



# **Course report 2024**

## **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 with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

# Grade boundary and statistical information

## Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 80

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 95

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

<b>A</b>	Number of candidates	70	Percentage	73.7	Cumulative percentage	73.7	Minimum mark required	140
<b>B</b>	Number of candidates	11	Percentage	11.6	Cumulative percentage	85.3	Minimum mark required	120
<b>C</b>	Number of candidates	4	Percentage	4.2	Cumulative percentage	89.5	Minimum mark required	100
<b>D</b>	Number of candidates	6	Percentage	6.3	Cumulative percentage	95.8	Minimum mark required	80
<b>No award</b>	Number of candidates	4	Percentage	4.2	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

We have not applied rounding 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 statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our 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 level of demand. The topic of the text, combining studying with practical work experience, 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 and flair in English.

### **Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing**

The listening and discursive writing paper performed in line with expectations. The paper was fair in terms of course coverage and level of demand. The topics for item 1 (youth engagement in politics) and item 2 (the environment) were accessible and relatable to most candidates. The discursive writing paper proved challenging for many candidates. All four essay questions were attempted; however, most candidates chose to respond to the learning and culture essay titles.

### **Portfolio**

There was a slight decrease in candidates' performance in the portfolio, compared to last year. There were no language in work portfolio submissions.

### **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. Although there is no direct translation of *das duale Studium*, this did not prevent candidates from giving high quality answers. Most candidates dealt with this well, either by leaving it in the original German, as it is in the introductory sentence of the text, or by paraphrasing it. A few candidates did not attempt all questions.

Many candidates found the overall purpose question challenging and did not gain the upper marks of 5 or 7. Many candidates had difficulty going beyond giving a summary of the text. A few candidates did not 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 sense unit is in the active or passive voice (*Man wird auf eine bestimmte Karriere vorbereitet*)
- ◆ identifying when *die* is a relative pronoun, as opposed to the definite article (*Es sind die Besten der Besten, die dual studieren*)
- ◆ lacking awareness of what constitutes good English, rendering the translations awkward ('is not for the weak nerves', 'which job direction', 'notably is the following fact')

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 yet have the full context of the text.

## Question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Most candidates coped well with the listening paper, especially in item 2 (the environment). The question that had the highest no response from candidates was question 2(d)(ii), where the expected answer was 'almost half' (*fast die Hälfte*), indicating candidates were unfamiliar with this term.

In discursive writing, questions 4 (learning) and 6 (culture) accounted for most candidates' responses. Many candidates who attempted question 3 (you can choose your friends, but not your family) were less successful. Markers noted that most candidates struggled with this paper due to a weak grasp of basic grammatical structures and lack of accuracy in spelling.

Essays that achieved the upper range of marks contained idiomatic language, a high level of accuracy in both grammar and vocabulary choice appropriate to the level, and a structure that was clear and enabled the reader to understand which direction the essay would go. They demonstrated a strong conclusion, which summarised the arguments presented in their piece of writing.

## Portfolio

Most candidates chose sources used in previous years, for example *Der Besuch der alten Dame*, *Das Leben der Anderen*, *Andorra*, *Jenseits der Stille* and *Der Vorleser*. A small number of candidates submitted pieces on *Das Wunder von Bern*, *Der Erinnerungsfälscher*, *Lola Rennt* and *Tschick*.

Some candidates who chose essay titles that did not lend themselves to an analytical approach and instead led to a retelling of the plot, could only access the lower marks in the range. Some candidates selected quotations that had some relevance to the title of the essay but led to a plot description and not to analysis.

Some candidates included the only additional source to a media portfolio in the form of a screenplay and could only achieve a maximum of 15 marks.

Candidates who performed well in the portfolio chose a question that led to critical analysis, for example 'To what extent is the author and/or director successful in...' and provided several considered examples to back up their position. These candidates proofread their submissions and took an analytical and/or critical approach, with reasoned and relevant arguments. Candidates achieving the higher marks often consulted background materials on their focus of study and had integrated the findings of these into their essays.

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, as well as benefits and challenges of a multicultural society.

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 and 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.

The reinstatement of the portfolio as a topic of discussion in the performance–talking, allowed most candidates the opportunity to talk about a topic they had studied in depth during the course. Few candidates struggled with this part of the exam.

## 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
- ◆ attempt the questions in the given order and not to tackle 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 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: Online learning is more difficult than traditional lessons?’
- ◆ 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
- ◆ are not responding to exactly the same question, using the same quotations and bibliography, and that they attempt the task using critical and independent thinking
- ◆ know they should not translate any quotes they include in their essay. Translated quotes might lead markers to think the text has been read in translation only
- ◆ fully reference quotes in their essay
- ◆ follow SQA’s guidelines in the [Advanced Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) 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, while ensuring 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 that 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.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).