



Course report 2019

Subject	German
Level	National 5

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 National 5 German course assessment performed as expected. The question papers were deemed to be fair and accessible to all candidates. The majority of candidates coped well with the level and were able to complete the exam within the allocated time.

Similar to last year, the grade boundary was increased by 2 marks to take into account the introduction of the assignment–writing, which was common across all modern languages at National 5.

Question paper 1: Reading

The reading question paper was composed of three texts worth 10 marks on the contexts of society, employability and learning. There were four supported questions. The texts were relevant and interesting which engaged the candidates, given the overall quality of responses. The reading question paper, which was accessible to all candidates, performed as expected while providing the demand and rigour required at National 5 and leading to a range of performances.

Overall, candidates performed well in the reading question paper. There was a full range of performances and some candidates were able to attain full marks in the paper.

Candidates generally performed well throughout, although some candidates did not provide enough detail from the text to access some of the marks. The marking scheme allowed candidates to offer a range of answers to demonstrate their understanding from a range of contexts. Candidates performed consistently across all three reading texts.

There were some no responses, but not an excessive amount and most candidates made an attempt to answer all questions.

From the overall picture, the vast majority of pupils passed this element of course assessment or were close to it, with very few candidates scoring less than 12 marks.

Question paper 1: Writing

The writing question paper asked candidates to reply to a job advert for a sales assistant at a supermarket in Kiel. The job application required candidates to respond to six bullet points, four of which were predictable and the final two bullet points were unpredictable.

Overall, candidates performed as expected in the writing question paper. There was a full range of performances and a good number of candidates were able to achieve 16 or 20 marks. However, it is worth noting that the number of candidates achieving the higher marks increased significantly and reversed the trend from last year.

Most candidates coped relatively well with the first four bullet points. However, it was clear that a number of candidates did not always understand what they were writing and made errors when writing from memory. Most candidates attempted all six bullet points, but many encountered difficulties in the final two unpredictable bullet points, particularly with using auxiliary and modal verbs which lead to confusion with conjugations and word order.

Some candidates coped less well with the unpredictable bullet points, particularly number five. Some candidates had excellent responses in bullet points one to four, although it deteriorated significantly in bullet points five and six, indicating that writing spontaneously seemed to be challenging. Lots of candidates kept the final two bullet points simple which worked overall. A number of candidates tried to shoehorn an answer for the final bullet point which had, at best, a tenuous link to the bullet point.

Question paper 2: Listening

The context of the listening question paper was about learning foreign languages which sampled vocabulary from all contexts. The level of challenge in this paper was slightly more demanding than last year's paper. The paper performed broadly as expected.

Candidates performed as expected in the listening question paper. There was a range of performances and the marking instructions were sufficiently adapted to ensure that candidates could provide a range of answers. There were a range of topics included within the context of the paper which sampled a wide range of vocabulary.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing was introduced last year and candidates were asked to complete a written task of 120–200 words on a topic of their choosing from the contexts of society, learning and culture. This aspect of the course allows for personalisation and choice.

Candidates chose a range of topics appropriate to National 5, for example school, technology, family, healthy living, free-time, holidays and home town. There were a range of performances and candidates generally did very well. Most candidates chose an appropriate title and chose the correct context box.

The assignment allowed for candidates to write about a topic in-depth and it was expected, at this level, that candidates were able to provide opinions and give reasons. Most candidates provided an introduction and a conclusion and most assignments were well-structured using time phrases, inversion and connectives.

Performance–talking

In the externally verified sample of performances, the majority of centres used the marking instructions for the presentation and conversation 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 comment on fluency, accuracy and range of vocabulary.

Many centres used the Modern Languages performance assessment record to record commentaries about the sections of each of their candidates' performances.

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 to hear the candidate clearly throughout the performance.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Text 1 (society)

Generally, this question was well done. Most candidates coped well with the majority of questions in this first text, providing sufficient detail to gain most of the marks.

Question 1(a): was well done, with most candidates being able to break up the composite noun: street violence.

Question 1(b): was relatively well done, with nearly all candidates achieving at least 1 mark.

Question 1(c)(ii): was particularly well done.

Question 1(e)(i) and (e)(ii): over two thirds of candidates achieved the mark.

