



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>German</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 1</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

The Setting Team carefully selected Reading texts which covered all areas of the course. This was also the case with the Listening paper, in which a wide range of topics, both personal and transactional, were chosen. Feedback from Markers about the exam itself was very positive.

The number of candidates sitting German at Intermediate 1 level saw an increase this year from 389 to 446. This is very pleasing and continues to reflect an increasing confidence by centres that the demands of the exam are appropriate for S4 candidates. 78% of the candidates were in S4, a slight increase from 2010, with 16.9% from S3, a slight decrease from 2010. There was also a slight increase in the numbers of S5 candidates sitting the exam. It was also good to see nine new centres presenting, plus four returning centres.

The performance of candidates this year was high, with 89.9% gaining an A–C. 51.5% of candidates gained grade A, which was very pleasing. The average mark in Reading rose from 20.4 to 22.1 out of 35, the highest score in the last five years, indicating that candidates are being prepared well for this element. In Listening, the average mark fell slightly from 11.5 to 11.2 out of 20, but still above the 2009 level of 11.0. In Writing, there was an increase in the average mark from 9.2 to 9.6 out of 15.

Overall, the average score in the examination increased by 2.7 to 68%. Pupils in the 2011 cohort seemed to be well prepared for the examination. Centres are encouraged to look carefully at the level of German candidates are producing and present them accordingly so that they achieve the best they can.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates performed well in all areas of the examination, particularly in Reading. Examiners were particularly impressed by candidates' responses to Question 3 of the reading paper which deals with the topic 'The World of Work'. It was noted that the inclusion of more supported questions on this text helped candidates. This follows on an improvement in this area last year and suggests that centres have taken on board the advice given in earlier reports.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

In Reading, the first three passages were well done, and the vocabulary and structures did not cause candidates undue concern. In the longer fourth text, as is intended, candidates had the opportunity to show their strengths. In the passage, a young German girl writes about her family.

When asked why the sister did not like Latin, some candidates struggled with *weil sie dafür so viel lernen muss*. In question (e) they were asked to mention two reasons why Nicolas does not like German. The target section *weil er nicht gerne liest und schreibt* caused problems. Many candidates identified the verbs, but omitted the *nicht gerne*, even though it

formed part of the question (*Deutsch mag er nicht gerne...*). In question (g) the examining team insisted on the inclusion of *zu* in the answer (*zu streng*), as *streng* had already figured in the previous text.

The final question in the text (What is the final thing you are told about Borkum?) caused problems; the answer (*es gibt dort guten Kuchen*) provided a selection of alternative answers (kitchens, biscuits, cooking) which the team were unable to accept in place of 'good cake'.

In the Listening paper, it was concerning that a large number of candidates did not identify some basic vocabulary correctly, such as *Bahnhof*. In question 6 (b), when asked who asks her to babysit, many candidates did not correctly identify *Nachbarn* (neighbours). They also struggled in question 7 (a) when asked why she finds babysitting a good job. The target language - *ich find diesen Job toll, weil ich gut verdienen kann* – was testing, but of this level, and many candidates did not achieve the marks available for this question.

Question 9, which asked candidates to mention one thing about Katherina's brother (out of a possible two points) was challenging for some. *Er arbeitet in Dortmund* produced some incorrect answers, with Dortmund appearing in various unacceptable formats, and with *arbeitet* being translated as 'he stays, lives, comes from' or even 'was born in Dortmund'. The alternative point *er kommt nur einmal im Monat nach Hause* was also rendered in a number of incorrect ways. Other vocabulary such as *Bratwurst*, *Strand* and *Urlaub* was not correctly identified by many candidates.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The detailed Marking Instructions for the examination are available on the SQA website, and the examining team encourages all presenting centres to download and analyse them to see what core information is required in the Reading and Listening papers. Please pass this information on to candidates.

The slight fall in the Listening average mark underlines the concern voiced in last year's report that centres should focus more rigorously on listening skills in the classroom and on basic vocabulary learning to prepare candidates more fully for the demands of the external assessment in this skill.

The examining team were pleased by the improvement in the standard of writing, although there remain centres where candidates are not writing three sentences for each section, resulting in a deduction of 2 marks for each section. When this happens in three sections, the candidate has to be awarded 0. Centres should make this absolutely clear to candidates, and underline the fact that they need to have at least three verbs in each section.

At the other extreme it was noted that the overall quality of some candidates' writing was considerably above the level required for Intermediate 1, and that a number of candidates wrote two–three times what was required. However, some penalised themselves by doing this, as the number of errors within this very extended writing meant that they could not be awarded full marks.

One further issue in the Writing paper is where candidates used 12 different verbs, but only in simple sentences. This resulted in lists, with no variation in word order, no adverbs, no adjectives and no complexity, therefore the maximum mark that could be awarded was 12.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2010	389
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	446
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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	49.6%	49.6%	221	70
B	20.9%	70.4%	93	60
C	17.9%	88.3%	80	50
D	4.9%	93.3%	22	45
No award	6.7%	100.0%	30	-

## **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.