Course report 2022

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 appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	505

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	65.3	Cumulative percentage	65.3	Number of candidates	330	Minimum mark required	72
B	Percentage	14.1	Cumulative percentage	79.4	Number of candidates	70	Minimum mark required	60
C	Percentage	8.9	Cumulative percentage	88.3	Number of candidates	45	Minimum mark required	48
D	Percentage	7.1	Cumulative percentage	95.4	Number of candidates	35	Minimum mark required	36
No award	Percentage	4.6	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	25	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

♦ 'most' means greater than 70%
♦ 'many' means 50% to 69%
♦ 'some' means 25% to 49%
♦ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

The 2022 Higher German course assessment offered flexibility, personalisation and elements of choice to candidates. It consisted of balanced question papers that accommodated a range of candidates. The course assessment components were created with the following principles in mind:

♦ prior knowledge: relevant and familiar concepts in reading and listening items that 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 that corresponds with the course content of Higher
♦ coherence: course assessment elements in reading and listening follow the National 5 pattern and language development

Compared to 2019, there was a drop in the number of candidates presented for Higher German this session. The average component mark remained stable, but the distribution of marks was different, indicating a stronger performance at the upper end.

Due to the removal of the assignment–writing, the mark for the writing question paper was doubled.

Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, the reading question paper performed as expected. It presented candidates with an article about Interrail, a rail ticket for people who wish to travel around Europe. Overall, candidates coped 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 as well as the accurate use of Standard English, proved to be more challenging than expected for some candidates, particularly the plural of nouns. The translation question, although appearing to be accessible for most candidates, proved to be a challenge for some.

Question paper 1: Directed Writing

Candidates were given the choice of two scenarios: scenario 1 (society) on a visit to Germany with friends, and scenario 2 (learning) on a language course in Germany. 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 of 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 in general.

The directed writing question paper performed as expected. There was an increase in lower marks or 0 marks this year, which implies that some candidates might have to improve their exam techniques and time management skills.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper did not perform as expected, and most candidates found it more challenging than anticipated. The question paper presented candidates with a monologue on the topic of becoming a vet, and a dialogue on the topic of a young vet's experience in a North German village.

The listening question paper, in its structure and content, allows progression from the National 5 course assessment and course topics. Although this principle has proven its value and resulted in good responses by a few candidates, overall, the listening question paper appeared to be more challenging than expected for most candidates. It was evident that preparation and practice had been affected by the disruption of the pandemic. This was taken into account when setting the grade boundaries.

Assignment–writing

The requirement to complete the assignment–writing was removed for session 2021–22.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected. All centres verified this session used SQA's guidelines for the internally assessed component of the course assessment: Higher Modern Languages performance–talking assessment task.

At this level, candidates are required to interact in a discussion and cover **at least** two contexts. The recommended duration of the discussion is between 8 and 10 minutes.

All centres provided audio files of the performances, either digitally or in a physical format.

Markers applied the marking instructions in line with national standards.

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 1, 3(b), 4(a) and (b) proved to be accessible for most candidates. Question 8 (overall purpose question) has seen some excellent responses where candidates have used their National 5 and Higher English skills and applied these to answer the analysis question.

Candidates with a sound knowledge of German and English grammar did particularly well in the translation. Overall, candidates displayed good time management skills.

Candidates with a good knowledge of English adjectives and an understanding of the difference in register between Standard German and Standard English performed better in the translation.

Question paper 1: Directed Writing

Most candidates performed well in the directed writing question paper, addressing all bullet points and using pre-learned material to complete the task. Their knowledge of the perfect and imperfect tenses, as well as of German word-order and sentence structure, was evident.

Candidates with a sound knowledge of German word-order and tenses performed better.

Candidates with good exam and time management skills were more successful in completing the question paper.

Question paper 2: Listening

Overall, candidates' responses varied in quality and level of detail. Questions 2(a) and (c) proved to be accessible for most candidates and questions 1(b) and (e), 2(d), (f) and (g) were done well.

Candidates with a wide range of vocabulary performed better in listening comprehension.

Performance–talking

Most candidates were well-prepared, and this was reflected in the high quality of most performances. The candidates' selection of topics allowed them to use a range of tenses, structures, and vocabulary appropriate to each level and to the chosen topics.

All candidates chose at least two contexts for the discussion at Higher and demonstrated detailed and complex language.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

In some cases, candidates missed out details that were required to gain marks.

