



Course report 2024

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 2024 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 520

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 552

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	339	Percentage	61.4	Cumulative percentage	61.4	Minimum mark required	82
B	Number of candidates	87	Percentage	15.8	Cumulative percentage	77.2	Minimum mark required	70
C	Number of candidates	64	Percentage	11.6	Cumulative percentage	88.8	Minimum mark required	58
D	Number of candidates	30	Percentage	5.4	Cumulative percentage	94.2	Minimum mark required	46
No award	Number of candidates	32	Percentage	5.8	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

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 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 2024 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 assessment components were created with the following principles:

- ◆ prior knowledge: relevant and familiar concepts in reading and listening items that reflect the course content for the level
- ◆ choice: flexibility in responses in most reading and listening comprehension questions and a choice of two writing scenarios
- ◆ progressive linguistic development: lexical items and phrases as well as a level of demand that corresponds with the course content at Higher
- ◆ coherence: assessment in reading and listening follow the National 5 pattern and language development

Compared to 2023, there was a slight increase in the number of candidates presented for Higher German this session. Overall, the course components performed as expected. Some concepts in the listening question paper were challenging for some candidates, and a slight adjustment was made to the grade boundaries.

Question paper 1: Reading

Overall, the reading question paper performed as expected. It presented candidates with an article about digitalisation and automation in the world of work and its potential impact on employment and employment skills. Overall, candidates coped well with the question paper and the comprehension questions. The inclusion of questions that allowed for a range of acceptable answers, allowed candidates more flexibility and choice in their responses.

The translation, with complex and detailed language and a focus on grammar and the accurate use of English, proved to be more challenging than expected for some candidates. This was evident in the translation of sentences including modal verbs into English and the identification and correct translation of compound nouns.

Question paper 1: Directed writing

Candidates were given the choice of two scenarios: scenario 1 (society) on participating in a student exchange programme and staying with a host family in Germany, and scenario 2 (culture) on participating in a sports camp in Germany.

Both scenarios and their six bullet points were designed to allow candidates an element of personalisation, give them more control over their writing and allow them the freedom to add information and create some flair. The principle of choice is worthwhile for candidates. The question paper performed as expected.

Question paper 2: Listening

The listening paper consists of a monologue and a dialogue. The monologue was about pupils in Germany who are taught in two languages. The dialogue was on the topic of going to school in Germany as a young Spanish immigrant. Overall, the listening paper presented challenges to some candidates who found the concept of learning a school subject, such as geography or history in another language difficult to understand. This was taken into account when setting the grade boundaries.

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

Assignment–writing

The assignment–writing was reinstated this session. Candidates produce a piece of writing, using detailed and complex language, based on one of the following contexts: society, learning, employability, culture.

Overall, candidates performed well. Teachers and lecturers provided a range of stimuli, which varied in difficulty.

Performance–talking

The performance–talking performed as expected.

This year saw an increase in the number of candidates presented for Higher German. The average mark remained stable, but the distribution of marks was different, indicating a stronger performance at the higher pegged marks.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1: Reading

- ◆ overall, candidates' responses were good, and most answered the comprehension questions well
- ◆ questions 1, 3, 8, 9 and 10 were accessible to most candidates. Question 11 (the overall purpose question) saw some very good responses where candidates used their National 5 and Higher English skills and applied these to answer the analysis question
- ◆ candidates with a sound knowledge of German and English grammar did particularly well in the translation. Many candidates displayed very good time management skills
- ◆ candidates with a good knowledge of German tenses and an understanding of the function of modal verbs and compound nouns, with an awareness of their English equivalents, achieved higher marks in the translation
- ◆ candidates with a sound understanding of grammar and English literacy performed better in the translation section of the paper and demonstrated good analysis skills in responding to the overall purpose question

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, 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 good knowledge of German word-order and tenses (imperfect tense, perfect tense, future tense and conditional) gained higher marks
- ◆ candidates with good exam and time management skills were more successful in completing the paper

Question paper 2: Listening

- ◆ candidates' responses varied in quality and level of detail. Questions 1(b)(i), 2(b)(i) and 2(c) proved to be accessible for most candidates, and they answered these questions well
- ◆ candidates with a wide range of National 5 and Higher vocabulary gained higher marks in the listening comprehension

Assignment–writing

Overall, the performance of candidates in the assignment–writing was good. Candidates with a sound understanding of discursive or persuasive writing gained higher marks.

