



Course Report 2015

Subject	German
Level	National 5

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 examinations. 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 and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

In 2015, the second year of National 5, there were 2,172 entries, 21 down on 2014. There was an increase, however, in the number of presenting centres, 160 in 2015, as opposed to 135 in 2014. There were 42 new centres, presenting candidates at National 5 for the first time. The vast majority of candidates (90.8%) came from S4 and 5.5% came from S5.

There was a wider range of ability in 2015: 50.9% of candidates were able to achieve an A grade, 18.0% of those a band 1, as opposed to 57.9% and 20.8% respectively in 2014.

88.7% of candidates were able to achieve a grade A–C, as opposed to 92.9% of candidates the previous year.

In 2015, 11.3% of candidates were awarded a grade D or No Award, compared to 7.1% in 2014.

In a change from 2014, in 2015 there are four components to the National 5 examination in German: Component 1 – Reading, Component 2 – Writing, Component 3 – Listening and Component 4 – Talking. Components 1, 2 & 3 are assessed by question paper.

Component 4 is a Performance, assessing Talking. This component is internally devised and assessed by presenting centres, and externally verified by SQA.

Reactions to the examination from centres and practitioners, teachers, markers and examiners, were very positive, and centres and practitioners are to be sincerely congratulated on the high standard of candidate performance.

Component 1: Question paper — Reading

The Reading paper comprised three items or texts of equal difficulty and weight (10 marks for each item). The Reading paper covered the contexts of Learning, Culture and Employability. The average test score in Reading was 18.5 out of a maximum test score of 30. This is down by 2.1 on 2014.

Online commentary and commentary from markers indicated that Reading was ‘of an appropriate standard’, ‘accessible texts’, ‘clear questions’, ‘very fair paper’.

Component 2: Question paper — Writing

The Writing paper required the candidates to apply for a job in reception at a hotel in Germany, by addressing six bullet points, four of which are ‘predictable’ (ie unchanging each year) and two of which are ‘unpredictable’ and which change each year. The average test score in Writing was 13.6 out of a maximum score of 20. This average is down 0.6, compared to 2014.

Reaction to this paper has been positive, and markers note that the vast majority of candidates were more than able to cope with at least the first four bullet points of the Writing paper.

Component 3: Question paper — Listening

The Listening paper consisted of two items: a monologue worth 8 marks, including an overall purpose question, and a dialogue worth 12 marks. The paper was based on the context of Society. The average test score in Listening was 14.2 out of a maximum test score of 20. This average is 0.5 down on 2014.

Despite candidate performance being slightly down compared to 2014, it was noted by markers, and in online commentary, that Listening was less demanding than might have been expected.

Component 4: Performance — Talking

This internally-assessed Course component consists of two elements: a presentation on a topic of candidates' choice, and a follow-up discussion. Candidates were allowed to use notes for their presentation. However, notes were not allowed in the follow-up discussion.

Candidates were also assessed on their ability to sustain a natural conversation.

It would appear that some candidates had been guided by the centre in their choice of Presentation topic. While this is understandable where there are large numbers of candidates, or where candidates are taught in bi-level groups, care must be taken to provide candidates with every opportunity for personalisation and choice.

All centres verified this year used the SQA guidelines for the Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment — National 5 Performance: Talking. The difficulty was therefore the same from candidate to candidate.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper — Reading

Overall, candidates also performed well in Reading. Some candidates were able to attain the full range of marks. Of the three texts, the second text, about Lisa Wiedermann spending time in India, proved the trickiest for candidates.

Component 2: Question paper — Writing

In Writing, candidates performed best in the first four bullet points, the 'predictable' bullet points. The majority of candidates did attempt all the bullet points, although many encountered difficulty with the last two 'unpredictable' bullet points.

Component 3: Question paper — Listening

Candidates performed very well in Listening. The full range of marks was accessible to a good number of candidates. The vast majority of candidates were able to make an attempt at all the questions. As stated above, Listening was less demanding than might have been expected.

Component 4: Performance — Talking

In the internally-assessed component, almost all candidates passed, which indicates that centres are presenting the vast majority at the right level. Overall, the level of candidate performance was high, with many accessing marks in the Good or Very Good category for at least one element of the performance.

Some candidates were unable to sustain detailed language as appropriate to National 5 level. In the presentation, some candidates seemed to struggle with the complexity of the language or the topic they had chosen.

In the conversation, where interlocutors asked a good range of open-ended questions, this provided greater scope for candidates to effectively use detailed language to express a wide range of ideas and opinions. Where more closed questions on factual topics were asked, candidates seldom gave responses that used vocabulary and structures in line with the 'Very Good' or 'Good' categories.

