



Course Report 2016

Subject	German
Level	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

Summary of the Course assessment

The Higher German course assessment 2016 had accessible Question Papers which took all grades into consideration and accommodated the full range of candidates.

The assessment reflected the Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles, offering flexibility, personalisation and an element of choice to candidates. The components of the exam were created with the following principles in mind:

- ◆ The principle of prior knowledge: relevant and familiar concepts in reading and listening items which reflect the course content of Higher.
- ◆ The principle of choice: flexibility of topic in Talk and a choice of two Directed Writing Scenarios.
- ◆ The principle of progressive linguistic development: lexical items and phrases as well as a level of demand which corresponds with the course content of Higher.
- ◆ The principle of coherence: course assessment element in reading and listening follow the National 5 pattern and language development.

The reading and listening papers proved less demanding than intended – primarily due to the choice of stimulus used. This was taken into account when setting the grade boundaries. Overall, candidate performance was very strong.

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Directed Writing

The Reading Exam presented the candidates with an article about aspects of successful learning in schools. Overall, candidates coped well with the question paper. The concept of pupils' responsibility for their own learning seemed to be an unfamiliar one for a majority of candidates. The principle of flexibility in responses has proved its value.

In the Directed Writing component, candidates were given the choice between two scenarios: Scenario 1 (Culture) on a stay with relatives in Germany; and Scenario 2 (Employability) on a holiday job work experience in Germany.

Both scenarios and their four bullet points were designed to be open to allow candidates an element of personalisation and give them more control over their writing. Most candidates preferred Scenario 1. Bullet points in both scenarios were accessible and accommodated a range of candidates.

The principle of choice in the Directed Writing has proven to be worthwhile for candidates with many of them achieving at least 'satisfactory'.

The translation was very well-received with complex and detailed language presented in an accessible manner. Most candidates were able to apply their translation skills and knowledge of language very successfully. The level of language in the translation was in correspondence with candidates' English skills.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Writing

The listening paper presented the candidates with a monologue on the topic migration from rural areas into big cities in Germany and a dialogue on the topic moving from a big city (Berlin) into the countryside. The follow-up writing topic focused on candidates' home area and their preferred place of living.

The contexts for both listening items reflect commonly taught aspects of citizenship in the contexts Society, Learning and Culture.

The listening exam, in its structure and contents, followed on from the National 5 course assessment and course topics. The principle of coherence has proven its value and resulted in some good, very good and excellent responses by candidates.

Component 3: performance – Talking

This internally-assessed course component has two elements: a presentation on a topic of the candidates' choice, and a follow-up discussion.

All centres verified this year used the SQA guidelines for the IACCA (Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment) — Higher Performance: Talking.

In the externally-verified sample of performances, the marking instructions for the presentation and conversation were, in the vast majority of centres, used appropriately. There was some inconsistency in approach and in marking with regard to the sustaining the performance element. Some centres were too severe in awarding marks.

Many centres provided commentaries on candidate performances with specific reference to aspects of the pegged mark commentaries provided in the Marking Instructions, eg fluency, accuracy, range of vocabulary etc.

Many centres used the Modern Languages performance 'Assessment Record' document to record commentaries about the sections of each of their candidates' performances. In terms of the recommended duration of the talking performance, centres are advised to refer to the 'Modern Languages Performance: Talking General Assessment Information' document.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Directed Writing

Although some candidates seemed to be unfamiliar with students' responsibility for their own learning, most candidates coped well with the demands of the text. Most candidates displayed good time-management skills in the reading paper, and some very good translations have been marked again this year.

As there was a line error and two minor spelling errors in some papers, these issues were addressed in the marking instructions to ensure that no candidate would be disadvantaged. For the second time, candidates were given the choice between two scenarios in the

Directed Writing component. These scenarios were open and allowed candidates personalisation and an element of control. Most candidates chose Scenario 1 (Culture) with many good and very good responses.

