Course Report 2014

Subject	German
Level	National 5

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Summary of the Course assessment

In 2014, the first year of National 5, 2193 candidates took the examination at 135 centres, the vast majority (96.8%) coming from S4.

57.9% of candidates were able to achieve an A grade, 20.8% of those a band 1.

92.9% of candidates were able to achieve a grade A–C.

There are two components to the National 5 examination in German: Listening, and Reading and Writing are assessed by question paper (Paper 1 and Paper 2 respectively); Component 2 is a Performance assessing Talking. It is internally devised and assessed by presenting centres, and externally verified by SQA.

Reactions to the examination from centres and practitioners were overwhelmingly positive, and centres and practitioners are to be congratulated on the high standard of candidate performance.

Component 1: Question paper

Listening

The average test score in Listening was 14.7 out of a maximum test score of 20.

After consideration, Listening was less demanding than might have been expected. For example, it was felt that too many marks were given for numbers, in whatever context, although numbers were not tackled well by candidates.

Reactions from Markers and also Examiners would indicate that the level of challenge of the Listening paper would need to be increased in the future.

The question of the level of challenge in Listening was addressed at Grade Boundary meeting.

Reading

The average test score in Reading was 20.6 out of a maximum test score of 30. . Online feedback indicated that Reading was 'as expected' and 'was of an appropriate standard'.

Writing

The average test score in Writing was 14.2 out of a maximum test score of 30. This would indicate that the Writing assessment performed, on the whole, to standard.

Component 2: Performance— Talking

In Talking, most candidates had been presented at the right level and performed well: the average score in Talking was 24 out of a maximum score of 30.

The Marking Instructions for the presentation and conversation, including the natural element, were used appropriately and many centres provided commentaries on candidate performances with specific reference to aspects of the pegged mark commentaries provided in the Marking Instructions, eg comment on fluency, accuracy, range of vocabulary etc. Many centres used the Modern Languages Performance 'Assessment Record' document to record commentaries about the sections of each of their candidates' performances.

In terms of the recommended duration of the talking performance, centres are advised to refer to the 'Modern Languages Performance: Talking General Assessment Information' document.

All centres provided audio recordings of the performances as appropriate to the task.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question Paper

Listening
Candidates performed very well in Listening. A number of candidates were able to attain the full range of marks.

Reading
Candidates also performed very well in Reading. Again, some candidates were able to attain the full range of marks.

Writing
In Writing, candidates performed best in bullet-points 1–4, the 'predictable' bullet-points. Nearly all candidates had difficulty with the bullet-points 5 and 6, the more 'unpredictable' bullet-points.

Component 2: Performance — Talking

As stated above, most candidates had been presented at the right level in Talking and performed well. Generally speaking, candidates performed well in the talking performance. The majority of externally verified candidate performances scored 'Satisfactory' and above for the presentation and conversation sections. The natural element was also mainly awarded 'Satisfactory' and above.

Presentation section
In most cases, candidates performed more confidently in this section of the talking performance, with many well-structured and fluent performances. Generally, this section of

the talking performance provided an opportunity for candidates to show control of the language.

Conversation section

In general, candidates performed well in the conversation section and were able to sustain an interaction based on the same or related topic in relation to the presentation context. 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.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1

Listening

Questions 1a, 1dii, 1e, 1f and 2a were particularly well answered, with over 90% of candidates being able to achieve the marks for the questions.

It was noted by markers that some candidates had developed very good skills to deal with exam questions: during the time given at the beginning of the exam to read through the

questions, they had taken the time to underline key words in the questions; and during the listening process, they had also developed the skill of note-taking rather than attempting to write the full answer while listening.

Reading

Questions 1(c)(i), 2(a), 3(a) and 3(b) were particularly well answered, with over 85% of candidates being able to achieve the marks for the questions.

Writing

In bullet-points one to four, there was evidence of a good range of vocabulary and structures and some very complex language. Markers highlighted a good degree of accuracy and fluency in the first four bullet-points.

Component 2: Performance —Talking

Presentation section

In this section, most externally-verified performances highlighted that candidates could perform successfully and were well-prepared for the assessment task. Most candidates relayed ideas and opinions about their chosen topic using detailed language and structures as appropriate to National 5. Generally, candidates demonstrated a range of vocabulary and structures that were relevant to the chosen content focus, and handled grammar accurately. This is as may be expected in the most predictable section of the talking performance. Where candidates could show a variety of tenses, this was often attributable to the context or topic, some of which provide greater scope for candidates to achieve this.

