of candidates. The lack of command of the basics of German grammar at this level, the degree of linguistic interference from English, and the irrelevant answers to specific questions, meant candidates produced what appeared to be rote-learned and often inappropriate material. This means that a significant number of answers fall into the Unsatisfactory category or below.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

### General

Candidates need to be made aware that the title 'Discursive Writing' is what it says — a candidate is required to engage in a thoughtful and reflective way on a specific aspect of the basic themes. General answers are likely to result in a depressed mark. Candidates should also be supported effectively to ensure they understand the importance of checking the grammatical accuracy of the language they have generated.

In the Folio there are still many instances of questions that invite a descriptive or a narrative response, rather than a critical or analytical response. Additionally the scope of the question addressed is quite often too great to allow a sensible treatment within the word limit.

In centres with more than one candidate there were many instances of all candidates using the same title. Encouraging candidates to pursue their own interests could create a greater sense of ownership and an enhanced response.

The bibliographies, particularly those relating to texts, frequently amount to no more than the edition of the primary text. Candidates should be encouraged to engage with a range of secondary sources to enrich and deepen their understanding.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	161
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	160
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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 200				
A	40.6%	40.6%	65	140
B	25.0%	65.6%	40	120
C	16.9%	82.5%	27	100
D	7.5%	90.0%	12	90
No award	10.0%	100.0%	16	-

## **General commentary on grade boundaries**

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.