



Course report 2025

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 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 95

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 105

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	62	59.0	59.0	140
B	21	20.0	79.0	120
C	17	16.2	95.2	100
D	4	3.8	99.0	80
No award	1	1.0	100	Not applicable

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 or equal to 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, doing a trial semester at a university abroad, was relevant to candidates. The translation offered appropriate challenge to candidates, with some sense units allowing 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 as expected. The paper was fair in terms of course coverage and level of demand. The topics for item 1 (working from home) and item 2 (post-school plans) 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 the learning essay title.

Portfolio

The portfolio performed as intended. The standard of candidate responses for the portfolio was higher this year. There were no language in work portfolio submissions.

Performance—talking

The performance—talking performed as expected, allowing many candidates to show excellent preparation across a variety of high-level topics, using sophisticated language.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates attempted most comprehension questions and most gave enough detail to show a good understanding of the text. Where the ideas were less well known to candidates, for example that some universities would not accept students under the age of 18, most coped well and managed to come up with a way of expressing this in English. A few candidates did not attempt all questions.

Most candidates found question 4(b) challenging. Many were not able to identify the two nouns *Anmeldeformular* und *Abschlusszeugnis*. Compound nouns were more problematic this year than in previous years, for example some candidates were unable to give the English terms for *Stundenplan* or *Grundstudium*.

Where there was more than one meaning to choose from, some candidates chose the wrong meaning, or they missed the reflexive pronoun. For example in line 43, *weil sie sich mit den Gasteltern nicht verstand*, some translated as 'she didn't understand the host family.' In line 19, *gestiegen sei*, some translated as climbing (as in sport), rather than increase.

Some candidates did not number their answers correctly, which led to confusion and missed marks.

The overall purpose question was dealt with in a range of ways, with varying degrees of success. 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 were able to figure out the overall purpose from a chosen sentence, what the wider impact was. Many candidates chose to comment on language choice and features used by the author to further emphasise what the purpose of the text was; however, this was not always done successfully as there was very little imagery in this text.

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

- understanding in German whether a sense unit is in the active or passive voice, for example *Deshalb sollten sie nur mit Vorsicht verglichen werden*
- identifying when *wer* is a relative pronoun, as opposed to the question word *Wer zum Beispiel Ingenieur werden will*

Candidates who performed well in the translation displayed an excellent level of idiomatic English, along 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 1 (working from home). The question with the highest no response from candidates was question 2(e)(iii), for which the answer was ‘He doesn’t have the patience’, indicating that many candidates were not familiar with this term in German. Some candidates confused *Polizist* with politician and did not gain the marks.

In discursive writing, all essay titles were addressed, and question 4 (learning) was the most popular title. Some candidates displayed very original ideas in their content.

Many candidates found this paper challenging 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 identify the points that would be discussed. They demonstrated a strong conclusion, which summarised the arguments presented in their piece of writing.

Portfolio

There was a narrower selection of sources this year, but one or two new ones were introduced, for example *Schuld*, by Ferdinand von Schirach. Many candidates chose sources used in previous years, including *Der Besuch der alten Dame* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Das Leben der Anderen* by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, and *Der Vorleser* by Bernhard Schlink.

Some candidates chose essay titles that did not lend themselves to an analytical approach and instead led to a retelling of the plot, and they 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 multilingualism. A few candidates chose to speak about their school trips to Germany and the effects that this had on their learning and outlook.

Candidates who accessed the upper range of marks had completed the STL form fully, with plenty of scope for conversation and 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 attempted to answer questions fully and tended not to give short answers.

Candidates who performed less well had not completed their STL forms with enough detail and were not prepared for some of the assessor's questions. The content of their topics of conversation was poorly organised and they found it hard to maintain the flow of a natural conversation or resorted to seeking clarification in English.

Discussion of their portfolio 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
- are aware of SQA's numbering conventions, for example 2(a), 2(b)(i), 2(b)(ii), 3(a), 3(a)(i)..., and ensure they put the correct answer beside the right number-letter combination
- give precise, detailed answers, checking for qualifiers that may be required to gain the mark
- attempt the questions in the given order and do not tackle the overall purpose question and translation before completing the comprehension questions.
Working through the questions in order provides 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 only translating large parts of the text as a response to the overall purpose question. Instead, choose key points and explain what the impact of these points is, beyond the text

- 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 they are making is acceptable and valid
- incorporate translation practice as an exercise in accuracy and precision throughout the year, with a focus on ensuring the English translation is in good, idiomatic English
- pay close attention to the function of seemingly simple words
- make full use of [SQA's Advanced Higher Modern Languages web page](#), including course reports, marking instructions for Advanced Higher Spanish and past papers

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 of SQA's current position statement on the use of [generative artificial intelligence \(GenAI\) in assessments](#)
- write the same essay title on the flyleaf and their actual essay
- keep the essay short and to the point, and avoid long complex titles
- are aware that the title is crucial, and they should formulate one that leads to a critical and analytical response
- discuss the literature text or media selected for study 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
- 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
- refer to the guidelines in the [Advanced Higher Modern Languages Course Specification](#) to know what they need to do to access the higher marks. For example, candidates who choose to study a film in a literature or media-based portfolio, must include two sources in the modern language. The instructions clearly state that the screenplay of that film does not count as an additional 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 enough 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

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

For most National Courses, we aim 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, we hold 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 our 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. We 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.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).