



NQ Verification 2015–16 Key Messages Round 2

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Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	German
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	June 2016

National Courses/Units verified:

H27T 74	National 4	Added value unit
C734 75	National 5	Performance: talking (IACCA*)
C734 76	Higher	Performance: talking (IACCA)
H7X6 77	Advanced Higher	Specialist study unit

* Internally assessed component of course assessment

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Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Added value unit

It was pleasing to note that the approaches to assessment used by centres that were selected for verification were all 'accepted'. This demonstrates that centres have followed guidelines and made use of the feedback and support provided by SQA in publication updates, the verification key messages and at events (for nominees and practitioners) during 2014–16. This should be reassuring for practitioners and is to be commended.

Some centres have used centre-devised assessments to assess their candidates reflecting the approach set in the published added value unit assessment support pack. This has allowed for personalisation and choice. The tasks were on the whole appropriate, varied and on interesting topics.

Centres must include the texts and a judging evidence table if they have used a centre-devised assessment to assess candidates. It is also recommended that they include an adapted judging evidence table when using a translation and an adaptation of the SQA-produced unit assessment support pack: *Modern Languages Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit*.

Centres should feel free to reformat the assessments provided in the unit assessment support packs by slightly amending the questions, the texts or the layout to suit their candidates' needs while maintaining the standards.

It is recommended that centres refer to the unit assessment support pack: *Modern Languages Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit* for guidance regarding length of texts, level of challenge and difficulty to ensure that the language is straightforward and that the questions are supportive and appropriate at National 4. Some centre-devised texts were slightly beyond National 4 level so more supportive questions would have better supported candidates.

Centres are reminded that assessment standard 1.3 exemplification in judging evidence suggests the interlocutor should ask 'at least four questions' of the candidate. Centres are reminded that there is no need to exceed this. Candidates rarely benefit from prolonged conversations.

Centres are reminded to refer to the most up-to date unit assessment support packs when conducting assessments. The added value unit has three assessment standards. Centres should ensure that tasks in reading, and the judging evidence table, meet the updated assessment standards.

Centres are reminded that there is no requirement for an 'overall purpose' question in the reading tasks of the added value unit. The overall purpose question is part of assessment standard 1.1 of the Understanding Language unit only.

Centres should be mindful of the level of language and contexts expected for National 4 candidates when selecting texts for use in the added value unit.

Centres are reminded that the topic of the presentation given by the candidate to address assessment standard 1.2 should relate back to the texts chosen for assessment standard 1.1. Equally, the questions asked by the interlocutor to address assessment standard 1.3 should relate back to the topics covered in 1.1 and 1.2.

Specialist study unit

The logbook produced by SQA and located in the unit assessment support pack of the specialist study unit was used by most centres.

It was encouraging to see that candidates worked through the process to meet assessment standards 1.1 and 1.2 in preparation for their portfolio.

In all cases candidates chose appropriate primary and secondary sources to meet the requirements for the specialist study unit. All additional secondary sources accessed should be fully cited with details of full website address and date accessed.

In all cases candidates chose an appropriate focus for the specialist study unit which gave rise to an analytical approach to the texts studied.

In some instances the evidence selected for analysis was not enough to give depth of argument. Centres are reminded that a range of sources for evidence is required.

Centres are reminded of the [continuing professional development materials on the specialist study unit](#) which are available.

National 5 and Higher performance: talking (IACCA)

All the centres verified in this round used the SQA guidelines for the internally assessed component of course assessment — *National 5/Higher Modern Languages Performance: talking assessment task*.

The quality of the performances was generally good across both levels.

In line with the *National 5/Higher Modern Languages performance: talking assessment task*, centres are reminded that the presentation and follow-up conversation must be carried out in a single assessment event, ie the presentation must be followed by the conversation during the single recording of the performance.

Candidates must use detailed language at National 5 and detailed and complex language at Higher in the performance. At these levels, long lists of more than two or three items (eg places in town, school subjects) or repetitions of straightforward descriptions (eg hair and eyes) are unlikely to allow candidates to use a suitable range of structures and vocabulary.

