



## Course report 2019

|         |        |
|---------|--------|
| Subject | German |
| Level   | 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

The 2019 Higher German course assessment offered flexibility, personalisation and elements of choice to candidates. The course assessment components were created with the following principles in mind:

- ◆ prior knowledge — relevant and familiar concepts in reading and listening items which reflect the course content of Higher
- ◆ choice — flexibility in responses in most reading and listening comprehension questions and a choice of two writing scenarios
- ◆ progressive linguistic development — lexical items and phrases as well as a level of demand which corresponds with the course content of Higher
- ◆ coherence — course assessment element in reading and listening follow the National 5 pattern and language development

The 2019 Higher German course assessment consisted of balanced question papers that accommodated a range of candidates.

Overall, the reading and the listening question papers performed well. The translation question this year contained challenges for some candidates which balanced the slightly more accessible comprehension questions.

The directed writing question paper and the assignment writing performed as expected. The listening question paper proved less challenging for some candidates, this resulted in a minor adjustment of the grade boundaries.

### Question paper 1: Reading

The reading question paper presented the candidates with an article about modern technology in everyday life. Overall, candidates coped very well with the question paper and the comprehension questions. The principle of flexibility in responses proved its value.

The translation, with complex and detailed language and a focus on grammar, proved to be challenging for most candidates. Some candidates were able to apply their translation skills and knowledge of language successfully. Some candidates were unable to identify the different tenses required for a successful translation, as well as relative clauses. Candidates with a sound knowledge of English and German grammar performed better in this part of the question paper.

### Question paper 1: Directed writing

Candidates were given the choice of two scenarios: scenario 1 (employability) on a work experience in a hotel in Germany, and scenario 2 (learning) on an exchange trip to a school or college in a German-speaking country.

Both scenarios and their six bullet points were designed to be open, to allow candidates an element of personalisation and give them more control over their writing.

There was a good balance in choice between scenario 1 and scenario 2. Bullet points in both scenarios were accessible and accommodated a range of candidates. They gave candidates the freedom of adding information and creating some flair.

The principle of choice in the directed writing question paper has proven to be worthwhile for candidates.

### **Question paper 2: Listening**

The listening question paper presented candidates with a monologue on the topic of how German people spend their holidays, and a dialogue on the topic of a German family's visit to Scotland.

The listening question paper, in its structure and contents, allows progression from the National 5 course assessment and course topics. This principle has proven its value and resulted in some very good responses by some candidates.

### **Assignment–writing**

The assignment writing was introduced to candidates for the first time this year. Many responses displayed a sound understanding of discursive writing with a clear essay structure and language resources, as appropriate. Some candidates displayed little or no discursive elements in their writing although their linguistic knowledge of German complied with the demands of Higher.

### **Performance–talking**

The format of this internally assessed course component changed this year and now consists of a discussion only. All centres verified used SQA's guidelines for the Higher performance–talking.

In the externally verified samples of the performance talking, the marking instructions were, in the majority of centres, applied appropriately.

Many centres provided commentaries on candidate performances with specific reference to aspects of the pegged mark commentaries provided in the marking instructions, for example comments on fluency, accuracy and range of vocabulary.

Many centres used the *Higher Modern Languages performance–talking candidate assessment record* to record commentaries about their candidates' performances.

## **Section 2: comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

#### **Question paper 1: Reading**

Overall, candidates' responses were good, and most did the comprehension questions well. Questions 2(a), 3, 4(b), 5(a) and 6(b) proved to be accessible for most candidates. Several no responses for question 7 could suggest that candidates are still not confident with this style of question, although responses in general were well done.

Candidates with a sound knowledge of German and English grammar did the translation especially successfully.

#### **Question paper 1: Directed writing**

Most candidates performed well in the directed writing question paper by addressing all bullet points and using pre-learned material to complete this task. Candidates with a sound knowledge of German tenses performed better.

#### **Question paper 2: Listening**

Candidates generally coped well with this question paper which intended to allow A candidates to reach the upper marks, and supporting C candidates to achieve mid-range marks. Few candidates achieved less than 8 marks, with several candidates making attempts at answering questions rather than submitting a no response. In general, candidates seemed to cope better with the conversation than the monologue.

#### **Assignment–writing**

Overall, candidates performed very well. The assignment gave scope for candidates to use level appropriate language as well as cross-curricular skills and knowledge by applying discursive writing skills which candidates developed in English. Most candidates were well prepared and able to write a suitable discursive essay within the word limit.

#### **Performance–talking**

Generally speaking, candidates performed well in the performance–talking.

There was much evidence of interlocutors asking questions which are appropriate to Higher. For many centres, there was a clear difference in the kind of questions asked at Higher compared to National 5. For example candidates who were asked to consider both sides of an argument, or advantages and disadvantages of a topic could show that they were operating within the 27/30 band at Higher.

## **Areas that candidates found demanding**

### **Question paper 1: Reading**

Overall, the comprehension questions were well done, but in some cases candidates missed out basic information in their answers. Some candidates did not clearly indicate what question or sub-question they were attempting.

In question 7, several candidates were providing long and unnecessary quotes from the text in German. The requirement that candidates need to rephrase in their own words is not well understood.

The translation presented challenges for candidates who struggled to identify and translate relative clauses and conditional tense accurately.

### **Question paper 1: Directed writing**

Candidates submitted varied responses in this question paper. Some candidates struggled to use a range of tenses, especially the future tense which was required in bullet point six of scenario 2. Some candidates seemed to struggle with time management, which became evident in incomplete essays or in some cases no responses. Candidates who relied on memorised material about the journey, which was not required in addressing the bullet points, performed less well in this question paper.