Some candidates developed the four bullet points very well, and created and added their own ideas and knowledge about localities in German cities and culture to the directed writing, which gave their essays a special flair. More detail could have been provided by some candidates in the second and third bullet point of Scenario 1 and the first and fourth bullet point in Scenario 2.

Most candidates showed good control of the perfect tense and German sentence structure and made good use of pre-learned material — especially for the first and the last bullet point. There were some outstanding Directed Writing performances this year, which would suggest that those candidates could be very successful Advanced Higher German candidates in the future.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Writing

Item 1 and Item 2 in the Listening paper contained concepts which most candidates appeared to be familiar with. There were some excellent and very good performances in both items, but some candidates appeared to be guessing rather than understanding.

The follow-up short essay questions on home area and future place of living enabled most candidates to produce some good and very good responses and correct use of present tense, future tense and/or conditional tense. A number of candidates described their home area and expressed their opinion using detailed and complex language very successfully. Good use of pre-learned material was made by some learners to write about future plans and their future place of living.

There were some outstanding performances, which might suggest that these candidates would be successful Advanced Higher candidates in the future.

The topics and sub-topics chosen for listening and short essay followed the principle of coherence and progressive linguistic development.

Component 3: performance – talking

Generally speaking, candidates did well in the talking performance.

For the candidates sampled during external verification, all performances scored 6 and above for the presentation and the vast majority scored 9 and above in the conversation section. For the sustaining the conversation element, with all verified candidates verified being awarded either 3 or 5 marks.

Presentation section

In most cases, candidates performed more confidently in this section of the talking performance, with many well-structured and fluent performances. Generally, this section of the talking performance provided an opportunity for candidates to show control of the language.

Conversation section

In general, candidates performed well in the conversation section and were able to sustain an interaction based on the same or related topic in relation to the presentation context.

Where interlocutors used a wide variety of questions in the conversation section, this often helped candidates to avoid recycling the same language and structures from their presentations into their conversations.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Directed Writing

The translation task revealed insecurity of some candidates' English grammar, resulting in some inaccurate translations.

In Question 4b, some candidates' answers' lacked detail. There was also a misreading of *einfach zu viele Fakten* which resulted in translating 'simple facts' rather than 'simply too many facts'.

In Question 5a, some candidates were unable to access all marks due to lack of detail (omitting 'more') or misunderstanding the word *Projektarbeit* and offering 'projector work' in their answers. There was also a misunderstanding of the word *Alltag* which a number of candidates translated as 'all day' rather than 'everyday life'.

In Question 5b, a number of candidates were unable to access all marks due to misunderstanding the phrase *eine spannende Geschichte* and translating 'exciting history' rather than 'an exciting story'.

In Question 10, not all candidates were able to provide essential information and relevant details from the text. The focus of answers was around the fun in learning, the use of modern technology and the responsibility of teachers in the learning process of pupils rather than pupils' responsibility for their own learning.

Component 2 – Listening and Writing

In Item 1 Question (a), most candidates were unable to access marks due to misunderstanding of German numbers (*siebzig* rather than *siebzehn*, and *neunzig* rather than *neunzehn*). The same feature occurred in Item 2 Question (e) where candidates misunderstood *nur zehn Kilometer*, and offered 'nineteen kilometres' rather than 'only ten kilometres'.

In Item 1 Question (d), candidates were unable to access marks due to a lack of detail (*jedes Jahr* — every year). In Item 2 Question (f), candidates with a sound knowledge of perfect tense in German performed better as this tense was required to access marks for this question.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper: Reading and Directed Writing

Most candidates displayed very good time management skills. Centres are to be commended for encouraging candidates to analyse the comprehension questions and the reading passage and distinguish between relevant and redundant vocabulary.

However, care must be taken that candidates also develop the literacy element of comprehension and approach the reading passage holistically.

Candidates with a sound knowledge of aspects of learning performed better in the reading exam; centres should always re-visit prior learning (National 4 and 5 grammar and lexical items) before stepping up into Higher German context development.