Specifics in relation to the presentation

In the presentation, a small number of candidates seemed to struggle with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen. Centres should provide advice to candidates as to what level of language they should be able to cope with and should ensure comprehension of their presentation in preparation for delivering it. Topics for this part of the performance should normally be taken from 'Appendix 3: Context development' of the Course Support Notes.

A few presentations were significantly long or short and affected the candidates' performances. Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the presentation should last, so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5/Higher as provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information*.

Specifics in relation to the conversation

Interlocutors should make a natural link between the topic chosen by the candidate for the presentation and the beginning of the conversation. Starting the conversation with a question unrelated to the presentation does not aid the natural flow of the performance.

Interlocutors should try to avoid asking closed questions, especially for more able candidates.

For the most part, interlocutors were supportive, especially with nervous candidates. Where interlocutors were aware of candidates' interests, this helped more natural/spontaneous conversations.

A few conversations were unnecessarily prolonged or significantly short and affected the candidates' performances. Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the conversation should last, so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5/Higher as provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information*.

Many assessors referred to other contexts in the course of the conversation which allowed for personalisation and choice. Naturally moving on to other contexts or topics also allows the candidates to demonstrate a variety of language. On occasions, where candidates were asked questions about the same topic/context as in their presentation, candidates were often limited to repeating parts of their presentation in their answers. Centres should therefore try to avoid asking questions about items that candidates have already addressed in the presentation. At Higher, centres are reminded that the conversation must lead into at least one other context. Centres should ensure that questions are chosen so that the conversation flows naturally and gives further opportunity for personalisation and choice.

Some centres were overly prescriptive in preparing candidates for the conversation. Conversations should be as spontaneous as possible for the level assessed. A small number of conversations appeared to be excessively rehearsed. It is recommended that centres ask a range of questions adapted to the responses of each candidate rather than asking the same questions to the whole cohort. A wider variety of questions in the conversation can aid candidates to develop strategies to cope with the unexpected (in line with Appendix 1 of the *Modern Languages performance: talking, General assessment information* which is available from SQA's website).

Assessment judgements

Added value unit

Again, it is pleasing to report that almost all the assessment judgements made by assessors in centres have been 'accepted' as they were in line with national standards.

Many centres have clearly justified how they made their assessment judgements. This should be commended. This is good practice as it is very useful and appropriate for internal and external verification purposes.

Detailed commentaries about each candidate's performance are very useful for internal and external verification purposes; however, it is acknowledged that this approach can be time-consuming. Therefore, a detailed checklist for each candidate's performance can be just as useful for the verifier, and more practical for the centre. This could also be used as effective feedback to candidates.

Centres should merge in-house information on judging evidence with judging evidence tables to create one document to demonstrate how assessment judgements are made.

Specialist study unit

The centres in the small sample verified in this round of verification were all accepted as their judgements were in line with national standards.

Whilst the record of the analysis of the evidence to meet assessment standard 1.2 does not have to be in essay format, centres are reminded that candidates should meet this assessment standard by making 'a number of detailed points' as suggested in the judging evidence table.

National 5 and Higher performance: talking (IACCA)

It is pleasing to report that a large majority of centres have applied the marking instructions for the performance in talking accurately and in line with national standards.

It is important that assessors only use the most up-to-date Marking Information Grid for the talking performance at National 5/Higher, in conjunction with the National 5/Higher Grammar Grid to make their assessment judgements. Referring to previous examination procedures (eg 'good', 'satisfactory') is not necessarily beneficial since the format of the assessment has changed. Evidence of 'dialogue' between the assessor and the internal verifier in the form of checklists or notes was very useful. It is however essential for the centre to provide a final mark. This mark should be recorded on the Verification Sample Form under the heading 'Mark'.

Specifics in relation to the sustaining the conversation element:

- ◆ There was some inconsistency in approach and in marking. Some centres were too severe in awarding marks.
- ◆ Candidates do not necessarily have to ask a question in the conversation to gain marks for this element. Some centre incorrectly justified not awarding pegged mark 5 when candidates did not ask any questions.
- ◆ In some cases, candidates paused — briefly — during the conversation to think about their answers; this is a natural part of a conversation. Assessors should give candidates appropriate time to think and respond. However, if candidates struggle to answer certain questions, assessors should try to

support the candidate by rephrasing, asking another question or changing the topic.

