



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2012**

**German**

**GER2T**

**(Specification 2660)**

**Unit 2: Speaking Test**

***Report on the Examination***

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## Unit 2

### General comments

This has been a successful examination series which produced many good and excellent performances from students. One factor in the overall high level of achievement is without doubt the fact that many students were re-sitting the test; they knew what to expect and benefitted from their improved confidence in speaking German.

Most schools and colleges now record the tests in digital format and as a result there were very few recordings of unsatisfactory quality. Nevertheless, schools and colleges still have to ensure that recording levels for both participants are set at the right volume. Tracks appearing on screen should be labelled with centre and candidates' details (as laid out in the instructions) and care should be taken to wrap CDs carefully to avoid damage in the post.

The majority of teachers adhered to the prescribed timings. In a few schools and colleges all tests were significantly shorter than 15 minutes which is clearly not in the students' interest. There were also still a number of teachers who re-set the stop-watch between Parts 1 and 2 or even after each conversation topic. For reasons mentioned in earlier reports and at support meetings this is not an advisable strategy.

Examiners were generally pleased with the standard of examining technique. Many teacher-examiners followed recommendations given out in previous years and thereby enabled their students to perform to the best of their ability. However, examiners observed that in many tests more attempts could have been made to develop points regularly by responding to what students said. Too often teacher-examiners preferred to ask series of unrelated questions rather than following up on students' responses and ensuring that each student was given regular opportunities to interact with some spontaneity.

## AS Unit 2

### Part 1: Discussion of Stimulus Card

As is usual in January, most centres had very few candidates; therefore cards A and B were the most frequently discussed. All cards were equally accessible and none of the questions posed a problem for understanding. Teacher-examiners have almost no influence in the first section and it is up to the student to use the material on the card along with his/her own ideas in order to give relevant and developed answers to the printed questions. There were many competent performances with extended and imaginative contributions. Some students found it difficult to summarise the subject of the card adequately with their first answer and either said too little or so much that they invariably repeated themselves in their subsequent answers. Too many students denied themselves higher marks in the first section because their answers contained little or no development. Words and phrases on the card were often quoted verbatim without any attempt to rephrase them and to incorporate them into their own answers. Examiners felt that students generally need more practice in exploiting the stimulus card as fully as possible.

The majority of teacher-examiners conducted the ensuing discussion around the sub-topic on the card. The discussion should as far as possible evolve from the student's responses to the printed questions and should aim to further explore the subject matter of the card and related aspects of the sub-topic. Many teachers did this skilfully thus enabling their students to react with some spontaneity and gain higher marks, but in many cases the discussion immediately proceeded onto quite unconnected issues with hardly any reference to what had been said before. Teachers need to avoid the impression that in this part of the test the student is simply allowed to follow a well-rehearsed path.

### Karte A (*Fitness und Spaß im Verein*)

Most students dealt well with this card and had valid things to say about the subject of sport and sport clubs. However, the verbal stimuli on the card were often ignored or read out unchanged. Inaccurate pronunciation of *Mitglied* was wide-spread. Students offered some interesting ideas about the pros

and cons of having separate age groups. The discussion usually focussed on keeping healthy through sport, on aspects of modern lifestyle, even on the forthcoming Olympic Games. Some teachers went outside the prescribed sub-topic by asking questions about healthy eating, smoking, stress etc.

### **Karte B (*Ein glückliches Familienleben – ganz leicht?*)**

This card also caused few problems although once again too many students simply lifted words and phrases from the card rather than using them as a starting point for developed responses. A variety of reasons were offered in answer to question 4; in their last response surprisingly many students did not see beyond their present family and talked about their own parents or siblings and how relationships may change.

### **Karte C (*Mode ohne Models*)**

This card produced some good and thoughtful performances. A number of students found it difficult to formulate a coherent answer to question 2 without merely reading out the captions on the card. Answers to question 4 were often imaginative and differentiated with many students quoting both positive and negative examples for the behaviour of famous models. All students were keen to talk about the importance of fashion in general and for themselves.

