



## Course Report 2017

Subject	German
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

## **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 marking team are of the opinion it was totally fair in terms of course coverage and overall level of demand.

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

Again, this paper performed in line with expectations. Again, the marking team agreed that the paper was totally fair in terms of course coverage and level of demand.

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

The level of candidate performance in this component was slightly higher than we have seen in previous cohorts. We attribute that change to the impact of the recent changes to the portfolio, ie one piece of writing, 1500 words.

#### **Component 4: Performance**

Visiting Assessors reported 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 the arrangements for carrying 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, with only a small number not attempting all questions.

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

The listening topic appeared to be familiar to all candidates. The vast majority attempted to answer all questions.

This year there were no candidates whose Discursive Writing piece was deemed to be irrelevant. All titles were addressed and candidates were comfortable with them.

### **Component 3: portfolio**

It was pleasing to note there is an increasing number of different pieces of portfolio work, moving away from the very traditional and well-used pieces of literature. Although there will always be a place for these pieces of literature, the main thrust for the candidate must always be to ensure they display their knowledge of and engagement with the chosen area of study.

### **Component 4: performance**

Most candidates were well prepared and confident, choosing to talk about their areas of study

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

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

Candidates continue to find questions 7 and 8 the most challenging. A number spend a disproportionate amount of time re-writing chunks of the text and then translating these chunks, in an attempt to address question 7.

For some candidates, translation continues to be very challenging. They fail to produce a translation that is as logical, coherent and accurate in English as it was in the original German — often as a result of some very basic errors of tense and gender.

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

In Listening there were some very basic errors that detracted from the overall candidate performance, eg identifying comparatives and dealing with numbers accurately.

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

### **Component 3: portfolio**

The title should be carefully chosen. If too wide, too obscure or simply not one the candidate identifies with, it proves challenging and can put candidates at a disadvantage from the start of the portfolio process.

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

The main challenge here is for candidates to understand they cannot just be allowed to repeat learned material — they must be prepared to talk about all areas of the STL form.

### **Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates**

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

As well as setting out to be as precise in their answers as possible, candidates should be encouraged to complete the questions in the given order, thereby not attempting questions 7 and 8 at the beginning. Taking the questions in order helps the candidate gain a deeper understanding of the text.

Question 7 should be answered in terms of the whole text. There is no need to re-write large parts of the text or translate large parts of the text.

Candidates should be encouraged to look upon the translation as an exercise that demands accuracy and precision. They should ensure their final version in English flows in a sensible manner.

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

In listening candidates must pay particular attention around numbers, dates etc, and they must also pay attention to the use of the comparative or superlative.

Discursive Writing demands accuracy too. Candidates must be taught to plan essays and under the pressure of time, not forget the grammatical accuracy and knowledge they have developed prior to Advanced Higher.

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

The title is crucial and must be negotiated with each candidate, to ensure they are comfortable with the title they are working towards delivering.

Centres with multiple candidates are still, in some cases, having all candidates working towards the same title, contrary to SQA guidelines.

Centres should also ensure that literary texts selected were originally written for German speakers. There is also no need for candidates to translate in full any German quotes they include in their essay.

Centres should ensure flyleaves are completed properly.

Candidates have the best opportunity to produce their best piece of work when SQA guidelines are adhered to.

**Component 4: performance**

Talking must not be seen in isolation. There has to be preparation throughout the session. Candidates, while able to indicate a preferred area for discussion, must be able to cover all areas of the STL form.

## Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	146
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	172
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### Statistical information: Performance of candidates

#### Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	49.4%	49.4%	85	140
B	22.7%	72.1%	39	120
C	13.4%	85.5%	23	100
D	6.4%	91.9%	11	90
No award	8.1%	-	14	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will 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.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings 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.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ 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.