

External Assessment Report 2013

German Advanced Higher

Overall Performance

The general impression recorded by Examiners was of a slightly improved performance this year, and this is supported by the numerical results and awards. While some candidates continue to meet the criteria for success with a very high standard of response, there remains evidence in others of significant weakness in knowledge and understanding, naive judgement and lack of preparation.

Speaking

- Visiting Assessors continue to be impressed by the willingness of candidates to engage in what is recognised as a demanding event.
- This year many noted an improved performance overall, and this is borne out by an increase in the average mark for the Speaking Test, which had remained virtually static over many years.

Reading and Translation

- Examiners noted an improved performance in Paper 1 which was borne out by the average mark.
- The exercise of Translation continues to pose considerable challenge for many candidates, as is reflected in an average mark of below 50% for this component.
- Many responses did not demonstrate the accuracy of detail required by this task. Examples of this include inaccuracy in translating tenses, omission of words, confusion of singular and plural and difficulty with German word order.

Discursive Writing

- The average mark for this section in 2013 is below the 'Satisfactory' threshold.
- Many candidates pay little attention to the specific question that has been asked and reproduce a response that bears no relevance to the question.
- Linguistically, many candidates show a lack of command of the basics of German grammar, ranging from a lack of understanding of the convention of writing German nouns with a capital letter to the basics of agreement, word order, gender, conjugation and spelling.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- Centres should train candidates carefully in their approach to translation making it clear that this is not a gist-rendering task.
- Centres should ensure that time is spent specifically training candidates in the art of Translation. This includes clear instruction in the appropriate use of a dictionary, attention to detail and accuracy, and adaptive and flexible use of English.
- Candidates need more experience of writing in German at this advanced level so they can apply and reinforce their knowledge of the fundamentals of German grammar.
- Candidates should be encouraged to engage with the range of resources available for each topic so that they can respond with a degree of sophistication that transcends the everyday or the mundane.
- In the folio;
 - The formulation of the question is crucial and should take heed of the limitations of the word count. Sadly, there were many instances of titles that preclude a critical or an analytical response and force candidates into descriptive and narrative responses.
 - Centres should encourage candidates to tap in to the range of resources available to them when exploring their chosen text or topic. Engaging with external discourse would allow them to formulate their own ideas and understandings in a more sophisticated and reflective way.
 - In centres with multiple candidates there are still many instances of all candidates writing Folio pieces on the same topic. This defeats the objective of encouraging individual exploration of a text or topic with the consequent title negotiated on an individual basis.