Conversation section

Most candidates coped well with this section and were able to respond to questions with responses that were relevant and demonstrated understanding of the questions put to them by the interlocutor at normal speed. Some candidates were able to take some control of the direction of the conversation by asking questions of the interlocutor, and this worked well in some instances and provided evidence of a natural conversation.

Where candidates performed well, they were able to demonstrate use of detailed language and structures, most of which were likely to have been recycled from learning and teaching activities relating to the chosen topic. Usually, candidates who performed well in their responses demonstrated little hesitation, having given thought to their opinion, or to the possible content of their answers ahead of the assessment event. A good range of open-ended questions from the interlocutor provided candidates with more opportunity to expand on answers and use detailed language**.**

Natural element

In the main, among the candidates who performed well in this sub-section were those who were able to respond well to questions, ask questions of the interlocutor, and use idiomatic or conversational phrases that would be used naturally in an interaction. In general, candidates coped better with the conversation section where they could reasonably cope with unexpected questions, and could either say they had not understood or could ask for repetition and rephrasing of questions using the language.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1

Listening

Question 1(c): The vagaries of expressing time in German were not well known and *halb fünf* was misunderstood as meaning 'half-past five'.

Question 1(d)(i): Almost half of candidates did not understand *fünfzig* in the expression €6.50, referring to an hourly wage.

Question 1g: Concern was expressed at the Marker Briefing that in the Overall Response Question there was not enough differentiation between the correct answer and the wrong answers — that at least one of the 'wrong' answers, ('her opinion of the work she does and of what she gets paid'), could have genuinely been acceptable. This has been noted.

Question 2c: Most candidates did not understand *Geige.* Candidates who managed to achieve a mark opted for *Schulorchester*.

Many candidates who opted for *Arbeitsgemeinschaften*, wrongly guessed 'homework/study clubs'.

Question 2d: Approximately 60% of candidates failed to answer correctly—many failed to make it clear that Annika was studying three **foreign** languages.

Question 2g: Many candidates did not give sufficient detail that Lara left school **at 16** or **this year**. Many candidates wrote that she was working as a vet and many misunderstood *mit Tieren* as 'with pets'.

Reading

Question 1(a): Candidates who did not achieve full marks in the question failed to mention both elements of the answer, '**with a teacher**, **in a small group**.' Also, some candidates failed to mention 'discuss their **work'**.

Question 1(b): Candidates who did not achieve full marks in this question failed to compare pupils' performances before and after attending the COOL-Center and did not mention the comparative 'better'. Other candidates mistranslated *Freiheit* as 'free time'.

Question 1(c)(ii): Candidates mistranslated *kennen lernen* as 'to learn'.Others guessed the meaning of *Angst* as 'anxiety' or 'She was anxious'.

Question 1(d): Many candidates failed to indicate the comparative forms of the adverbs '**more** clearly', '**more** slowly' in their answers.

Question 2(c): Many candidates did not give enough details to achieve a mark — 'special offers twice a week on **tickets**' or candidates mistranslated *Karten* as 'cards'.

Question 2(d): Many candidates failed to observe the superlative form of the adjective in the answers—*die **neusten** Kinohits.*

Question 2(e): Many candidates failed to mention the fact that the seven 3D films to appear in cinemas were **German**/**made in Germany**.

Question 3d: Many candidates who failed to achieve the first mark, had not indicated the **overuse** of chemicals by German factories — *eine Menge chemische Produkte.*

It was also noted by Markers that, in Reading, some candidates lost marks through a lack of attention to detail.

Writing

Bullet-points five and six gave candidates the biggest problem: Markers noted a 'huge gulf' between the two parts of the Writing paper, highlighting a marked deterioration in candidates' control of the language system and the inability of many candidates to frame simple questions accurately in German.

Component 2: Performance — Talking

Centres should encourage candidates to develop and use strategies to make their conversations more 'natural' or 'spontaneous' — there are examples of this in Key Messages reports. It should also be noted that interlocutors also have a key role in making a conversation 'natural'. Generally, in both the presentation and conversation sections, the areas candidates found more challenging were general accuracy and adjectival agreement in particular. Pronunciation of some common words and phrases proved problematic for some candidates and, at times, pronunciation and intonation impacted on understanding of what was being said. In some less successful performances, candidates' delivery was hesitant and there was other-tongue interference.

