



Course report 2023

Advanced Higher German

This report provides information on candidates' performance. 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. You should read the report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022: 110

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 80

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|----|------------|------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|-----|
| A | Number of candidates | 49 | Percentage | 61.3 | Cumulative percentage | 61.3 | Minimum mark required | 138 |
| B | Number of candidates | 17 | Percentage | 21.3 | Cumulative percentage | 82.5 | Minimum mark required | 118 |
| C | Number of candidates | 13 | Percentage | 16.3 | Cumulative percentage | 98.8 | Minimum mark required | 98 |
| D | Number of candidates | 1 | Percentage | 1.3 | Cumulative percentage | 100 | Minimum mark required | 78 |
| No award | Number of candidates | 0 | Percentage | 0 | Cumulative percentage | 100 | Minimum mark required | N/A |

Please note that rounding has not been applied to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper: Reading and Translation

The reading and translation paper performed as expected. The paper was fair in terms of course coverage and the overall level of demand was appropriate for the level. The topic of the text, loneliness and isolation, was current and comprehensible to candidates.

The translation offered appropriate challenge to candidates, with some sense units allowing exceptional candidates to show their grasp of linguistic nuance.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening and discursive writing 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 topics for item 1 (technology in German schools) and item 2 (the German school system and future plans) were accessible as both are relatable to most candidates.

The discursive writing paper proved challenging for many candidates. All four essay questions were attempted; however, the most candidates chose to respond to the society and learning essay titles.

Portfolio

The candidates performed slightly better in the portfolio than in previous years. There were no language in work portfolios.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected, with many candidates taking full advantage of the opportunity to showcase excellent preparation across a variety of high-level topics, using sophisticated language.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates found the text accessible and attempted the questions well. Only a few candidates did not attempt all questions.

The overall purpose question proved challenging, with many candidates failing to access the upper marks of 5 or 7. Many had difficulty going beyond giving a summary of the text. Markers noted that, on occasion, candidates failed to give an introductory statement to answer the question, 'What was the author's purpose in writing this text?'

Candidates who were successful in the overall purpose question used excellent inferencing skills, asking themselves, 'So what?', 'What is implied by this line from the text in a wider context?', and commented on language choice and features used by the author to further emphasise what the purpose of the text was.

Some candidates found the translation challenging, and the three main areas were:

- ◆ understanding in German whether a noun or verb is in its singular or plural form
- ◆ identifying when *die* is a relative pronoun, as opposed to the definite article (*Aber auch Menschen, die aktiv am sozialen Leben teilnehmen, die einen großen Freundeskreis...*)
- ◆ lack of awareness of what constitutes good English, rendering the translations awkward (earlier or later, friend circle, suffer under a lack of nearness)

Candidates who performed well in the translation displayed an excellent level of idiomatic English, coupled with a good grasp of the grammatical challenges in each sense unit.

A few candidates chose to do the overall purpose question and/or translation question before attempting all the other questions. This strategy is often disadvantageous to candidates as they do not have the full context of the text.

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The listening topic was one that was familiar to candidates' own experience, especially in item 2 (school and future plans) and was well done by most candidates.

In discursive writing, questions 3 (society) and 4 (learning) accounted for most of candidates' responses. Markers noted that this was the paper that candidates struggled most with due to a poor grasp of basic grammatical structures and lack of accuracy in spelling. However, essays that accessed the upper range of the marks contained idiomatic language, a high level of accuracy in both grammar and vocabulary choice appropriate to Advanced Higher level, and a structure that was clear and enabled the reader to understand in which direction the essay would go. They demonstrated a strong conclusion, which summarised the arguments presented in the preceding 250 words.

The marking team noted a significant decline in the presentation of candidates' work and handwriting skills.

Portfolio

Most candidates chose sources that had been used in previous years, for example *Der Besuch der alten Dame*, *Das Leben der Anderen*, *Andorra* and *Jenseits der Stille*. Notable exceptions were *Das Wunder von Bern*, *Der Untergang*, *Der Erinnerungsfälscher* and an increase in candidates discussing *Russendisko*.

A number of candidates chose essay titles that did not lend themselves to an analytical approach and led to a re-telling of the plot. In some cases, candidates focused their entire submission on a scientific study relating to the main theme of their text, but hardly wrote any analysis on the actual book itself. A few candidates with an essay title that had several parts to it failed to address all parts.