Candidates with translation skills performed better in Question 11. Centres are to be commended in advising their candidates on the difference between reading and translation skills. Please consider the vital role of native language grammar and lexical skills.

Candidates with a sound knowledge of German grammar performed better in reading as they understood the concept of compounds and syntax in connection with verbs in German sentences. This applies in particular to the translation but also to more detailed and complex reading.

Most centres prepared their candidates very well for the directed writing paper. Their approach to consolidation knowledge of perfect tense and German sentence structure is to be commended.

There was evidence of good use of pre-learned material and centres are to be commended for encouraging their candidates in their effort to perform well.

Candidates who appeared to be more secure in other tense forms (future tense, conditional, present tense) performed better.

Centres are encouraged to give candidates writing opportunities from Beginners' stage onwards, and to keep consolidating German sentence structure with special consideration of the position of the verb.

Component 2: question paper: Listening and Writing

Candidates seemed to be familiar with the contexts chosen in the Listening and Writing component. They performed very well overall and centres are to be commended for their thorough preparation and encouragement to make good use of pre-learned material.

Candidates with a sound knowledge of present tense, future tense and conditional tense performed better in the writing element. Centres might wish to ensure that all candidates have a sound knowledge of verbs and their ability to appear in different tense forms in German with an awareness of their English equivalents.

Component 3: performance – Talking

Presentation section

In the presentation, a small number of candidates seemed to struggle with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen.

Centres should provide advice to candidates as to what level of language they should be able to cope with, and should ensure comprehension of their presentation in preparation for delivering it. Topics for this part of the performance should normally be taken from Appendix 3: 'Context development' of the Course and Support Notes, which is available on the Modern Languages homepage of the SQA website.

A few presentations were significantly long or short, which affected the candidates' performances. Centres are advised to refer to the information on the recommended length of the presentation and the conversation provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information*.

Conversation section

A few conversations were unnecessarily prolonged or significantly short, which affected the candidates' performances. Centres are advised to refer to the information on the recommended length of the presentation and the conversation provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information*.

Component 3: performance – Talking

Interlocutors should ask questions in the conversation which follow on naturally from the presentation topic chosen by candidates as recommended in the *Higher Modern Languages performance: talking assessment task*.

Making a natural link between the topic chosen by the candidate for the presentation and the beginning of the conversation is good practice. Interlocutors should ensure they do not start the conversation with a question unrelated to the presentation — this does not aid the natural flow of the performance.

Over the course of the performance, interlocutors should ensure that at least two contexts are covered at Higher level. Interlocutors should move on naturally to other topics and contexts, thereby allowing the candidates to demonstrate a variety of language. Interlocutors should ensure they do not ask questions which lead to candidates repeating parts of their presentation in their answers. Interlocutors should therefore try to avoid asking questions about items that candidates have already addressed in the presentation.

Centres should ensure they are not overly prescriptive in preparing candidates for the conversation. Conversations should be as spontaneous as possible for the level assessed. It is recommended that centres ask a range of questions adapted to the responses of each candidate rather than asking the same questions to the whole cohort. A wider variety of questions in the conversation can aid candidates to develop strategies to cope with the unexpected (in line with Appendix 1 of the *Modern Languages performance: talking, General assessment information* which is available from SQA's website).

Updated versions of the Higher Marking Information Grid will be published in September 2016. The standards will remain the same, but each pegged mark descriptor will provide additional detail for assessors. The sustaining the conversation element will see the addition of 'pegged mark 1'. For Higher, the pegged marks for the presentation will be separated from the pegged marks for the conversation as happened for National 5 in 2015–16. Centres should take note of the new detailed advice in the updated version of the Higher Marking Information Grid for the awarding of 5, 3, 1 and 0 for the sustaining the conversation element of the Performance.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	637
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Number of resulted entries in 2016	1019
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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	49.0%	49.0%	499	78
B	27.5%	76.4%	280	67
C	15.3%	91.8%	156	56
D	4.8%	96.6%	49	50
No award	3.4%	-	35	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.