Text 2 (employability)

Overall, candidates coped with the range of questions in the second text.

Question 2(a): nearly all candidates achieved at least 1 mark.

Question 2(b): most candidates recognised the modal verb.

Question 2(c): most candidates were able to recognise the past tense with some recognising more complex irregular past participles.

Question 2(d)(i): was generally well done, with the majority of candidates achieving at least 1 mark.

Text 3 (learning)

Candidates performed well in this text. Candidates seemed to have managed their time better this year with fewer no responses.

Question 3(d)(ii): most candidates were able to gain at least 1 mark here, with many being able to pick out the effects of stress.

Question 3(e): candidates were able to recognise the modal verb 'wollen'.

Question 3(f)(ii): most candidates were able to recognise the near-cognates 'plane' and 'organisiere'.

Similar to last year, there were particular difficulties with the recognition of comparative adjectives (schneller, höher, eleganter) and plural forms of nouns (Tanzschritte, Berufe, Vorurteile). A small number of candidates also found composite nouns (Straßengewalt, Muskelkraft, Arbeitsmarkt) difficult. Some candidates only provided single-word answers

and, as a result, did not provide sufficient detail to gain some of the marks. At this level, it is expected that candidates are able to provide detailed information or an extended answer. A few candidates did not choose the correct meaning from the dictionary which distorted their answer (for example 1(a), 1(e)(ii) and 2(e)) and in turn, did not answer the question.

Question paper 1: Writing

Nearly all candidates attempted the first four predictable bullet points, displaying a good range of vocabulary, grammatical structures and tenses. The majority of candidates seemed well prepared and confident in their writing.

Question paper 2: Listening

Item 1: monologue

Question 1(a): almost all candidates were able to identify that Max's parents only spoke German and that books and magazines cost too much.

Question 1(b): most candidates were able to provide at least one correct reason.

Question 1(c): most candidates were able to identify that Max wanted to be a sports journalist or that he wanted to work in the USA.

Item 2: dialogue

Question 2(a): most candidates were able to identify that Beate had been living in Germany for 10 years, or moved when she was 8.

Question 2(c): most candidates recognised that Beate's dad had a language barrier or that he had never learnt German at school.

Question 2(d): most candidates gained at least 1 mark in the true/false question.

Question 2(e): most candidates were able to point out that Beate was young when she moved and so had not made any close friends.

Question 2(g): the majority of candidates were able to recognise the near-cognate 'Grammatik'.

Some candidates struggled with composite nouns (Fernsehsendungen, Tageszeitung, Arbeitschancen) and a number were unable to recognise cognates and near-cognates (Magazine, Kollegen, USA). Most candidates coped well with the listening overall, while others almost got the correct answer but failed to provide sufficient detail required for the mark. Both item 1 and item 2 were generally well attempted.

It was clear that a number of candidates had isolated pieces of vocabulary and had then guessed the answer for some questions.

Assignment–writing

Overall, candidates performed well in the assignment–writing. There were a range of interesting topics and most candidates were able to write in-depth about their chosen topic.

Most candidates were able to write at least 120 words and provided a structured text including an introduction and a conclusion. Most candidates were able to use conjunctions to help structure their texts and gave opinions as well as justifying them. There was a range of language and grammatical structures appropriate to National 5 German.

Some centres opted for all candidates to do the same topic, whereas other centres allowed candidates free choice. Overall, it was clear that the work submitted was conducted under the conditions set out in the course specification and understanding standards documents.

Performance–talking

Overall, candidates performed well in the talking performance.

In almost all cases, candidates performed more confidently in the presentation section of the performance–talking, with many well-structured and fluent performances. This section of the performance–talking provided an opportunity for candidates to show control of the language.

Overall, candidates performed well in the conversation section. They were able to sustain an interaction based on the same or related topic to the presentation context and then moved on to another context in the course of the conversation.

Where interlocutors used a wide variety of questions in the conversation section, this often helped candidates to avoid recycling the same language and structures from their presentations into their conversations.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

Question 1(a): a significant number of candidates were unable to split up the composite noun or had used the meaning ‘road’ for ‘Straße[n]’.

Question 1(c): more than half of candidates did not achieve the mark as they either missed out the idea of ‘own’ for ‘eigen’ or did not convey the idea of ‘develop’ for ‘entwickeln’. Very few candidates conveyed the idea of ‘pushing limits’.