Questions 3(a), 5(b) and 7(b) proved to be challenging for many candidates due to lack of knowledge about the superlative of adjectives, identifying imperfect tense, mixing up the genitive case with the plural of nouns, and the inability to understand the concept of *andere Reisende*. There were a few no response to questions 7(b), 8 and 9, which suggests that some candidates may have struggled with time management.

The translation presented challenges for candidates who struggled to identify and translate the present tense, as well as the plural of nouns and verbs (*bietet* in sense unit 3, *warum so viele Jugendliche diese Fahrkarten nutzen wollen* in sense unit 5).

A few candidates, more than in previous years, did not complete this question paper, which might imply a lack of exam skills as well as issues with time management. This was taken into account when setting the grade boundaries.

Question paper 1: Directed Writing

Most candidates chose scenario 2 (learning) although many candidates chose scenario 1 (society). Overall, candidates submitted varied responses of different quality. Some candidates struggled to use a range of tenses, especially the future tense which was required in bullet point six of scenario 1.

There were a few candidates who seemed to struggle with time management, which became evident in incomplete essays (three bullet points or more not addressed) or in some cases no responses. Candidates who relied on memorised material performed less well in this question paper. A few candidates failed to demonstrate control of the language and this showed in their responses to the different bullet points, which showed little development.

Question paper 2: Listening

Overall, candidates found this question paper more challenging than expected. Many candidates continue to struggle with numbers. This became evident in the variations of responses to question 1(c). Few candidates were able to provide the detail and accuracy of responses as expected at Higher level.

Candidates' responses were not specific enough in places to gain the mark, for example in questions 1(d) and 2(b)(i) and (ii). Most candidates found the concept of a snake laying eggs that end up in an incubator (question 2(e)) challenging, which resulted in a wide range of answers. Few candidates were able to gain both marks in question 2(e).

Performance–talking

Overall, most candidates coped well with the discussion at Higher, although some candidates found it difficult to sustain the conversation as the discussion progressed.

A number of discussions were unnecessarily long or too short. Particularly when conversations and discussions were short, candidates were unable to demonstrate detailed and complex language.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ are provided with ongoing assessment opportunities, which are timed to support them in developing exam skills
♦ analyse the comprehension questions and the reading passage. This helps them to learn to distinguish between relevant and redundant vocabulary
♦ approach the reading task holistically, which helps with a successful response to the overall purpose question
♦ are encouraged to use transferrable literacy skills from National 5 and Higher English classes, which helped some candidates in their successful analysis of the passage this year. This skill will become especially relevant for those who wish to continue their studies in an Advanced Higher German course where the reading passages require some more analysis

Teachers and lecturers should consider the role of native language knowledge (grammar and lexicology) as well as the interconnected nature of European languages. A focus on enhancing wider literacy skills could help candidates to improve English and German language skills.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ study all bullet points carefully before choosing between the two scenarios
♦ remember that the first bullet point has two parts, both of which must be addressed to access all marks
♦ practise spontaneous talking or writing to learn how to control the language with confidence
♦ have a sound knowledge of verbs and their ability to appear in different tense forms in German, with an awareness of their English equivalents

Teachers and lecturers could make use of the examples of candidates' responses with commentaries on marks awarded on SQA's Understanding Standards website.

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ continue to practise developing vocabulary knowledge with focus on lexicology and semantic use of words in sentences
♦ are aware of the similarities between English and German with special consideration of the Scots language. Candidates with an awareness of the interconnected nature of languages are likely to become more successful listeners and learners of German

- do constant repetition and practice of vocabulary in connection with monologue and dialogue tasks in the classroom
- access authentic material to develop listening comprehension for successfully understanding German
- remember to check their responses to ensure their written answers make sense and answer the question

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- have a range of strategies when asking for questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to say when they have not understood an aspect of the discussion
- are encouraged to give their opinions, including reasons for their opinion and for some candidates, a degree of evaluation
- remember to cover at least two different contexts
- try to use detailed and complex language at this level to access the top range of marks

Teachers and lecturers could make use of the Understanding Standards materials for Higher German talking performances (IACCAs) published on SQA's secure website.

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
♦ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade 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 for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
♦ Where levels of difficulty 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 on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the National Qualifications 2022 Awarding — Methodology Report.