



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

German

GERM1

(Specification 2660)

Unit 1: Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination

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Unit 1

General comments

Performances in this paper ranged from students who were obviously not native speakers but who nevertheless scored very high marks thanks to their secure grasp of the AS German specification to those whose linguistic skill barely rose above GCSE standard. Very few students seemed to have run short of time on the paper as a whole. It was good to see evidence of the specified topics having been taught and learned thoroughly, but equally it was disappointing to see a lack of attention to detail from some students, especially in Section B where many responses would have benefited from more careful checking. As in previous series, the quality of some students' handwriting was a cause for concern. A small number of students answered Question 1 in German instead of English, while an even smaller number answered Question 8 in English instead of German.

Section A

Question 1

This transfer of meaning task was relatively accessible and enabled most students to make a confident start to the examination. A few students may well have understood the German but did not manage to express their answer in clear English, thereby gaining no credit.

- (a) Well answered, although not all students seemed to know *sich streiten*. A few students gave only two pieces of information even though the question was clearly labelled as being worth three marks.
- (b) Not entirely straightforward. Some students homed in on *Betriebsfest* but did not know *Betrieb*; others seemed to have mistaken *Firma* for *Film* and gave a wrong answer such as 'at a film festival'.
- (c) The hardest item in this question. Many students did not know *sich verlassen auf* and some mistook *Rat* for *Rad*, resulting in wrong answers such as 'they go for bike rides together'.
- (d) Most students scored the first marking point, referring to *unterschiedliche Welten*, but in the second part of the answer the verb *sich berühren* was a good discriminator at the top end of the attainment range.
- (e) Well answered. It was pleasing that many students were able to work out the meaning of *unzertrennlich*, perhaps because they recognised the element *-trenn-* from *trennen*.
- (f) A good number of correct answers were given here, although a few students did not pick up on the past meaning of *hat ... hinter sich* and wrote 'he already has a relationship'.

Question 2

This non-verbal comprehension task was generally well handled. Almost all students gave the correct answer in parts (a) and (h), while the hardest items were parts (d) and (f).

Question 3

Many students coped well with this multiple-choice question. The most accessible item was part (f), where students generally managed to make the link between *kein großes Thema* on the recording and *nicht zu oft ... sprechen* in the question. The hardest items proved to be parts (d) and (g).

Question 4

This listening comprehension question, which required answers in German, produced a wide range of attainment. As in previous series, marks were awarded for successful communication only. It was pleasing to see fewer students than in previous series attempting to transcribe lengthy sections of the recording; such an approach often results in confusion because too much irrelevant material is included.

- (a) Most students gave the correct figure.
- (b) A fairly difficult item, because students had to understand *fand ... statt* in the question and realise that this referred to the carrying out of the survey, not to the publication of its outcome.
- (c) Generally well answered, although *heimisch* was sometimes wrongly rendered as *heimlich* or *unheimlich*.
- (d)(i) Fairly well answered, but some students seemed not to recognise *verbinden*.
- (d)(ii) Less able students tended to lift *lieber* from the recording but use it wrongly as if it were a verb, e.g. *Sie lieben Schweizer Musik*. Certain misspellings of *Schweizer*, e.g. *schwarzer*, *Schweiß*, made the meaning unclear and could not be credited.
- (e) The word *Künstler(n)* caused some difficulty here. No credit was given for answers that looked more like *Kunst* than *Künstler(n)*.
- (f) The verb *herunterladen* was well known.
- (g) The verb *fördert* caused widespread difficulty; no credit was given for *fordert*. Many students referred correctly to music making in Switzerland being seen as *ein nettes Hobby*, although sometimes they included extraneous material in their answer which made the meaning unclear.

Question 5

Many students coped well with this matching task. The most accessible items were parts (a) and (f). The most difficult items were part (d), where students were required to link *keine Diskriminierung* with *gleich behandelt*, and part (b), where students needed to link *arme Schüler werden benachteiligt* with *schlecht für diejenigen, die sich ... nicht leisten können*.

Question 6

Fairly well answered overall. Parts (a) and (e) produced the largest number of correct answers within the question, and parts (f) and (g) produced the largest number of wrong answers.

Question 7

This question discriminated well at all levels. The most accessible items were parts (a) and (b), and the least accessible were parts (c) and (e). Many students opted wrongly for C (*Fettleibigkeit*) in part (c) and for A (*zusammen spielen*) in part (e).

Question 8

Most parts of this question, which required answers in German, discriminated well across the attainment range. More able students often wrote shorter answers, just picking out the relevant phrase and either quoting it or putting it into their own words – both approaches being equally acceptable. Many less able students relied on copying out lengthy sections of text, sometimes either including irrelevant material which then obscured their answer or missing out key words through apparent carelessness. It was disappointing to see many wrong spellings of words which were printed on the question paper, such as *Gewalsenen* for *Gewaltszenen*.

