Course report 2023

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:   504

Number of resulted entries in 2023:   520

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	335	Percentage	64.4	Cumulative percentage	64.4	Minimum mark required	81
B	Number of candidates	76	Percentage	14.6	Cumulative percentage	79	Minimum mark required	68
C	Number of candidates	60	Percentage	11.5	Cumulative percentage	90.6	Minimum mark required	56
D	Number of candidates	29	Percentage	5.6	Cumulative percentage	96.2	Minimum mark required	43
No award	Number of candidates	20	Percentage	3.8	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

The 2023 Higher German course assessment offered flexibility, personalisation, and elements of choice to candidates. It consisted of balanced question papers that accommodated a range of candidates.

There was a slight increase in the number of candidates presented for Higher German this session.

Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, the reading question paper performed as expected. It presented candidates with an article about school stress and how to deal with its causes and consequences. Overall, candidates coped well with the question paper and the comprehension questions.

The translation, with complex and detailed language and a focus on grammar as well as the accurate use of English, proved to be more challenging than expected for some candidates, particularly the translation of the future tense and model verbs into English and the identification and correct translation of a relative clause.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Candidates were given the choice of two scenarios: scenario 1 (culture) on a visit to Germany and a German Christmas market with school or college, and scenario 2 (employability) on a summer job in a hotel in Germany.

Both scenarios and their six bullet points were designed to be open, to allow candidates an element of personalisation and give them more control over their writing.

Some candidates chose scenario 1 (culture); however, many candidates opted for scenario 2 (employability). Bullet points in both scenarios were accessible and accommodated a range of candidates. They allowed candidates the freedom of adding information and creating some flair. The principle of choice in the directed writing question paper benefitted candidates in general.

The directed writing question paper performed as expected. The marks achieved suggest there was an improvement of study and time management skills.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening question paper performed as expected, and most candidates found it accessible. The question paper presented candidates with a monologue on the topic of how young people in Germany spend their free time, and a dialogue on the topic of a young person's free-time preferences.

The listening question paper, in its structure and content, allows progression from the National 5 course assessment and topics. This resulted in good responses by many candidates; however some candidates found the paper challenging. This was taken into account when setting grade boundaries.

Assignment–writing

The requirement to complete the assignment–writing was removed for session 2022–23.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected. All centres verified this session used SQA's guidelines for the internally assessed component of the course assessment: Higher Modern Languages performance–talking assessment task.

At this level, candidates are required to interact in a discussion and cover at least two contexts. The recommended duration of the discussion is between 8 and 10 minutes.

Markers applied the marking instructions in line with national standards.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, candidates' responses were good, and most did the comprehension questions well.

Questions 1, 4(b) and 6 proved to be accessible to most candidates. Question 7 (the overall purpose question) saw some very good responses where candidates have used their National 5 and Higher English skills and applied these to answer the analysis question.

Candidates with a sound knowledge of German and English grammar did particularly well in the translation. Many candidates displayed very good time management skills.

Candidates with a good knowledge of German tenses and an understanding of the function of relative clauses, with an awareness of their English equivalents, performed better in the translation.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Most candidates performed well in the directed writing question paper, addressing all bullet points, and using pre-learned material to complete the task. Their knowledge of the perfect and imperfect tenses, as well as of German word-order and sentence structure, was evident. A few candidates went beyond the demands of the bullet points adding information and flair to their responses.

Candidates with a sound knowledge of German word-order and tenses performed better.

Candidates with good exam and time management skills were more successful in completing the question paper.

Question paper 2: Listening

Overall, candidates' responses varied in quality and level of detail. Questions 1(b), (c) and 2(d) proved to be accessible for most candidates and questions 1(a) and 2(a), (e) to (i) were done well.

Candidates with a wide range of N5 and Higher vocabulary performed better in the listening comprehension.

Performance–talking

Most candidates had prepared well, and this was reflected in the high quality of most performances. The candidates' selection of topics allowed them to use a range of tenses, structures, and vocabulary appropriate to each level and to the chosen topics.

All candidates chose at least two contexts for the discussion at Higher and demonstrated detailed and complex language.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

In some cases, candidates' responses were imprecise, or candidates missed out details that were required to gain marks.