Candidates who performed well in the portfolio chose a question that led to critical analysis, for example 'To what extent is the author, or director successful in...' and provided several considered examples to back up the thesis. These candidates proofread their submissions and took an analytical/critical approach, with reasoned and relevant arguments.

Most portfolios contained a bibliography.

Performance–talking

Most candidates were well-prepared and gave confident performances. They were able to talk about the topics noted in the Subject Topic List (STL). Popular topics of conversation included all aspects of the environment, renewable energy, global warming, technology and its effects on society, gender equality, and school systems in Germany and Scotland.

Candidates who accessed the upper range of marks reacted in a natural way to the visiting assessor's questions or comments. They could seek help in German if they were struggling, use learned material but maintain a natural flow. They completed the STL form fully with plenty of scope for conversation.

Candidates who performed less well had not completed their STL forms with enough detail or had inserted a list of questions. The content of their topics of conversation was poorly organised and they had trouble maintaining the flow of a natural conversation or resorted to seeking clarification in English.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Teachers and lecturers should:

- ◆ share and discuss marking information, including pegged mark descriptors (portfolio, performance, and discursive writing) with candidates
- ◆ make use of support materials published on SQA's Understanding Standards website to help prepare candidates for the course assessment
- ◆ encourage candidates to access past papers available on SQA's website

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ adhere to all line references given: these help and guide candidates through the text
- ◆ give as precise answers as possible, checking for qualifiers that may be required to gain the mark
- ◆ tackle the questions in the given order and not to attempt the overall purpose question and translation before completing the comprehension questions. If the candidate works through the questions, that should provide a deeper understanding of the text and a stronger foundation for answering the overall purpose question and completing the translation
- ◆ infer the meaning of the main parts of the text in order to produce a response to the overall purpose question, which is analytical and inferential in nature
- ◆ avoid rewriting or merely translating large parts of the text as a response to the overall purpose question
- ◆ know there is nothing to gain by rewriting numerous lines from the text as a quotation. The inclusion of a short phrase or single word to demonstrate a point being made is acceptable and valid
- ◆ incorporate translation practice as an exercise in accuracy and precision throughout the year, with a focus on ensuring the resulting English translation is in good, idiomatic English
- ◆ pay close attention to the function of seemingly simple words

Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ pay particular attention to any numbers, dates, times and years, and listen out for any qualifiers or other adjectives (*fast, circa, ungefähr, quasi, knapp*) as well as any comparatives or superlatives, as these are likely to be assessed
- ◆ listen to sophisticated, authentic language throughout the year, and develop note-taking skills well in advance of the exam
- ◆ are aware of the importance of relevance and accuracy in their discursive writing

- ◆ practise planning essays and, under pressure of time, concentrate on the grammatical accuracy of the language
- ◆ practise adapting essays they have written to suit various scenarios, for example 'how could I use an essay I have written on the importance of language learning to respond to the essay title: Maths and English are the most important subjects on the curriculum?'
- ◆ use bank structuring phrases to give a polished response
- ◆ practise and develop both skills throughout the year

Portfolio

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ are aware that the title is crucial, and they should formulate one which leads to a critical and analytical response
- ◆ discuss the literature text or media selected for study with them to ensure that the text chosen is not an immediate barrier, for example if the film or book has little scope for analysis or is of an inappropriate level. Teachers and lecturers need to look carefully at the literature text each candidate selects
- ◆ know they should not translate any quotes they include in their essays. Translated quotes might lead markers to think the text has been read in translation only
- ◆ fully reference quotes in their essays
- ◆ follow SQA guidelines to have the opportunity to produce their best piece of work. For example, candidates who chose a film study (media) need to ensure that they have included two sources in the modern language. The instructions to candidates clearly state that a film script does not count as a second source.

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ have opportunities to practise their conversational German throughout the session to prepare for the visiting assessor
- ◆ can adapt pre-learned material to the conversation, and ensure that it is not a scripted dialogue
- ◆ fill in the STL form in a comprehensive way, by identifying topics and sub-topics they would like to discuss. They should not include a list of questions they would like to be asked but should give sufficient detail about topics they are comfortable discussing
- ◆ have a bank of phrases which they can use to elevate their performance–talking to a more sophisticated level, as well as ones that they can use to seek clarification in German

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade 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 for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).