Performance–talking

Most candidates had prepared well for the task, and this was reflected in the high quality of their performances. Most candidates' selection of topics allowed them to use a range of tenses, structures and vocabulary appropriate to the level.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: Reading

- ◆ some candidates' responses were imprecise, or missed out details that were required to gain marks
- ◆ question 6(b): many candidates found this challenging due to the level of detail required. Instead of mentioning the places of work (car industry, harbour), successful candidates were expected to provide examples of advantages of automation (robots put cars together, large cranes load metal boxes onto ships)
- ◆ question 12 (translation): some candidates mistranslated compound nouns, for example 'traffic jam' instead of 'traffic problems' (*Verkehrsprobleme*) or 'living quality' or 'life quality' instead of 'quality of life' (*Lebensqualität*)
- ◆ some candidates were unable to identify and translate the correct tense in sense unit 1 and sense unit 2
- ◆ there were a few no responses to question 11 (overall purpose question), suggesting these candidates struggled with time management
- ◆ there were instances of illegible handwriting for some candidates

Question paper 1: Directed writing

- ◆ there was a balance in choice between scenario 1 (society) and scenario 2 (culture). Candidates submitted varied responses of different quality
- ◆ some candidates struggled to use a range of tenses, especially the conditional (*würde*), required in bullet point 5 (scenario 2) and the future tense (*werde*), required in bullet point 5 (scenario 1)
- ◆ there were fewer candidates who struggled with time management; however, there was evidence of some incomplete essays, for example three bullet points or more not addressed or no responses
- ◆ candidates who relied on pre-learned material performed less well in this question paper
- ◆ a few candidates failed to demonstrate control of the language. This showed in their responses to different bullet points, for example bullet points 1 and 5 (scenario 1) and bullet points 2 and 3 (scenario 2), which showed little or no development
- ◆ a few candidates demonstrated an over-reliance on pre-learned material and produced a response without consideration for the bullet points

Question paper 2: Listening

- ◆ some candidates found the questions and the concept of learning a school subject in another language challenging and did not provide the detail and accuracy of responses expected at this level
- ◆ question 1(d): some candidates' responses were not specific enough to gain the mark. Some candidates struggled with the comparison form of the adjective (easier to make decisions, easier to solve problems, less afraid (*weniger Angst*) of making decisions)
- ◆ question 1(e)(i): some candidates struggled with the concept of life in a global world (*das Leben in einer globalen Welt*) and referred to travelling around the world or living in other countries
- ◆ question 2(b)(ii): many candidates were unfamiliar with the compound noun 'outskirts' (*Stadttrand*) and did not gain the mark. Some candidates provided alternative answers, for example 'on the beach', 'near', 'in a town in Barcelona'
- ◆ question 2(d): candidates found the noun 'support' and the concept of private tuition and/or extra tuition challenging. Some candidates provided alternative answers, for example 'help from his teachers' and/or 'teachers spend a lot of time with him'

Assignment–writing

Some stimuli did not allow candidates to submit a discursive essay, with certain topics being more suited to Advanced Higher.

The assignments revealed some candidates' literacy issues, for example the need for a clear essay structure, writing in paragraphs, using discursive language, and providing an appropriate conclusion.

There was inconsistency in how candidates presented the stimulus: some candidates provided the full stimulus in English, some provided an abbreviated version, and some only gave the title of their essay.

Performance–talking

All candidates chose at least two contexts for the discussion, and the type of questioning allowed candidates to use detailed and complex language.

Most candidates coped well with the discussion, although some candidates found it difficult to sustain the conversation as the discussion progressed.

A number of conversations and discussions were unnecessarily long or too short, which was sometimes to the detriment of some candidates. Particularly, when conversations and discussions were short, candidates were unable to demonstrate detailed and complex language.

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 this year. These skills are especially relevant for candidates who wish to continue to Advanced Higher German, where the reading passages require more analysis

Teachers and lecturers should consider the role of native 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:

- ◆ study 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 gain the marks
- ◆ address all other bullet points in full
- ◆ 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:

- ◆ continue to practise developing vocabulary knowledge and German compound nouns 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 be 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:

- ◆ 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

Teachers and lecturers could refer to discursive writing skills as they are developed in the broad general education, and National 5 and Higher English courses.

Performance–talking

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates:

- ◆ have a range of strategies to cope with unpredictable elements of the task
- ◆ have a range of strategies when asking for questions to be repeated, or language structures and phrases to say when they have not understood an aspect of the discussion
- ◆ are encouraged to give their opinions, including reasons for their opinion and for some candidates, a degree of evaluation
- ◆ remember to cover at least two different contexts
- ◆ try to use detailed and complex language at this level to access the top range of marks
- ◆ prepare for the performance–talking assessment independently to personalise their performance. Candidates can select their own topics of interest, vocabulary and grammatical structures

Teachers and lecturers should make use of the Understanding Standards materials for Higher German performance–talking (IACCAs) published on SQA's secure website. These are available through your SQA co-ordinator.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, SQA aims 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, SQA holds 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 SQA's 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. SQA 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.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).