



NQ Verification 2014–15

Key Messages Round 2

01

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Modern Languages — German
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	June 2015

National Course verified:

C734 75 National 5 German performance: talking (Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment)

C734 76 Higher German performance: talking (Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment)

02

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

All the centres verified in this round used SQA's guidelines for the Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment — National 5/Higher performance: talking.

In line with the National 5/Higher Modern Languages performance: talking assessment task, centres are reminded that candidates must use detailed language at National 5 and detailed and complex language at Higher in most parts of the performance. At these levels, long lists of more than two or three items (eg places in town, school subjects) or repetitions of straightforward descriptions (eg hair and eyes) are unlikely to allow candidates to use a suitable range of structures and vocabulary.

In the presentation, some candidates seem to struggle with the complexity of the language or 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 comprehension of their presentation before learning it.

Centres should bear in mind the recommended length of both presentation and conversation at each level, as stated in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information*. Excessive length rarely benefits candidates and can lead to deterioration in performance and affect the candidate's mark.

It would appear that some candidates had been guided by the centre in their choice of presentation topic. While this is understandable where there are large numbers of candidates, or where candidates are taught in bi-level groups, centres are encouraged to provide candidates with every opportunity for personalisation and choice. Interlocutors should bear in mind the differing requirements of National 5 and Higher when conducting assessments. Asking candidates the same questions at both levels is likely to disadvantage candidates at one or other level.

Interlocutors should carefully consider the type of questions they ask, as closed questions do not offer candidates the scope to develop their ideas. Questions such as „Wie alt ist deine Schwester?“ are likely to invite very short answers and prevent candidates from demonstrating their full ability. Alternatively, these questions could be immediately followed by „Wie kommst du mit ihr aus?“ to elicit fuller answers.

Where interlocutors asked a good range of open-ended questions, this provided greater scope for candidates to effectively use detailed language (National 5) or detailed and complex language (Higher), to express a wide range of ideas and opinions. Where more closed questions on factual topics were asked, candidates seldom gave responses which contained vocabulary and structures in line with the 'Very good' or 'Good' categories. Centres are encouraged to refer to the Productive Grammar Grid for National 5/Higher to inform their choice of questions to candidates.

For the most part, interlocutors were supportive of candidates, especially with nervous candidates. Where interlocutors were aware of candidates' interests, this helped more natural/spontaneous conversations.

The majority of centres asked questions in the conversation, which followed on naturally from the presentation topic chosen by candidates as recommended in the *National 5 Modern Languages Performance: talking assessment task* document. Many assessors went on to refer to other contexts, which allowed for personalisation and choice. Naturally moving on to other contexts or topics also allows the candidates to demonstrate a variety of language. On occasions, where candidates were asked questions about the same topic/context as in their presentation, candidates were often limited to repeating parts of their presentation in their answers. Centres should therefore try to avoid asking questions about topics that candidates have already addressed in the presentation. At Higher, centres are reminded that the conversation must lead into at least one other context.

Centres should ensure that questions are chosen so that the conversation flows naturally and gives further opportunity for personalisation and choice.

Appendix 1: Information for assessors on page 8 of *Modern Languages Performance: talking*, General assessment information on SQA's website states that, 'Conversation involves direct interaction, which brings an amount of unpredictability. Part of the development of talking skills is the development of strategies to cope with the unexpected.' While it is good practice for centres to prepare candidates for the performance, the conversation section should be a genuine interaction between candidate and interlocutor. Centres should encourage candidates to go beyond the use of learned material, where possible.

Natural element (National 5) / Sustaining the performance (Higher)

Most centres had employed a range of techniques to enhance the natural element in the conversation, for example:

- ◆ there was an obvious link between the topics discussed/questions asked to allow for a more natural sounding performance all round
- ◆ candidates asked for repetition or clarification using German
- ◆ candidates made use of typical exchange techniques such as sounds, pause words/phrases and idiomatic phrases
- ◆ questions asked by the candidate to the interlocutor followed on naturally from their presentation/own responses

While centres are to be commended for encouraging candidates to ask the interlocutor questions, these should arise naturally from the interaction.

There was a level of inconsistency in approach and in marking of the natural element/sustaining performance. Some centres were too lenient in awarding marks, especially where conversations seemed to lack spontaneity and sounded rehearsed.

Interlocutors should allow candidates time to answer and try not to prompt too quickly in the conversation (both levels.) This can sometimes make it more difficult for candidates to access upper pegged marks in the conversation, in the natural element/sustaining performance section in particular.

Assessment judgements

The verification team for German is pleased to report that the majority of centres applied the marking instructions for the performance in talking accurately and in line with national standards.

For the small number of the centres where this was not the case, there was a tendency to be over-generous in the application of the talking performance marking instructions in the conversation section. Where centres were over-generous, the pegged marks allocated were called into question by:

- ◆ the level of grammatical accuracy
- ◆ the ability to sustain the performance

- ◆ a limited range of detailed structures and/or a limited range of structures used to express ideas and opinions

Pronunciation was an issue for some of the candidates who did not perform well. Verifiers — sympathetic (native or non-native) speakers of German — must be able to understand candidates, no matter how good the content of their presentation/conversation is.

Most centres provided Candidate Assessment Records with commentary against the marks awarded for each section of the talking performance. Where centres had explained why they had opted for one pegged mark over another for each section, this greatly assisted the verification process. This is also useful for internal verifiers and promotes constructive professional dialogue.

03 Section 3: General comments

When preparing a verification sample containing two levels, it is preferable for the centres to split the sample by level when submitting the evidence. For example, six candidates at National 5 in alphabetical order, followed by six candidates at Higher in alphabetical order.

Most centres clearly labelled candidate evidence, which is necessary for the verification team to proceed with the verification process.

It is important that the SQA Verification Sample Form is completed correctly and matches the information on the Candidate Evidence Flyleaf and the Candidate Assessment Record. This is important, as the mark out of 30 entered on the Verification Sample Form is what the verification exercise is based on, regardless of what is entered on individual Candidate Assessment Record forms.

Centres should leave blank the 'Nominee Review Result' section on the Verification Sample Form as this will only be completed by the external nominee verifiers if marks for the Course assessment are changed.

Audio recordings

Centres submitted candidates' performances on DVDs, CDs, tapes and memory sticks. It is recommended that centres check the sound quality of the CDs, tapes and MP3/4 files that are submitted for verification.

Where there were issues with audio recordings these were often where centres used cassettes.

Centres should check equipment prior to assessment, and ensure all mobile devices are switched off during the assessment to avoid interference affecting recordings.

The verification team recommends that USB keys are put into a separate envelope within the large brown envelope and that this is sealed and labelled.

Good practice

One centre submitted a DVD recording, ie video and audio, evidencing candidate performance. While this is not necessary, it was very effective in allowing assessors, internal verifiers and external nominee verifiers to witness candidate non-verbal responses to questions asked in the conversation.

Examples of detailed and thorough internal verification, showing evidence of professional dialogue within a centre, are helpful in showing how assessment judgements have been reached. These help external nominee verifiers understand the thinking of assessors and internal verifiers.