Question 1(d): most candidates achieved at least 1 mark in this question as many were able to identify that it kept her fit. However, less than half of candidates were able to demonstrate the idea that ‘she got to know’ for ‘kennen lernen’.

Question 1(e): a number of candidates mentioned ‘discipline’ but missed out the idea of ‘mental’.

Question 2(a): a small number of candidates still ticked more than two boxes or left the answer blank.

Question 2(b): a considerable number of candidates were unable to identify the past tense and it was clear that they had looked up the nouns and had guessed, such as 'they went onto websites' or 'they looked it up on computers'.

Question 2(d): some candidates were unable to convey the idea of 'basteln' and a considerable number thought 'Geschichte' in this context meant 'history'.

Question 2(d)(ii): about a third of candidates did not achieve a mark here as they did not convey the idea that Karl now knew that it was the right job for him.

Question 2(e): two thirds of candidates were unable to convey that traditional opinions were being changed or that young people could start work without prejudice, with many mixing the word 'Vorurteile' with 'Vorteile'.

Question 3(a): few candidates were able to accurately convey 'immer mehr' and about a third of candidates were not able to identify 'young people' for 'Jugendliche'.

Question 3(b): a small number of candidates confused the idea that 'competition for jobs was increasing' with 'there was greater competition in the past'.

Question 3(c): a significant number of candidates thought the parents were helping their child with Maths and English, not that they were paying for a tutor.

Question 3(d): a small number of candidates thought that 'they wanted [Carolyn] to do her best' instead of 'wanting the best for her'.

Question 3(f)(i): many candidates thought 'Klassenarbeiten' was 'class work' and a number of candidates missed out the idea of 'lots of'.

Question 3(f)(ii): some candidates did not provide enough detail to gain the mark.

Question 3(g): there was some evidence of dictionary misuse here and it was clear that some candidates did not understand the word 'Ernährung' and some candidates were too generic with answers like 'you need to stay healthy'.

Question paper 1: Writing

Most candidates attempted bullet points five and six in the writing question paper. The accuracy of the bullet points deteriorated significantly in the last two bullet points and a considerable number of candidates were unable to form basic sentences using two verbs. The result was unconjugated verbs and incorrect word order.

In the first four bullet points, it was evident that a growing number of candidates had not adequately prepared for these, despite the predictability. Some candidates did not provide a range of tenses and some had particular difficulty in forming the past tense. Other points of difficulty for some candidates were adjective endings, word order and verb agreement.

A small number of candidates had over-prepared the first four bullet points and it was clear that they did not always understand what they were writing. The language was so complicated

in parts that some candidates were making errors which detracted from the overall impression of the marking, particularly where chunks of learned material were missed out.

Some centres are still encouraging pupils to write a formal introduction which is no longer necessary.

In bullet point three, a small number of candidates were writing about free-time activities with no mention of skills and qualities. Free-time activities are often mentioned without any relevance to the job, for example going to the cinema and their favourite types of films. It is important to remember that the bullet point is looking for information on skills and interests which make the candidate right for the job.

In bullet point six, some candidates made too tenuous links to the reasons they want to work in Germany, despite the bullet point being specific.

Question paper 2: Listening

Item 1: monologue

Question 1(b): a number of candidates guessed with answers like 'watching films/movies in English'.

Question 1(c): the question was simplified in the marking instruction as a considerable number of candidates were able to understand the idea that he wanted to be a sports journalist in the USA.

Question 1(d): very few candidates picked out the word 'newspaper'..

Question 1(e): many candidates guessed the answer and made generic references to the advantages of learning a language. Less than half the candidates were able to convey 'kennen lernen' or were unable to split the composite noun 'Arbeitschancen'.

Item 2: dialogue

Question 2(a): a small number of candidates misheard 'vor zehn Jahren' as '14 years ago' or negated their answer with an incorrect number: 'She moved 10 years ago when she was two'.

Question 2(b): a significant number of candidates did not understand that her mum's native language was German. Some candidates said that her mum lived in Austria or came from Germany. Only a small number were able to recognise that she was [almost] bilingual.

Question 2(c): some candidates did not recognise 'Ungarn' as 'Hungary', despite it being given in the introductory sentence.