To varying degrees, most candidates found the conversation section more difficult than the presentation. Some candidates had not fully prepared for the type of questions that could be asked in relation to their chosen topic and therefore found it challenging in places to respond with the detailed language and types of structures expected at National 5. Consequently, some of the language used in responses by some candidates was too limited and lacking in the detail and accuracy expected. Also, some candidates' performances offered little flow and, indeed, in a few conversations there was an overreliance on prompting from the interlocutor.

Some candidates were unable to understand questions, and either one-word answers or an irrelevant answer (in relation to the question) meant that candidates performed less successfully in this section (or parts of this section

In some instances, prolonged conversations meant that candidates' performances became increasingly less accurate and less confident as they struggled to sustain the conversation.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1

Listening

As stated above, Markers noted evidence of highlighting key words (especially question words) during the silent time on the CD, and also evidence of note-taking during the first playing of the German. As the monologue **and** dialogue were not a feature of Listening at either Standard Grade or Intermediate 2, this is to be encouraged.

In 'tick box' answers, although most candidates do tick the correct boxes, it would be worthwhile for practitioners to remind candidates that one mark will be deducted for each box ticked over and above the required number of ticks. This also applies to Reading.

Reading

In Reading at National 5, and also in Listening, the Extraneous Material Rule, which was a feature of marking at Standard Grade, no longer pertains. Extraneous, or wrong, detail mentioned by the candidate, will be ignored by markers, **unless the detail directly contradicts another element in the candidate's answer**.

Secondly, where a candidate has left an answer blank, but has crossed out the correct answer in a note in the margin, for example, the candidate receives credit for the answer. This also applies to Listening.

Writing

One comment on Writing stated, 'The inclusion of questions in the Writing paper was not something we have seen before'. This comment is noted, but, as the Writing is an e-mail of application for employment, it was thought that asking a small number of questions, for example about the working hours, the pay and time off work, was fair, quite predictable and had been a feature of Writing at Intermediate 2.

As a guide or clue to the 'unpredictable' bullet-points in Writing, it would be worth practitioners' while going through the 'unpredictable' bullet-points in other languages.

Component 2: Performance — Talking

In Talking, the focus of the first round of Verification in session 2014-15 will be 'Understanding Standards', which will clarify assessment approaches for National 5 Performance and also for internal assessment generally.

To prepare candidates, centres should continue to refer closely to the *National 5 Modern Languages Performance: Talking General Assessment Information* document and the *National 5 Modern Languages Performance: Talking Assessment Task*. Both these documents should be considered in conjunction with the *Productive Grammar Grid for National 5 Modern Languages.*

Centres should continue to guide candidates in relation to the types of structures, phrases, vocabulary and grammar that might be used during the talking performance, and should advise candidates in relation to detailed language. Some candidates performed with greater success and accessed higher pegged marks with contexts that lend themselves more easily to using a greater variety of structures and tenses. Centres should consider this in advance of the assessment event, advising candidates accordingly.

Some centres encouraged candidates to personalise their presentation and/or use a range of contexts or topics for the presentations (from the same centre). It is good practice to encourage this. In a few cases, the context of the conversation section elicited responses from candidates that included the same (or very similar) vocabulary and structures that were used in the presentation.

While centres can use a variety of methods to record candidates' performances, centres are kindly requested to verify the quality of the audio recording before submitting to SQA for external verification.

External verification activities highlighted that in some cases where candidates' presentations were extended in length, this impacted on the candidates' ability to sustain the conversation section using detailed language. Centres are encouraged to advise candidates on the length of their proposed presentation. Conversely, some performances were shorter than the recommended duration, and this meant that in some cases candidates were unable to access the higher pegged marks.

Finally, the interlocutor plays an important role in managing the assessment event to ensure that candidates get the most out of their talking performance. Interlocutors are encouraged to use a wide variety of open-ended questions that will allow the candidate to expand on answers. Interlocutors should also be mindful to remain flexible and to tailor the length of conversation section. For example, interlocutors can support candidates by gauging how the candidate interacts on the day of the assessment event, and can shorten or lengthen the intended duration of the conversation section as appropriate.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	0

Number of resulted entries in 2014	2206

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	57.7%	57.7%	1273	72
B	21.3%	79.0%	470	62
C	13.6%	92.6%	300	52
D	3.2%	95.8%	71	47
No award	4.2%	-	92	-