### **Question paper 2: Listening**

Overall candidates did well in this question paper, with most candidates performing better in item 2. However, candidates continue to struggle with numbers. This became evident in the variations on '67 million' in question 1(a). Candidates' responses were not specific enough in places to award the mark (for example questions 1(c), 2(d) and (e)). Some candidates do not check their work to ensure their written answers make sense and answer the question

### **Assignment–writing**

Although most candidates performed very well in the assignment–writing, some candidates did not fully understand the task. A significant number of candidates responded to stimuli lacking adequate scope for discussion and/or detailed and complex language, resulting in a finished piece of writing more akin to National 5. Some candidates lost marks due to very personal responses without any arguments, viewpoints or conclusion. Some centres produced stimuli for candidates on topics beyond Higher – and this was not always successful.

### **Performance–talking**

Some candidates found the new format of the performance–talking challenging. Candidates no longer give a presentation at this level.

Some conversations sounded more natural as candidates answered with a mixture of longer and shorter answers. However, some candidates had difficulty in reacting appropriately to unpredicted questions.

## **Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment**

### **Question paper 1: Reading**

Most candidates displayed very good time management skills. Centres are to continue to encourage candidates to analyse the comprehension questions and the reading passage, and to distinguish between relevant and redundant vocabulary.

However, centres should ensure that candidates also develop the skill of comprehension and approach the reading passage holistically. Centres could encourage the use of transferrable skills from English classes for interpretation of a reading passage.

Candidates with sound grammar knowledge in English and German performed better in the translation. Centres should consider the vital role of native language grammar and lexical skills. Centres are encouraged to always revisit prior learning (BGE and National 4 and National 5 grammar and lexical items) before moving into Higher German context development.

### **Question paper 1: Directed writing**

Most centres prepared their candidates very well for the directed writing question paper. Their approach to consolidating knowledge of perfect tense and German sentence structure is to be commended.

There has been evidence of good use of pre-learned material and centres are to be commended for encouraging their candidates in their effort to perform well. However, candidates should be encouraged to address the bullet points accurately rather than relying on memorised material only.

Candidates who appeared to be more secure in other tense forms (future tense, conditional, present tense) performed better.

Centres are encouraged to give candidates writing opportunities from an early stage in the course, and to keep consolidating German sentence structure with special consideration of the position of the verb.

Candidates with a sound knowledge of present tense, future tense and conditional tense performed better in the writing element. Centres might wish to ensure that all candidates have a sound knowledge of verbs and their ability to appear in different tense forms in German with an awareness of their English equivalents.

### **Question paper 2: Listening**

Candidates with a wide range of vocabulary knowledge performed better in listening comprehension. To this end, centres are encouraged to develop vocabulary knowledge with focus on lexicology and semantic use of words in sentences.

It is important to highlight the similarities between English and German with special consideration of the Scots language. Candidates with an awareness of the interconnected nature of languages perform well.

### **Assignment–writing**

As the assignment–writing is a new component this year, centres are encouraged to fully engage with all SQA documents in relation to the assignment.

It is important that candidates understand that they are required to submit a discursive essay using detailed and complex language. Centres should include discursive language in their learning and teaching (understanding language skills) from as early as National 5, using language resources, for example *Vorteile haben/geben*, *Nachteile haben/geben*, *einerseits*, *andererseits*, *erstens/zweitens/drittens*, *im Allgemeinen*, *schließlich*, *abschließend* as well as using phrases and different ways of expressing opinion.

### **Performance–talking**

To do well at this level, candidates must be able to deal successfully with unpredicted questions and take part in a discussion which is, at times, discursive in nature and develops beyond facts. Centres should consider how to vary the approach for each candidate and how to build in the element of unpredictable questions appropriately.

Many confident performances demonstrated very good language resource. In some instances, the language was not detailed and complex and this detracted from the overall quality.

Candidates who were able to use interjections, ask relevant questions and use idiomatic phrases were able to sustain the conversation well. Centres are encouraged to continue to prepare candidates in this way.

Centres should ensure candidates have a range of strategies for asking for questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to say when they have not understood any aspect of the conversation.

Where candidates struggle to answer certain questions, teachers and lecturers should continue to support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic. Teachers and lecturers should give candidates the appropriate response or thinking time before doing this.

The length of the performances sampled varied, and centres are advised to refer to the advice in the *Higher Modern Languages Course Specification* on the recommended duration of the performance–talking, which at this level should be approximately 10 minutes. This is to make sure candidates can demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of the task at Higher.

Centres are also encouraged to ask their candidates a variety of questions, even where the same or similar topics have been selected by candidates from within the same centre. This



provides for personalisation and choice and provides scope for candidates to produce a more varied conversation.

All centres provided audio recordings of the performances as appropriate to the task. In a minority of audio files, the interlocutor was very clear, while it was difficult to hear the candidate. Centres should be aware that it is vital for the candidate to be heard clearly throughout the performance.

## Grade boundary and statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2018 | 817 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2019 | 787 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

### Statistical information: performance of candidates

#### Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

| Distribution of course awards | Percentage | Cumulative % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Maximum mark</b>           |            |              |                      |             |
| <b>A</b>                      | 53.2%      | 53.2%        | 419                  | 87          |
| <b>B</b>                      | 20.3%      | 73.6%        | 160                  | 74          |
| <b>C</b>                      | 16.3%      | 89.8%        | 128                  | 61          |
| <b>D</b>                      | 7.8%       | 97.6%        | 61                   | 48          |
| <b>No award</b>               | 2.4%       | -            | 19                   | -           |

## 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 head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question 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 question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.