



## Course Report 2018

Subject	German
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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**

## **Summary of the course assessment**

### **Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation**

The question paper performed in line with expectations. The paper was fair in terms of course coverage and overall level of demand. The topic was current and relevant.

### **Component 2: question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

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

### **Component 3: portfolio**

The level of candidate performance in the portfolio was slightly higher than we have seen in previous years. That change can be attributed to candidates getting used to the changes previously made to the portfolio: one piece of writing at 1,500 words. This change allows candidates to expand their thoughts to a greater extent.

### **Component 4: performance**

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

Once again the visiting assessors recorded their thanks to schools for their co-operation in making arrangements to carry out the assessments.

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

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

#### **Component 1: Question paper: Reading and Translation**

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

The slight improvement noted in the translation work was very pleasing.

#### **Component 2: Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

The listening topic was one which candidates appeared comfortable and almost all candidates attempted to answer all questions.

This year there were no candidates whose discursive writing was thought to be irrelevant. All titles were addressed, although more than half of candidates chose the first title.

#### **Component 3: portfolio**

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

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

#### **Component 4: performance**

Most candidates were well prepared and confident. They were able to talk confidently about the themes and topics noted on the STL.

### **Areas which candidates found demanding**

#### **Component 1: 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 responses 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.

Although responses in translation was better this year, for some candidates it continues to be very challenging. Some very basic errors of tense, number and gender did lead these candidates in the wrong direction.

#### **Component 2: question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

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

Discursive writing is challenging for candidates. Although this year again saw a welcome 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 such as adjective endings, verb endings and word order.

### **Component 3: portfolio**

The main issue with the portfolio remains the initial selection of the title. If the selected title is too vague, too demanding or one which candidates cannot identify with, then the title itself becomes a hurdle for candidates.

### **Component 4: performance**

The main challenge for candidates is to be able and willing to talk about all areas identified on 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**

### **Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation**

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

Candidates must avoid re-writing large parts of the text or merely translating large parts of the text as a response to question 7.

Candidates should be encouraged to see translation as an exercise in accuracy and precision throughout the year, as a preparation for this question paper.

### **Component 2: 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 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.

### **Component 3: portfolio**

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

Centres with multiple candidates should not have all candidates working towards the same title. This is contrary to SQA guidelines. The lack of personalisation and choice can be disadvantageous to individual candidates, who may feel limited ownership and commitment to delivering the title.

Candidates should be aware there is no need to translate any quotes they include in their essays.

Centres should ensure flyleaves are completed accurately with a bibliography as outlined in SQA guidelines. Where candidates adhere to all SQA guidelines they have the best opportunity to produce their best piece of work.

### **Component 4: performance**

Candidates should be preparing for the performance throughout the session. They will have preferred areas for discussion but must be able to cover all areas indicated on 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 2017	172
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	124
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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	65.3%	65.3%	81	140
B	13.7%	79.0%	17	120
C	13.7%	92.7%	17	100
D	3.2%	96.0%	4	90
No award	4.0%	-	5	-

## **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 which 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 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.