There was a level of inconsistency in approach and in marking of the natural element part of the conversation. Some centres were too lenient in awarding marks, especially where conversations seemed to lack spontaneity and sounded rehearsed.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper – Reading

In Reading, candidates performed particularly well in Questions 1(a), 1(c), 1(d)(ii), 2(c), 2(f) and 3(a), with over 80% of candidates able to achieve the mark for these questions.

Component 2: Question paper – Writing

Commentary from markers indicated that there were examples of some excellent language in the first four bullet points.

Candidates were, on the whole, prepared well for the 'predictable' bullet points, and were able to write at some length on each of these.

Component 3: Question paper – Listening

In Listening, candidates coped best with Questions 1(a), 1(b), 2(a), 2(b), 2(d), 2(e)(ii) and 2(g) with over 80% of candidates managing to achieve the mark for the question.

In Question 2(f), a three-mark question, 81% of candidates managed to achieve at least 2/3 for this question. In attempting the third point, however, many candidates contented themselves with 'They were interesting', misunderstanding *die gleichen Interessen*.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper – Reading

Question 1(b): Many candidates mistranslated *alle neunzig Minuten* as ‘all 90 minutes’, which is meaningless. Many candidates therefore, thought that the breaks between studying were 90 minutes long.

Question 1(d)(i): A number of candidates failed to gain a mark for this question because they misunderstood *mit einer Freundin* as meaning ‘with friends’, not understanding that *Freundin* is feminine singular.

Question 1(e): Candidates continue to guess *Angst*, as ‘anxiety’, or even ‘angst’. These translations were not accepted.

Question 2(a): Many candidates failed to appreciate *die Hälfte meiner Reisekosten*, ‘half of my travel costs’. ‘Travel, trip and journey costs’ were accepted, but not ‘half my flight costs’.

Question 2(b): Candidates demonstrated a degree of confusion in answering this question — ‘contact between young people’ was the correct answer and ‘tolerance between the two countries’.

‘Understanding between the two countries’ was not accepted, as this was given as an option in the Overall Response Question and the German word was *Toleranz*.

Question 2(d): Candidate lost marks in this question, owing to lack of attention to detail; a common answer was ‘a good party with Indian food’. The examining team insisted on an indication of regularity, as the German had given *jeden Abend*, ‘every evening’.

Question 2(e): Some candidates got the elements of the answer, ‘two weeks, with a church group, in Hamburg/Germany’ but candidates often did not make it clear in their answers that the three boys had also taken part in the trip to Hamburg.

Question 3(b): Most candidates manage to achieve 2/3 for this question, but failed to get all three marks because of a lack of detail. It was thought unacceptable to say, ‘It was creative’: the candidate had to be specific that ‘the work was creative’. Many thought wrongly that ‘working with your hands’ was synonymous with ‘manual work’. It was not enough to answer, ‘You can experiment’ — the examining team insisted on ‘experiment with new ideas’.

Question 3(c): A number of candidates did not get the second mark for this question because they confused *kaufen* and *verkaufen* and answered that the

cake had been bought in the cake shop and not sold in the cake shop.

Question 3(d): Candidates were given the mark for 'exams', as the majority had not addressed the verb *ablegen* (to pass, sit). There were many examples of poor expression — for example, the translation of *neue Talente entdecken und entwickeln* as 'new talents to discover and develop', which is English word order and does not show an understanding of the infinitive as gerund.

Question 3(e): There was an example of misuse of the dictionary in some candidates' answers to this question: the use of 'to close personal contacts' and even 'close personal contacts' showed a lack of understanding of the verb *schliessen* in this context.

Component 2: Question paper – Writing

Markers noted that the last two bullet points were less well done than the predictable bullet points. This, however, did not mean that the points were difficult. It's clearly easier when candidates can prepare what to write. Although most candidates 'stayed the course', it was also clear that some candidates were not prepared to go further than the bullet points they had been able to memorise.

Component 3: Question paper – Listening

Question 1(c): Candidates did not have too much difficulty in obtaining 1/2 for this question, usually answering 'on Wednesdays'. They had more difficulty in getting the second mark: 'every **second** weekend or **four** weeks in the school holidays'. Frequently, candidates did not get **second** weekend or **four** weeks.