- ◆ Some conversations sounded more natural as candidates answered with a mixture of longer and shorter answers and it was clear it was not scripted. Using scripted conversations may not allow candidates to meet the criteria for the top pegged marks in the performance. Instead, candidates could prepare for their conversation thinking about the type of questions the assessor is likely to ask on their chosen topic and thinking about what key words the interlocutor is likely to use in his/her questions.
- ◆ Examples of how candidates could demonstrate their ability to sustain the conversation include the following:
 - a mixture of extended and shorter answers (ie not a suite of short presentations/monologues)
 - appropriate thinking time
 - natural interjections ('also/ na ja/ hmmm')
 - acknowledgement that they have understood the question ('das ist eine gute Frage/ darüber habe ich noch nie nachgedacht/ da bin ich mir nicht sicher'). Some centres included a brief commentary to describe how the candidate showed how they had understood through non-verbal means the question/ response from the interlocutor
 - asking questions that are relevant to the conversation and at relevant times
 - sustaining the conversation, asking for repetition or clarification (eg 'wie bitte? kannst du/ können Sie die Frage bitte wiederholen?')

This is not an exhaustive list and one example from the above list on its own may not be sufficient to be awarded full marks.

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Section 3: General comments

Added value unit

Overall candidate performance was appropriate for this level and in some cases candidates went beyond what is expected at National 4.

For the assessment of talking and listening in the added value unit assessment standards 1.2 and 1.3, there is no requirement to submit an audio recording of candidate work. However, audio-recordings allow verifiers to provide more detailed and useful feedback to centres.

If no audio recording is submitted, centres must submit a detailed checklist or commentary with some examples of what each candidate says referenced against each assessment standard for the outcome.

It is recommended that centres use a range of open-ended questions to allow candidates to meet assessment standard 1.3. This will allow candidates to demonstrate that they can handle straightforward language and use a reasonable

range of vocabulary appropriate to National 4. Candidates should also be encouraged to answer unexpected questions. Performances should not be scripted in advance and should allow for personalisation and choice, although candidates should be made aware of the type of questions they could be asked on the selected topic. Some centres prepared and supported candidates by asking the same questions, but also included some unexpected questions to facilitate a more natural conversation.

Unnecessarily prolonged presentations and conversations affected the candidates' performance in a detrimental way. Centres are advised to follow SQA guidelines more closely.

Centres should avoid asking questions in the follow-up conversation where the information has already been addressed in the presentation.

Some centres have detailed their quality assurance procedures, which is to be commended.

Specialist study unit

Centres can adapt the SQA logbook or create their own as long as it is supportive for the candidate and illustrates how the assessment standard has been met, particularly the analysis for assessment standard 1.2.

Candidates need to demonstrate clearly that analysis has taken place by providing enough evidence of analysis to meet assessment standard 1.2. This may include a series of ideas for analysis, relevant quotes which relate clearly to the focus. Centres should refer to the two exemplars of a completed specialist study unit available on SQA's website.

If selected for verification of the specialist study unit, centres should note that it is not necessary to include the final portfolio essay in the submission of candidate evidence.

National 5 and Higher performance: talking (IACCA)

Centres submitted candidates' performances on CDs and memory sticks. It is recommended that centres check the sound quality of the CDs, and MP3/4 files that are submitted for verification. In the case of CDs, it is essential that they can be played on a range of devices and not solely on the device used for recordings. We recommend that USB keys are put into a separate envelope within the large brown envelope and that this is sealed and labelled.

Most centres clearly labelled candidate evidence, which is necessary for the verification team to proceed with the verification process.

Centres should leave blank the SQA verification mark column on the Verification Sample Form as this will only be completed by the nominee verifiers if marks for the talking performance are changed.

Centres must include a breakdown of the marks (presentation + conversation + sustaining the conversation) for each candidate and the total mark must be entered on the Verification Sample Form.