



Course Report 2019

Subject	German
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The reading and translation question paper performed very much in line with expectations. The marking team, although slightly changed from last year, believe the question paper was fair in terms of course coverage and the overall level of demand.

The topic was current and relevant, and a topic which has media coverage both in this country and in Germany.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening and discursive writing question paper performed in line with expectations. The marking team agreed that the paper was fair in terms of course coverage and the level of demand. The topic was one which candidates could identify with as part of their own lives.

Portfolio

The level of candidate performance in this component continues to be very positive. This can be attributed to the further impact of the continued bedding in process around the previous changes to the portfolio: one piece of writing, 1,500 words. This change allows candidates to fully expand their thoughts.

The lack of candidates choosing to write language in work pieces continues to be a concern.

Performance–talking

Visiting assessors were pleased to report that the majority of candidates were well prepared and gave confident performances.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates found the text accessible and attempted the questions well. Only a very small number of candidates did not attempt all questions.

There was a slight improvement noted in the translation work again, which was very pleasing.

Only a very small number of candidates still chose to attempt the overall purpose question and/or the translation before attempting all of the other questions. This strategy can disadvantage candidates.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening topic was one which candidates appeared comfortable with. Almost all candidates attempted to answer all questions.

This year there were no candidates whose discursive writing was deemed to be irrelevant. All titles were addressed, with the bulk of candidates choosing to tackle question 3 on society, and question 4 on learning.

The standard of candidate response was very similar for all four titles.

Portfolio

It was encouraging to note the increasing number of more modern literary texts selected. However, there is always a place for the traditional and well used pieces of literature.

Irrespective of the text chosen, the majority of candidates displayed their knowledge of, and engagement with, the chosen text.

Performance–talking

Most candidates were well prepared and confident in the performance–talking. They were able to talk well about the themes and topics noted on the Subject Topic List (STL).

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Questions 7 and 8 continue to be the questions which candidates find most challenging, although there were signs of improved performance this year.

A small number of candidates still spend a disproportionate amount of time re-writing parts of the text and then translating these in an attempt to address question 7, the overall purpose question.

Many candidates completed the translation well. However, for some candidates translation continues to be very challenging. Some very basic errors of tense, number and gender did lead these candidates in the wrong direction.

There were obvious examples of candidates misreading the original German, for example translating 'Stunden' as 'students'.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

In the listening question paper, there were a number of candidates who made basic errors which detracted from their overall candidate performance for example failing to identify comparatives and deal with numbers accurately.

Discursive writing is challenging for some candidates. Although this year again saw a drop in the number of irrelevant essays, there were a number of essays which displayed low levels of grammatical accuracy with clear weaknesses in basic grammatical areas, for example adjective endings, verb endings and word order.

Portfolio

The main issue with the portfolio remains the initial selection of the title for the candidate to work towards. If the selected title is too vague, too demanding or one which the candidate has had no part in selecting and cannot identify with, then the title itself becomes a hurdle for the candidate.

Performance–talking

The main challenge for candidates is to be able to talk about all areas included in the STL form. The temptation to try simply to recite pre-learned material must be avoided.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates should strive to be as precise in their answers as possible. They should always be encouraged to tackle the questions in the given order and not attempt questions 7 and 8 before completing questions 1 to 6. If the candidate works through the questions, that should provide a deeper understanding of the text and a stronger foundation for answering the overall purpose question and completing the translation.

In answer to all questions, candidates must avoid re-writing large parts of the text or merely translating large parts of the text as a response to question 7. There is nothing to be gained by re-writing numerous lines from the text as a quotation. Clearly the inclusion of a short phrase or single word to demonstrate a point being made is acceptable and valid.

As preparation for this question paper, candidates should be encouraged to see translation as an exercise in accuracy and precision throughout the year. Candidates must always remember the basic premise: the text makes sense in the original language, it must also do so in translation.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Candidates must pay particular attention to any numbers, dates, etc. and listen out for any comparatives or superlatives, since these will inevitably be important.

Discursive writing demands relevance and accuracy. Candidates must plan essays and, under pressure of time, concentrate on the grammatical accuracy they have acquired during their years of studying the language. These skills are enhanced if candidates are encouraged to further develop them in the course of the academic year.

Portfolio

The title is crucial and should always be negotiated with each candidate to ensure they are at all times committed to delivering the best individual portfolio possible.

Centres should look carefully at the literature text selected for study and, in discussion with candidates, ensure that text in itself is not an immediate barrier.

Centres with multiple candidates are still, in some cases, having all candidates work towards the same, or a very similar title. This is contrary to SQA guidelines. The lack of personalisation and choice can be disadvantageous to individual candidates, who may feel they have limited ownership and commitment to delivering the title.

Candidates should be very aware that there is no need to translate any quotes they include in their essays. Indeed, translated quotes might lead examiners to think the text has been read in translation only.

Centres should ensure flyleaves are completed accurately with all requested information, and a bibliography included as outlined in SQA guidelines.

Where all SQA guidelines are adhered to, candidates have the best opportunity to produce their best piece of work.

Performance–talking

Candidates should be preparing for the visiting assessor throughout the session. They will, of course, have preferred areas for discussion but must be able to cover all areas of the STL form.

Candidates must be aware they cannot look upon this as an exercise in reciting learned material. The assessor will always interrupt at an appropriate moment and seek to have a meaningful conversation.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	124
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	127
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	60.6%	60.6%	77	140
B	23.6%	84.3%	30	120
C	11.8%	96.1%	15	100
D	0.8%	96.9%	1	90
No award	3.1%	-	4	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ 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.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.