Course Report 2016

Subject	German
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation

The question paper is worth a maximum of 50 marks and was structured in the same way as the specimen question paper.

The question paper performed in line with expectations, and the marking team were clear in their thoughts that the paper was completely fair in terms of course coverage and the overall level of demand.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

The question paper is presented in two parts worth a combined maximum of 70 marks. It, too, was structured in the same way as the specimen question paper.

The question paper was judged to be fair in terms of course coverage and level of demand.

Component 3: portfolio

The new approach to the portfolio has worked well. With now only one piece of work to submit, candidates had greater scope to tackle their chosen specialist topic.

Component 4: performance – Talking

Visiting assessors reported that the vast majority of candidates were well prepared and confident in their talking performance.

Overall

The course assessment performed as intended.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates tackled all questions well. There were very few who did not attempt all questions.

It was clear that candidates benefited from the revised format which directs them to the areas of the text where answers to specific questions lie.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Again all questions were tackled by the vast majority of candidates. The topic of the Listening passages was clearly one which candidates could identify with.

This year we were pleased to note there was a clear drop in the number of essays which were not relevant to the chosen title.

Component 3: portfolio

The new portfolio requirements are an improvement. With only one piece of writing (with an upper word limit of 1500) to submit, candidates now have more scope to produce a more detailed, relevant and coherent piece of work, something many did do.

Component 4: performance — Talking

Most candidates were well prepared and confident. Some did, however, lack depth in conversation, especially when dealing with the chosen specialist study area

The introduction of a wider range of pegged marks was welcomed by all visiting assessors and made for fairer candidate assessments.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation

By far the weakest candidate response area is question 7, the inferential question.

While a number of candidates tackled the question well, a number struggle with the concept of the question, failing to comment on the article as a whole and back up their opinion with specific reference to the text.

For some candidates, translation is a problem area. They fail to adhere to the first principle of translation — that the piece to be translated makes complete sense in the original language, and therefore should do so in the translation.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Writing

In Listening there were no specifically demanding areas for candidates. There were however, a surprising number of very basic errors made, eg Item 1a 20% did appear incorrectly in answers as 10%.

Discursive Writing is demanding of candidates. Although this year saw far fewer essays that were classed as irrelevant, there continues to be a small group of candidates who attempt to shoehorn a pre-learned essay into a given title, often with limited success.

Component 3: portfolio

With this piece of work on-going through a large part of the school session, the main demand on candidates is perseverance and commitment to produce the best piece of work they can.

For some candidates there are extra self-imposed demands when they are writing to a title which is obscure, too wide and not personal to them

Component 4: performance — Talking

Success in this component demands practice throughout the session, building on the good practice of previous years of language learning.

All areas detailed on Form STL/AH should be open for a comfortable conversation between the Visiting Assessor and the candidate.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Translation

Candidates should be encouraged to think about Question 7 (the inferential question) in terms of the whole article. They should give opinions backed up by evidence from the article rather than just repeat points already made in their answers to question 1–6.

Additionally, candidates should be aware of the precision required in translation skills. Many translations were peppered with examples of bad dictionary skills, wrong use of tenses and wrong use of genders.

Candidates should also be discouraged from trying to complete Questions 7 and 8 (translation) before answering Questions 1–6.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Discursive Writing

Again candidates should be advised of the need for accuracy and precision in their Listening answers, especially around numbers.

In Discursive Writing planning of the essay is as crucial as relevance to the title. A well planned essay goes a long way towards success.

Component 3: portfolio

The title selected by the candidate is of paramount importance. Candidates must be comfortable with the title they select to work towards.

Centres should not impose the same title for all candidates. The lack of personalisation and choice is completely contrary to the SQA guidelines for the Portfolio

A number of candidates working towards the same essay title is not what is expected or required.

Component 4: performance — Talking

Candidates must have practice in this skills area throughout the session to develop confidence and go some way to dispelling nerves.

They must be fully aware they will be expected to cover all areas of the Form STL/AH which they have signed and submitted to SQA prior to the visit of the visiting assessor.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	0

Number of resulted entries in 2016	146

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	45.2%	45.2%	66	140
B	24.7%	69.9%	36	120
C	15.8%	85.6%	23	100
D	5.5%	91.1%	8	90
No award	8.9%	-	13	0

General commentary on grade boundaries

♦ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

♦ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

♦ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

♦ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.

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