- (a)(i) Well answered. A few students mistakenly wrote *im Herbst*, perhaps because they thought *Herbst* was a place name.
- (a)(ii) Generally well answered. Versions beginning *nachdem ...* were not credited because they did not answer the question *Warum ... ?*
- (b) Almost always correctly answered.
- (c) Most students identified the reference to (*die einzelnen*) *Schulleiter*, but a few included extra material which was unnecessary and sometimes inappropriate in answer to a question beginning *Wer ... ?*
- (d) Too many answers included irrelevant material such as ... *sondern verschiebt sie lediglich ...*
- (e) Some good answers, but also some wrong responses which showed no comprehension of the text.
- (f) A challenging question, especially for those who tried to use the wording *um einen geringen Prozentsatz* from the stimulus text. A simple 'own words' answer such as *Wenige Schüler machen das* worked well here.
- (g) A good discriminator at the top end of the range, as students had to realise that the communication was from parent to child, not the other way round, and that the reference to *Notfall* was a significant part of the answer.
- (h) A wide range of attainment here. Less able students tended to omit the essential reference to (*Sie sollten*) *zeigen ...*. Those who merely quoted the phrase *wie man verantwortungsvoll mit dem Handy umgeht* as their whole answer gained no credit for the first marking point.

Question 9

This question was tackled slightly more successfully than its equivalent in previous series, although for some students it was still the hardest question on the paper. Any misspelling, however minor, invalidated the response, as did some instances of poor handwriting where for example it was impossible to tell between an *-m* and an *-n*.

- (a) There was a surprisingly large number of wrong endings here, as well as some versions with no ending at all.
- (b) Relatively few correct answers. Many students either gave the neuter ending *typisches* or the weak masculine/neuter ending *typische*.
- (c) Fairly well answered.
- (d) A number of students seemed not to know that *viele* counts as an adjective and that another adjective after it will take the same ending, i.e. *-e* in this instance.
- (e) Well answered.
- (f) Many students seemed unfamiliar with the past participle of *gefallen* and wrote *gefällt* in error.
- (g) As well as wrong endings, there was a disappointingly large number of misspellings of the basic word, such as *entäuscht* (sic).
- (h) Relatively few students knew how to form the present tense of *wachsen*. A few attempted to put the verb into a different tense, perhaps because they had not recognised the time clue *zurzeit*.
- (i) Many students did not spot the need for the tense sequence to be logical, i.e. *wäre* goes with *könnte* whereas *ist* goes with *kann*.
- (j) A difficult item, which discriminated well at the top end of the range. Students had to recognise the use of the passive and form the past participle of *anbieten*.

Section B: Extended writing questions

The overall standard of students' responses to Section B was slightly lower than in the last series. While examiners still enjoyed reading some impressive performances from students who had obviously taken the trouble to learn a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary and AS level structures which they were then able to incorporate into relevant and well argued essays, a significant number of less able students either relied too much on pre-learnt material which they did not adapt fully to the question set or they made too many serious linguistic errors which impeded communication and, therefore, lowered the content mark. Poor handwriting was a regrettable feature of some students' work, and there seemed to be more instances this year of students crossing out large sections of their work and starting it again – not necessarily a problem except that such students must have wasted valuable time.

In terms of content, the best essays tended to be those which began with a short, clear introduction, included a small number of key points with suitable examples and good justification, and finished with a concise and decisive conclusion. Weaker performances tended to be unduly repetitive or to make only superficial reference to a large number of points. This paper produced a larger than usual number of short answers, i.e. below 200 words, which were self-penalising because they could include only a limited amount of material. There were also many very long essays, some of which were excellent but others tended to ramble and lose focus.

Linguistically, there was a wide range of attainment. It was a pleasure to read natural-sounding German with a variety of sentence types, even if the accuracy was not entirely secure. Less impressive were those essays in which students wrote fixed phrases such as *Es ist nicht zu leugnen, dass ...* even where they did not fit the context, or translated English idioms literally into German, such as *am Ende des Tages*. There was some over-use of clichés such as *den grauen Alltag*, but also at the top end of the range some genuinely imaginative use of AS level vocabulary. Many otherwise able students did not check their accuracy carefully enough, resulting in inconsistencies such as the same word having two or three different genders within a paragraph.

Question 10

This was the least popular of the three options. The strongest responses were those which read like a real letter to a newspaper and included some persuasive language as well as a detailed explanation of why the cinema in question should be kept open. (The task allowed for students to take the opposite viewpoint if they wished, but hardly any took that option.) It was not necessary to include opening and closing greetings, but it did no harm to do so! Examples of good content points included the pleasure of going to the cinema compared with watching films at home, the cinema's role in the local economy of the town, including the provision of jobs, and the likely consequences of the planned closure such as more young people having nothing purposeful to do. It was good to see mention of the cinema helping the student to learn German during her/his time abroad. Some answers were too superficial and did not go far beyond the delights of over-priced popcorn, or perhaps a description of a specific film, while the least satisfactory responses were those where the student seemed just to home in on the word *Kino* and write a discursive 'for and against' essay on the cinema. In such responses, references to the disadvantages of the cinema were usually discredited as irrelevant to the task.