Question 2(d): only a small number of candidates achieved both of the available marks here. Candidates seemed to be thrown by the second point and had not heard 'aber das sind nicht so viele'.

Question 2(e): some candidates did not understand the idea that they were neighbours who lived nearby. Most understood that they saw each other every day, but missed the idea of

before and after school. There were many misunderstandings or guesses, for example 'they have the same interests' or 'they are in the same class'.

Question 2(f): just under half of candidates did not recognise that he worked alone or did not work with colleagues.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing was developed to allow candidates to write in-depth about one topic. A small number of centres had encouraged candidates to write about a range of topics, which did not allow candidates to provide sufficient detail about a particular topic.

A number of candidates did not provide a title, provided a title in English, or a title that was not appropriate for the text that they had written, for example 'Holidays' or "German writing 2nd draft".

A number of candidates had chosen a film study as part of their assignment. Sometimes these were unsuccessful as the language required to write about such complex ideas was far beyond the ability of the candidates.

Some candidates wrote well below the 120-word minimum, and some texts were written as single paragraphs.

A number of texts were basic and very repetitive. Basic grammatical concepts caused some candidates problems, for example capitalising nouns, verb endings, word order and basic inversion. It is important for centres to follow the advice given in the understanding standard packs and the course support notes.

Performance–talking

Presentation

In the presentation, a small number of candidates struggled with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen.

A few presentations were significantly long or short and this affected the candidates' performances.

Conversation

A few conversations were unnecessarily long or significantly short which affected the candidates' performances.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

Some candidates did not provide sufficient detail to gain the marks available. Candidates should be guided by the marks awarded for each question and should provide as much detail as they have understood. It is important to note that it is rare for a single word answer to be sufficient detail at National 5. It may be worth advising candidates to look at what comes before and what comes after to ensure that all the necessary detail is included.

Centres should encourage dictionary skill practice to allow candidates to select the most appropriate translations in the context of the text. It is also important that candidate responses answer the question being asked. It may be worthwhile reminding candidates that the information comes in a chronological order and the questions include hooks to support the candidate throughout the text.

Candidates should be familiar with a range of grammatical structures as outlined in the productive grammar grid at National 5. This should assist them in identifying the relationship between the words in the sentence, including the tense if there is more than one verb in the sentence. Comparative adjectives and composite nouns are common features at National 5. The tense of the question should give candidates a good idea of the tense they should be using in their response.

Although the extraneous rule no longer applies, candidates should be discouraged from giving additional information that is not related to the text or the question, as this could negate any correct information and they could therefore lose the marks gained for correct information.

Candidates should be encouraged to read each question carefully and highlight or underline key words to help them find the correct answer in the text. They should also be encouraged to write in bullet points containing the relevant information. It may also be useful to encourage candidates to read the question and their answer at the end of the paper to ensure that the question has been answered and what they have written in English makes sense.

Question paper 1: Writing

It should be made clear to candidates that no formal introduction or conclusion is required, as many candidates struggled to provide these accurately.

Centres should advise candidates that for bullet point three, the information should be relevant to the job. A number of candidates had written about their free-time, but not mentioned any skills. It is important to remember the context of the paper: that it is a job application.

In bullet point four, some candidates chose to write in the present tense, which limited the range of tenses in the piece overall. Candidates should try to showcase a range of tenses accurately to achieve the best possible mark.

For the unpredictable bullet points, candidates should have the opportunity to practice a range of these and it may be worthwhile looking to other languages for ideas.

It is important that candidates attempt all six bullet points to ensure that they have written enough, as this can have an impact on their overall mark.

Candidates should check that all bullet points have been covered, and use their dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have written. Centres should concentrate on a range of productive grammar skills, including how to form questions. Centres should also make candidates aware of the marking criteria so that candidates know what is expected of them in this paper to achieve a high a mark as possible.

Question paper 2: Listening

In the listening question paper, candidates should be guided by the number of marks awarded for each question to ensure that sufficient detail is provided. It is important to note that it is rare for a single word answer to be sufficient detail at National 5, for example a country on its own would not be sufficient detail.

Candidates should revisit some basic vocabulary, for example countries, numbers, weather expressions and question words to ensure that sufficient detail is provided.

It is also vital that candidates read the introduction and are aware of the context.