Question 1(d): Candidates' answers were frequently badly expressed: 'He spends the **beginning** with his mother' — candidates really needed to express that Erik spent **Christmas** with his mother. Candidates were thrown by *Meinen Vater besuche ich* and translated this as 'My father visited me', thus misinterpreting the direct object as first idea in the sentence.

Question 1(e): Candidates frequently did not get the mark, because their answers lacked detail: 'He was good at it', focusing on *gut*, rather than *gute Noten*, 'good **marks/grades/results**'.

Question 2(b): The examining team were obliged to accept an answer, such as: 'It was good', as 'relationship' was mentioned in the rubric, but the team were convinced that candidates were only focusing aurally on *ganz gut*.

Question 2(e)(i): Very many candidates did not understand **Klavier** (piano) and many various spellings of 'clarinet' were offered.

Question 2(g): Many candidates lost marks in this question through lack of attention to detail: 'jogging in the park', 'playing football in the school team' and 'go regularly to the cinema'. It was thought by the examining team that the demand for detail should not be beyond N5 candidates.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper — Reading

In common with the Listening paper, candidates often missed out on marks by not giving enough detail in their answers.

It is also clear from responses that candidates need more practice in dictionary skills: eg the difference between *kaufen* and *verkaufen*, the meanings in context of *alle*, the meanings in context of *schliessen*. Candidates should also be reminded to use the dictionary with care and not always choose the first entry.

Centres should ensure that candidates have a sound knowledge of grammar outlined in the Grammar Grid for National 5.

Candidates should be encouraged to read each question carefully and perhaps to underline the key word or words in the question, which will lead them to the answer in the text.

Candidates should also be encouraged to read their own answers carefully to ensure they make sense in English.

Component 2: Question paper — Writing

It should be made clear to candidates that there is now no requirement for them to use the introductory and closing formulae which were given at Intermediate 2. This formality is not required in an e-mail application. Also, the formulae are rarely reproduced accurately.

As highlighted last year, 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, especially French, Spanish and Italian.

Centres should also ensure that candidates are aware of the criteria to be used in assessing Writing, so that candidates know what is required in terms of content, accuracy and range and variety of language to achieve the Good and Very Good categories.

Component 3: Question paper — Listening

In Listening, candidates should be guided by the number of marks awarded for each question, and should give as much detail in their answer **as they have understood**.

Candidates should be discouraged from attempting guesswork, as a contradictory answer could incur a penalty.

Centres should ensure that candidates are able to give **accurate** answers through confident knowledge of numbers, common adjectives, weather expressions, days of the week and question words, so that some of the 'easier' points of information are not lost through lack of sufficiently accurate details.

Candidates should also be discouraged from giving alternate answers using an oblique line (/). Candidates lost a mark in Listening by writing 'every two weeks/on the weekend', which examiners took to mean '**either** every two weeks **or** on the weekend'. Had the candidate omitted the oblique line, he/she would have got the mark, as 'every two weeks on the weekend' would mean 'every second weekend', which was the correct answer. This point also applies, of course, to Reading.

Markers noted that there was increasing evidence of note-taking in Listening. Centres are to be congratulated on this and the practice should be encouraged.

Component 4: Performance — Talking

Centres are advised to implement regular talking activities in the German classroom to develop the natural element of response on a regular basis. By doing this, candidates might show more confidence in using spoken German and enhance their productive language skills altogether.

Presentation

Centres are advised to provide guidance for candidates on the level of language they should be able to cope with, and should ensure comprehension of their Presentation before learning it. It is also recommended that centres provide candidates with an opportunity for personalisation and choice regarding their presentation topic.

Conversation

Interlocutors should carefully consider the type of questions they ask. They should also bear in mind the different requirements of National 5 and Higher when conducting assessments. Asking candidates the same questions at both levels is likely to disadvantage candidates at one level or the other. Candidates perform better when they have open-ended questions rather than closed questions on factual topics. Interlocutors should allow candidates time to answer as this will support candidates in accessing upper pegged marks in the conversation.

Most centres had employed a range of techniques to enhance the natural element part of the conversation. While centres are to be commended for encouraging candidates to ask the interlocutor questions, these should arise naturally from the interaction.

Centres are advised to refer to the Productive Grammar Grid for National 5 to inform their choice of questions to candidates.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	2206
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	2188
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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 - 100				
A	50.9%	50.9%	1113	72
B	19.3%	70.2%	423	62
C	18.2%	88.4%	398	52
D	5.2%	93.6%	113	47
No award	6.4%	-	141	-

The Listening component of the course assessment proved to be slightly easier than intended, resulting in the retention of a 2-mark upward adjustment from the notional difficulty levels.