Question 11

This was a popular question that produced a wide range of attainment, with fewer very strong performances than Questions 10 and 12. It tended to appeal to less able students, who unfortunately often scored low marks for content because they wrote merely a GCSE-style description of a past holiday or of their future holiday plans. It was acceptable to refer to actual holidays but only if linked to the weighing up of different factors as stated in the question. The prompt words on the question paper were intended to spark ideas, but unfortunately some students used those words as the springboard for an essay that was not clearly enough focused on *Urlaubsziele*. This happened especially with the word *Umwelt*, which led some students to write at length about the impact of mass tourism on the environment with very little reference to the set task. Another pitfall was the temptation to write about aspects of holidays that were not directly related to the choice of destination, such as who to go on holiday with and what type of accommodation is best. At the top end of the attainment range there were a few excellent responses which managed to maintain the right balance between ideas, examples and justifications. Some students used conditional sentences in a convincingly natural way, such as *Wenn ich die Wahl hätte, würde ich ... weil ich dann ... könnte*.

Question 12

A good number of students tackled this question. As with Questions 10 and 11, the best responses were those which provided a direct answer to the question, in this instance Sibylle's e-mail, rather than a discursive essay on the general topic. Many students really entered into the spirit of the discussion and seemed to show some insight into the feelings that Sibylle and Marco might have experienced, as well as offering their views on marriage as an institution. On the whole students thought it was best to respect Marco's decision, although of course markers gave credit for any opinion of the situation as long as it was well justified. The task allowed students to use direct question forms, e.g. *Hast du sie getroffen?*, and many did so to good effect. Some students used a variety of verb tenses, e.g. by comparing the experiences of their parents to those of today's young people, as well as *wenn* clauses to explain the likely consequences of various courses of action. At the lower end of the ability range, some students struggled to find any ideas beyond those mentioned in Sibylle's e-mail. A few introduced much confusion into their answer by muddling personal pronouns such as *du/sie/Sie* and *ihr/ihn/ihm*. A correctly entered AS level student ought to be able to use these pronouns accurately. There was also some confusion between *Leben* and *Liebe* (what does *die Lebe* (sic) mean?) and between *Freund*, *Freunde(n)* and *Freundin*.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

On-screen marking was used for this unit and students should be reminded that they must answer the questions in the spaces provided, as instructed on the front cover of the question paper. It is also very important that the instruction to students to write in black ink or ballpoint pen is adhered to, as answers written in blue ink or pen are very difficult to mark on screen. Unfortunately, a few students were careless in their writing and some of the letters they used in answering the comprehension questions were very hard to decipher.

Writing Section

Question Paper and Answer Booklet

Students must write using single line spacing when writing their answer for this section. Double line spacing (i.e. writing on alternate lines) must not be used. Those students who cannot complete their answer in the answer booklet must use additional answer sheets; they must not use the essay planning sheet for this purpose as it is not sent for marking.

Essay Planning Sheet

The Essay Planning Sheet must be used for the plan only and will not be assessed. Essay Planning Sheets, together with any questions on inserts, must not be enclosed with the question paper and answer booklets when they are despatched for marking.

Additional Guidance for Responding to the Writing Section

Are students expected to include an introduction and conclusion in their essay? If so, how many words approximately?

Students are not expected to include an introduction or conclusion, but it enhances the structure if there is a brief introduction and a concluding short paragraph, possibly including a personal response. One of the criteria is for a logical structure and this would enhance the overall structure of the essay.

Is a personal opinion valid as a point in the argument?

Yes, we gave ticks for personal opinions as we considered them valid as developments.

Should each point/opinion be backed up with an example?

Generally, yes. There must be plenty of justification of points/opinions in order to gain marks in the higher bands.

Are the examiners looking for a certain number of points/opinions plus examples, eg 3 arguments for one point of view with evidence and 3 against with evidence?

This would be sensible but we have no hard and fast rule on this since a limited number of points very well illustrated and developed would also be considered for the higher mark bands.

How does the marking scheme work in practice? Is there a list of relevant points, some of which the examiners are expecting to be included? If so, how many represents poor versus sufficient/very good?

There is a list of relevant points for the guidance of examiners but these are by no means prescriptive and students will get credit for well-argued points not in the list. Examiners tick every relevant, clearly expressed point and give further ticks for development/examples/opinions etc. Thus a list of bullet point type arguments with no development cannot access the highest mark band. In order to access the highest mark band, students must also ensure that they meet all the other criteria, eg their ideas are clearly expressed, there is logical structure and they have answered fully the question set.

Is it just an instinctive overall rating of logical sequence and therefore individual points are not counted up?

There is no mathematical guide to Content marks - examiners have to make a decision based on the descriptors in the assessment criteria.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion

Web pages

Centres are reminded that a wealth of support documents can be found on our web site at (http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/languages/german_materials.php?id=09&prev=09).

These include the latest version of the specification, past papers, reports on the examination and the Teacher Resource Bank (TRB). For GERM1 the TRB includes for the Writing Section additional specimen questions (to supplement past papers from previous series) and student exemplar work; this is an invaluable resource for preparing students for future examinations.