



Alternative Certification Model 2020–21: National QA Exercise Key Messages

Subject	German
Level	National 5

This report provides information on themes emerging from the national quality assurance exercise, which is part of the Alternative Certification Model for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

A sample of candidates' assessed work from selected centres was reviewed to determine whether assessment was in line with the national standard. The evidence submitted may have been partial or incomplete and is unlikely to have represented all of the evidence that will be gathered to allow the centre to determine a provisional result.

The centres selected for review in this subject and at this level have been provided with specific feedback on the evidence that they submitted. The comments below highlight key points about the assessment approaches and instruments used and the sampled centres' assessment judgements, for all centres delivering the subject at this level to reflect upon and make any appropriate adjustments.

Section 1: Comments on approach to assessment

Most centres sent partial evidence of reading, writing, listening and/or talking performance for learners at National 5, with an explanatory note. A few centres sent full sets of evidence for all four skills for each candidate. Centres submitted a range of evidence, including the 2020–21 SQA question paper and commercial question papers.

A range of learner attainment was provided. One centre also submitted the Additional Assessment Arrangements for its candidates.

Most centres submitted Marking Instructions, proposed cut-off scores and evidence of internal moderation and quality assurance. It would be useful if centres submitted the listening transcript when submitting evidence, particularly for commercial papers.

The approaches to assessment used by all centres were deemed to be valid.

SQA guidelines say that past papers should not be used in their entirety. Furthermore, it is advised that centres use the most up-to-date versions of any SQA guidance. One centre used an older version of Marking Instructions for the talking performance which did not include the specific guidance on context, accuracy and language resource. It also did not include the 1-mark option for sustaining the conversation. The most up-to-date Marking Instructions can be found in the National 5 Course Specification document for Modern Languages, available here: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/47415.html>

Some centres provided information about their internal moderation and quality assurance procedures, including timelines and evidence of professional discussions, as well as how they reach judgements. This is particularly important when there is a difference of opinion on the marks awarded. Some centres worked with other schools and networks. This is an example of good practice and is particularly important for German, as there are many schools who only have one German teacher.

One centre had exemplary procedures and it was clear how rigorous the processes were within the centre. The centre submitted its school Internal Verification Policy, including a timescale of when assessments were completed, how they were marked, any comments about the level or the assessment and next steps. Marking Instructions were standardised based on candidate responses at local authority or network level and then reapplied it to the previous marking. The centre has sent the learner evidence to another centre for quality assurance, and the centre also included the moderator's comment. This common approach allowed for a high level of consistency and is a practice to be commended.

Cross-marking was strong in most centres and some centres used different coloured pens to mark the work. A couple of centres marked blind and compared their results, submitting evidence of their professional discussion.

Overall, all centres used valid assessment approaches.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Almost all centres provided robust evidence that had been assessed in line with national standards, including annotated marking instructions that have been applied effectively.

Several areas of good practice were identified. Some centres provided evidence of supportive and robust internal and external moderation procedures, and this is reflected in the quality of marking and judgements. Notes were included to explain how the assessment judgements were reached in the evidence provided.

A few centres also included documented professional dialogue between the assessor and internal moderator, which promoted consistency of standards across all skills.

However, one centre had submitted unamended Marking Instructions for the reading and listening evidence, which made it challenging to quality assure. This led to several inconsistencies in the marking, and marks awarded were outwith the threshold of tolerance.

Another centre applied Marking Instructions consistently but too severely. Consistency and professional judgement are important features of marking. Assessment judgements should be based on the candidate's understanding of the ideas expressed in the German, and poor English should not be penalised unless it impedes the message being communicated.

It is also worth noting that any amendments to the Marking Instructions should ensure that the question being asked is still answered.

The assessment judgement of writing was lenient in some cases. Most centres whose assessment judgement had been lenient were within tolerance. It is recommended that centres use the Marking Instructions for Writing in conjunction with the Productive Grammar Grid to ensure that work is assessed in line with the national standards.

For the talking performance, it is recommended that audio recording devices are placed close to the candidate to ensure the quality of the recording is sufficient for quality assurance to take place. If submitting audio files digitally, it is necessary to ensure that the format can be read on all devices.

An important aspect of marking to ensure consistency is robust internal moderation procedures and quality assurance. One centre submitted no demonstrable evidence of internal moderation or cross-marking of the Reading and Listening evidence.

Where collegiate working across a local authority area was evident, this ensured a consistency of approach and a high level of effectiveness. Good practice was witnessed several times, including Marking Instructions being standardised to candidate responses. This made it much clearer about what the centre thought to be acceptable.

Overall, most centres' assessment judgements were deemed to be mostly accurate.