Candidates should be discouraged from providing a range of alternative answers using oblique lines (/), as some candidates lost marks if it was not clear what their answer was or if the two answers contradicted each other.

Candidates need to be careful to provide accurate answers. A small number of candidates negated the correct answer by providing additional information which was incorrect.

Candidates should read the questions carefully. Highlighting key words can help them structure the text. Centres should also encourage candidates to write in bullet points and to score out any notes with a single line. Some candidates took extensive notes and this practice should be encouraged through continued practice in class. Notes should be confined to the side of the paper. Some candidates drew a line down the middle of the paper which made it more difficult for markers to find the correct answers.

Candidates hear both the monologue and the dialogue three times and should be encouraged to use the third time to check the accuracy of what they have written.

Assignment–writing

Candidates should be encouraged to write about a single topic or context. This will allow them to provide more detailed information on one topic. Candidates should be discouraged from writing about a range of topics or including information that is not relevant to the topic.

It is important that all candidates choose an appropriate title for their assignment and this should be written in German. They should only choose one context for their piece of writing.

Candidates should be encouraged to structure their texts with a clear introduction and conclusion and use conjunctions and linking phrases to structure their writing. It would also be useful if candidates provide a word count at the end of their texts.

Centres should guide candidates away from choosing a topic that is beyond their linguistic capabilities. If the candidate opts to do a film study, then it would be appropriate to focus on, for example, the portrayal of a character, how others see him or her, mention the main themes and whether or not they enjoyed the film. It is advised to steer away from complex analyses which is generally beyond the ability of National 5 candidates.

Candidates should avoid listing or repetitive language. As already mentioned, candidates should move beyond providing names, ages and physical descriptions when talking about family and friends or listing what they eat every day.

Candidates should be encouraged to look at the productive grammar grid and ensure that they cover a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

At National 5 German, it is expected that candidates can use detailed language and give opinions and reasons. Candidates should be made aware of the marking criteria so that they know what is expected of them in this paper to achieve a high mark. Candidates should be encouraged to use a range of tenses (where appropriate) and include examples of inversion and subordinate clauses.

Performance–talking

Care must be taken to provide candidates with every opportunity for personalisation and choice, especially where there are large numbers of candidates, or where candidates are being taught in bi-level groups.

In terms of the recommended duration of the performance–talking, centres are advised to refer to the National 5 Modern Languages Course Specification.

Interlocutors should ask questions in the conversation which follow on naturally from the presentation topic chosen by candidates, as recommended in the course specification. Making a natural link between the topic chosen by the candidate for their presentation and the beginning of the conversation is good practice. Interlocutors should ensure they do not start the conversation with a question unrelated to the presentation, as this does not aid the natural flow of the conversation.

Referring to other topics in the course of the conversation allows for personalisation and choice. Interlocutors should move on naturally to other topics thereby allowing the candidates to demonstrate a variety of language. Interlocutors should ensure they do not ask questions which lead to candidates repeating parts of their presentation in their answers. Interlocutors should therefore try to avoid asking questions about items that candidates have already addressed in the presentation.

Centres should ensure they are not overly prescriptive in preparing candidates for the conversation. Conversations should be as spontaneous as possible for the level assessed. It is recommended that centres ask a range of questions adapted to the responses of each candidate, rather than asking the same questions to all candidates. A wider variety of

questions in the conversation can aid candidates to develop strategies to cope with the unexpected.

Some candidates gave what appeared to be short, 'mini-presentation' answers in the conversation. While candidates may wish to prepare language and phrases for topic-related questions, centres are encouraged to continue to put open-ended questions to candidates, which can elicit detailed language in the answers.

Centres are also encouraged to put a variety of questions to their candidates, even where the same or similar topics have been selected by candidates from within the same centre. In turn, this provides for personalisation and choice and provides scope for candidates to produce a more varied conversation.

At times, there was evidence of the interlocutor talking too much in the course of the discussion with the candidate. Assessors should be aware of this and not go into lengthy answers if asked a question by the candidate.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	1859
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	1805
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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	54.3%	54.3%	981	86
B	17.8%	72.2%	322	74
C	14.0%	86.2%	253	62
D	9.6%	95.8%	173	50
No award	4.2%	-	76	-

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.