Question 2(b): was challenging for many candidates due to dictionary misuse and understanding of separable verbs (*umgehen* had to be understood as 'to deal with' rather than 'to avoid' or 'to go round').

Question 5(a): many candidates missed the signpost between the question and the passage ('solve the problem' – *die Lösung des Problems*) which pointed them to the information that was required to be understood to achieve the mark.

There were a few no responses to question 7 (overall purpose question), suggesting some candidates struggled with time management. This was taken into account when setting grade boundaries.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Many candidates chose scenario 2 (employability) and some candidates chose scenario 1 (culture). Overall, candidates submitted varied responses of different quality. Some candidates struggled to use a range of tenses, especially the conditional (*würde*), which was required in bullet point 6 in both scenarios.

Although there were fewer candidates who seemed to struggle with time management, there was evidence of some incomplete essays (three bullet points or more not addressed) or no responses. Candidates who relied on pre-learned material performed less well in this question paper. A few candidates failed to demonstrate control of the language, and this showed in their responses to different bullet points (scenario 1 bullet point 3 and scenario 2 bullet point 4), which showed little or no development.

Question paper 2: Listening

Overall, candidates found some of the questions in this paper more challenging than expected and were not able to provide the detail and accuracy of responses as expected at Higher level.

Questions 1(d) and (e)(i): candidates' responses were not specific enough to gain the mark.

Question 1(e)(i) and (ii): some candidates struggled to understand the reflexive verb *sich interessieren für* and its subject-object relation, which was necessary to gain the mark.

Question 2(b): many candidates were unable to apply understanding of the perfect tense and basic vocabulary, in this case the days of the week, preventing them from achieving a mark.

Question 2(g)(i): the concept of volunteering in a soup kitchen appeared to be unfamiliar for some candidates who offered responses such as 'supermarket' or 'Zumba club'.

Performance–talking

Overall, most candidates coped well with the discussion at Higher, although some candidates found it difficult to sustain the conversation as the discussion progressed.

A number of discussions were unnecessarily long or too short. In particularly when conversations and discussions were too short, candidates were unable to demonstrate detailed and complex language.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: Reading

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ have ongoing timed assessment opportunities to support them in developing exam skills

♦ analyse the comprehension questions and the reading passage. This helps them to learn to distinguish between relevant and redundant vocabulary

♦ approach the reading task holistically, which helps with a successful response to the overall purpose question

♦ are encouraged to use transferrable literacy skills from National 5 and Higher English classes, which helped some candidates in their successful analysis of the passage this year. This skill is especially relevant for those who wish to continue their studies in an Advanced Higher German course where the reading passages require more analysis

Teachers and lecturers should consider the role of native language knowledge (grammar and lexicology) as well as the interconnected nature of European languages. A focus on enhancing wider literacy skills and dictionary skills could help candidates to improve English and German skills.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ study all bullet points carefully before choosing between the two scenarios

♦ remember that the first bullet point has two parts, both of which must be addressed to access all marks

♦ address all other bullet points in full

♦ use pre-learned material adequately

♦ practise spontaneous talking or writing to learn how to control the language with confidence

♦ have a sound knowledge of verbs and their ability to appear in different tense forms in German, with an awareness of their English equivalents

Teachers and lecturers should make use of the examples of candidates' responses with commentaries on marks awarded on SQA's Understanding Standards website.

Question paper 2: Listening

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ continue to practise developing vocabulary knowledge with focus on lexicology and semantic use of words in sentences

♦ are aware of the similarities between English and German with special consideration of the Scots language. Candidates with an awareness of the interconnected nature of language and the roots of the Scots language are likely to become more successful listeners and learners of German

♦ do constant repetition and practice of vocabulary in connection with monologue and dialogue tasks in the classroom

♦ access authentic material to develop listening comprehension for successfully understanding German

♦ remember to check their responses to ensure their written answers make sense and answer the question

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

♦ have a range of strategies to cope with unpredictable elements of the task

♦ have a range of strategies when asking for questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to say when they have not understood an aspect of the discussion

♦ are encouraged to give their opinions, including reasons for their opinion and for some candidates, a degree of evaluation

♦ remember to cover at least two different contexts

♦ try to use detailed and complex language at this level to access the top range of marks

Teachers and lecturers should make use of the Understanding Standards materials for Higher German talking performances (IACCAs) published on SQA's secure website.

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.