



Course report 2025

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.

For information about the performance–talking, which is internally assessed, please refer to the 2024–25 Qualification Verification Summary Report on the [subject page](#) of our website.

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: 552

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 600

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	339	56.5	56.5	83
B	96	16.0	72.5	71
C	90	15.0	87.5	59
D	43	7.2	94.7	47
No award	32	5.3	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

The 2025 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. The course components performed as expected.

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

Question paper 1: Reading

The question paper performed as expected. The text was an article about camping holidays. Candidates coped well with the comprehension questions. The inclusion of questions allowing for a range of acceptable answers allowed candidates more flexibility and choice in their responses.

The translation proved to be more challenging than expected for some candidates. This was evident in the first two sense units, where candidates found identification of the future tense difficult. The grade boundary was adjusted to take account that candidates who were unable to identify the correct tense in sense unit 1 would also have the incorrect tense in sense unit 2.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Candidates had a choice of two scenarios: scenario 1 (society) on staying with a host family in a German-speaking country, and scenario 2 (learning) on a school visit to a German-speaking country. The question paper performed as expected, with most candidates opting to answer scenario 1.

Both scenarios and each of their six bullet points allowed candidates an element of personalisation, giving them more control over their writing and allowing them to add information and creative flair.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening paper performed as expected. Candidates listened to a monologue on the introduction of the four-day working week in Germany, and a dialogue about an eco-friendly travel agency in Berlin. Although the concepts were unfamiliar for some candidates, the language was familiar and compensated for this.

The listening question paper, in its structure and content, allows progression from the National 5 course assessment and course topics, resulting in some good responses.

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing performed as intended. Candidates produce a piece of discursive writing, using detailed and complex language in response to the stimulus.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

- most candidates' responses were good, and they answered the comprehension questions well
- questions 1, 2, 3, 4(a), and 7: were accessible to most candidates
- question 8, the overall purpose question: some candidates gave very good responses where they used their National 5 and Higher English skills
- question 9, the translation: candidates with a sound knowledge of German and English grammar did well. Candidates with a good knowledge of German tenses (future, present and perfect), comparatives, and an understanding of differing word order in German and English achieved higher marks
- candidates with good exam and time management skills were more successful in completing the question paper

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

Question paper 2: Listening

Candidates' responses varied in quality and level of detail.

- questions 1(d), 2(d), (e) and (f): were accessible for most candidates
- questions 1(c) and 2(c)(ii): most candidates answered well
- candidates with a wide range of vocabulary performed better in the listening comprehension

Assignment–writing

Most candidates performed well in the assignment–writing, with the choice of topics allowing them to address the task fully. Candidates with a sound understanding of discursive or persuasive writing gained higher marks.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

- some candidates' responses were imprecise, or lacking in sufficient detail required to gain marks
- question 4(b): was challenging for many candidates as they misunderstood the verb *sparen* (to save). Some candidates missed out the verb in their responses and did not gain the marks
- question 8, the overall purpose question:
 - there were a few no responses, suggesting difficulty with time management
 - many candidate responses lacked justification or analysis, and they could not gain both marks
 - some responses were repetition of previous answers

- question 9, the translation:
 - some candidates were unable to identify and translate the correct tense in sense unit 1, sense unit 2, and in sense unit 5
 - a few candidates were unable to translate the comparative in sense unit 4
 - in sense unit 1, *Ostsee* was often mistranslated as 'East Sea', rather than 'Baltic Sea'

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Most candidates chose scenario 1 (society) and some candidates chose scenario 2 (learning). Candidates submitted varied responses of different quality.

Some candidates struggled to use a range of tenses, and a few demonstrated an over-reliance on pre-learned material, producing a response without consideration for the bullet points. This was evidenced in bullet point 6 in scenario 2, where a few candidates wrote that they would recommend the experience, rather than whether they would repeat the experience as the bullet point required. Candidates who relied on pre-learned material performed less well in this question paper.

There were fewer candidates who struggled with time management; however, there was evidence of some incomplete essays, for example three bullet points or more were not addressed.

Question paper 2: Listening

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

In the monologue, some candidates did not understand the concept of a four-day working week:

- question 1(a): some incorrectly answered that employees would earn less
- question 1(e): some responses were not specific enough to gain the mark

In the dialogue:

- question 2(a): some candidates did not understand the concept of holidays without planes/flights (*Urlaub ohne Flugzeug*)
- question 2(b): a few candidates did not understand 'more and more' (*immer mehr*)
- question 2(g) and (h): some candidate responses were not specific enough to gain the mark

Assignment–writing

Although most topics chosen allowed candidates to address the task fully, some of the choice of topics were more suited to Advanced Higher.

Some candidates did not provide a clear essay structure, write in paragraphs, use discursive language, and/or provide an appropriate conclusion.

There was inconsistency in how some candidates presented the stimulus: most candidates provided the full stimulus in English, some provided an abbreviated version, and some only gave the title of their essay. A few responses gave no indication of a stimulus or title.

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 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: this helped some candidates to analyse the passage successfully. These skills are especially relevant for candidates who wish to study Advanced Higher German, where the reading passages require more analysis

Teachers and lecturers should consider the role of more fluent 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:

- read 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

- know they must address each bullet point. If three or more of the bullet points are not addressed, the mark awarded would be 0, as detailed in the marking instructions
- 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:

- 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

Assignment–writing

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- are aware of SQA's current position statement on the use of [generative artificial intelligence \(GenAI\) in assessments](#)
- avoid writing in pencil or a gel pen
- chose an assignment–writing stimulus that is appropriate to the level
- are familiar with the nature of discursive and persuasive writing
- are aware of discursive language resources in German and how to use them effectively
- remember to write in paragraphs and draw a conclusion
- view examples of discursive writing on SQA's [Understanding Standards web page](#) to better understand the style of writing required in the assignment–writing

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](#).