



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	German
Level	Intermediate 2

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 and Listening texts that covered all areas of the course. Particular care was taken to ensure all the texts were accessible and of interest and relevance to candidates. Reading passages covered topics such as tidying one's room, Valentine's Day and surviving a day on one Euro. Listening topics included young people talking about their family relationships, part-time jobs and their dream holidays. Feedback from Markers about the exam itself was very positive.

The vast majority of candidates seem to have been presented at the appropriate level.

The Examining Team was pleased at the level of candidates' performance this year. The overall average score was 68.9%, which is a slight decrease from last year's 69.4%. Consequently, the pass rate (A–C) fell slightly from 90.5% to 90.4%.

The component average mark in Reading rose to 20.9 (out of 30), which is the highest it has been in the last five years. The Writing average also rose by 0.2 to 14.2. The external Speaking component rose by 0.3 on the previous best of 2010, from 23.5 to 23.8 out of 30. However, the improvements in these three components were partly balanced by the fall in the average score for Listening by 1.9 marks from 11.9 to 10 out of 20. This is the second year in a row that Listening marks have fallen dramatically, since 2009 when listening scores averaged 14.4. This underlines the importance of teachers ensuring they cover training for this skill thoroughly in class.

In 2011 there were 892 candidates at Intermediate 2 level. There were a large number of new and returning centres. The number of candidates in S4 increased, while the number in S5 and S6 decreased. 68.3% of candidates were in S4.

It is interesting to note that only 22.5% of candidates had progressed from Standard Grade (compared to 42.7% in 2006), whilst 70.9% had no previous SQA progress record, compared to 51.8% five years ago. This would seem to indicate that more senior students are picking up German as a second foreign language at that stage, and this is to be welcomed.

Areas in which candidates performed well

In both Reading and Writing candidates generally performed well across the board. In Reading, all texts were found to be very accessible. The first three texts were very well done by all candidates and the third text, dealing with the World of Work, was particularly well done. The longer passage was, as usual, challenging to some candidates, but accessible to most.

In Writing, some candidates are being very well prepared, resulting in many examples of excellence. However, very few candidates picked up that this year's advert was Austrian, and not German.

In Listening, some candidates performed well, remembering to listen and extract the relevant information. Passage one on family relationships was the best attempted of the three texts.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In the Reading paper, there was a lack of attention to detail and some examples of dictionary misuse. There was confusion with *aufräumen*, with it being translated as 'she likes space' in text 1. Also, *Schubblade* was rendered incorrectly as 'roller blades'. There was also a little confusion of pronouns in text 1, and *Montag* for *Monat* in the second text.

The final, longer text usually offers candidates the opportunity to show their strengths, and this year was no exception. In question (e) some candidates rendered *Doch ich schaffe es, noch eine knappe Stunde zu warten* as 'he manages to be a young knight', 'he creates a young knight in an hour' and 'he has a nap'. Many candidates were unable to correctly identify *Ich will heute nicht hungern*. The use of *wollen* is appropriate material for this level and should have been accessible to most candidates.

Candidates' performance in the Listening paper was disappointing. Some unnecessary marks were lost; for example, in passage one, many candidates did not correctly identify the gender. *Ich bringe ihn zum Fußballstadion* also caused problems where the 'taking/bringing' was omitted and candidates wrote that the brothers played football together.

In the second passage, the place where Martina worked caused various problems and *Jugendfashion-Laden* was challenging for some - with *Schule* preceding it, some candidates put them together to get 'youth centres', 'youth clubs', 'school clubs', 'youth hostels'. When asked what she saves her money for (*die Sommerferien und Weihnachtsgeschenke*) candidates lost marks by being economical with their answers, writing only 'holidays' and/or 'presents'. *Computerfachgeschäfte* in question 2c was not correctly identified by some, with renderings such as 'butcher's' and even 'frozen yoghurt shop'.

The third text allowed candidates to evidence their strengths and, on the whole, candidates performed well.

In Writing, certain candidates omitted some of the five obligatory bullet points, concentrating instead on the additional bullet points. Candidates should be aware that omitting the obligatory bullet points will result in loss of marks.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

In Reading, centres are encouraged to spend more time on dictionary work with candidates, particularly indicating the differences between, for example, nouns and adjectives

Listening is an area that is causing concern; responses were poor even in the supported questions, such as the grid in question 2. There is perhaps a place for centres to put

together packs, with ample exemplars, on how to approach Listening. Centres have clearly prepared candidates well in the other three skills, and are encouraged to prepare candidates equally well for Listening.

It is also important to continue to train candidates in exam techniques — particularly in taking time to read the questions properly.

In Writing, some candidates were over-prepared, to their detriment: in some cases, candidates from the same presenting centre were writing very similar pieces. Centres should ensure that their candidates personalise their responses.

Centres should ensure they have a complete understanding of the requirements in Writing, and pass this on to candidates. Some candidates are prepared quite unnecessarily for bullet points six and seven, but are less prepared for bullet points 2 and 3. At bullet Point 4, care should be taken to relate the response to the job in question. For example, it is not wholly convincing to say that the reason for applying for the job as a dishwasher is to improve one's German. Candidates should be more explicit, eg *Ich bewerbe mich um diese Stelle, weil ... / um ...*

What is required is a balanced response of 25–30 words on each of bullet points 1 to 5, presented clearly in paragraphs. Candidates should be encouraged to bring in their experience from other classes, such as PSE/Guidance, when responding to the job advert. Only bullet points 1 to 5 are compulsory and, if done well, can result in a mark of 20/20. Candidates should only really attempt the optional bullet points if they are secure and confident in their German.

Overall, the standard achieved in this year's examination was very satisfactory and centres are to be commended on the excellent work they are doing.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2010	927
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	891
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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	48.9%	48.9%	436	70
B	23.3%	72.3%	208	60
C	17.7%	90.0%	158	50
D	4.2%	94.2%	37	45
No award	5.8%	100.0%	52	-

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.