### **Karte D (*Werbung ist....englisch!*)**

This was the least popular choice and produced mixed results. Examiners expressed surprise at how many students were not able to find sound explanations for the wide-spread use of English in German advertising. The fact that English is seen as 'cool' and trendy, especially among younger people, did not occur to them. There were however some interesting responses about the need or otherwise to control advertising. Most discussions included the issue of restricting or banning advertising for certain products and students' reactions to adverts on today's media.

### **Karte E (*Das Fernsehen – eine Gefahr für die Jugend?*)**

Television is a popular subject and one that students of all levels of ability feel confident to talk about. It was therefore disappointing that many who chose this card did not make more of the verbal stimuli presented to them. The critical quotes in the speech bubbles were often ignored or read out without further comment; very few attempts were made to add examples or comments. Question 3 often elicited more negative than positive opinions about television thus rendering the responses not entirely relevant. Most students felt that control over TV programmes (Question 4) lies mainly in the hands of parents rather than advocating stricter rules over schedules and contents.

### **Karte F (*Essen? Nein danke!*)**

This was not a very popular choice but mostly handled well. Once again, many students read out the possible causes of anorexia without adding anything of their own and often lost out on the chance of being awarded high marks. Questions 3 and 4 produced some interesting answers about the importance of personal image and on the pressure on girls to be super-slim. Discussions usually addressed other aspects of diet and healthy eating although a few teachers diverted too soon into questions about smoking, alcohol and drugs.

## **Part 2: Conversation**

There were very few schools and colleges where students were allowed to deliver a presentation type speech at the start of their nominated topic; most teachers entered into a dialogue from the start. Often it was obvious, however that the teacher 'ticked off' all the bullet points on the prompt card with one question instead of trying to discuss fewer aspects in more detail. Giving opportunities to develop points and ideas is important for the entire length of the conversation and examiners were generally pleased to notice that in the remaining conversation fewer teachers than in the past discussed all available sub-topics concentrating instead on one or two within each topic area. In many schools and colleges, teacher-examiners enabled their students to react with some spontaneity through regular

follow-up questions and to access top marks for interaction. Yet in some instances students were still allowed to respond to a predictable list of questions and to deliver mainly pre-learnt passages.

In most tests, the times given to each topic area (including the nominated topic) were fairly even; there were very few students whose interaction mark had to be reduced because one topic was discussed for less than the required minimum time of two minutes. However, a number of teachers devoted five minutes and more to the nominated topic; such practice denies students extended opportunities to respond to less predictable lines of questioning.

The majority of students were keen to communicate and to give more than minimal answers. They appeared to be genuinely interested in all topics and many found new, often surprising things to say. Very low interaction and also fluency marks were therefore rare.

Pronunciation marks were generally in the middle and upper mark bands, too. *Umlaute* and *v, r, z, ch* consonants remained the most common area of weakness; individual errors included *digital* and *Vegetarier*, both pronounced with a soft *g*. Many students had developed a good 'feel' for German intonation and were able to avoid typical English intonation patterns.

### **Knowledge of grammar and vocabulary**

Examiners commended many students on their competent, occasionally excellent grammatical performance. There were few students whose grammatical shortcomings made immediate communication difficult so that marks below the middle band rarely had to be awarded. Almost all students attempted at least some complex clauses and commanded a sufficiently wide range of vocabulary; idiomatic expressions such as '*ich bin davon überzeugt, meiner Meinung nach, auf der anderen Seite*' were regularly used. Some examiners criticised the over-use of '*Ich glaube, dass...*' to start sentences; this may often be the result of some teachers introducing too many questions with '*Glaubst du/Glauben Sie, dass....?*' The inappropriate use of *Diät* instead of *Ernährung* appeared much less frequently than in previous years whereas *im Fern* and *übergewicht* used as an adjective were still common vocabulary errors. Other recurring problems with lexis included *werden / bekommen* ('*man kann süchtig bekommen*'), *schlank / schlimm, entspannend / entspannen* ('*ich kann mich entspannend*').

Examiners again identified the use of verbs as the main area of grammatical weakness, mentioning above all consistent errors with subject-verb agreement and many students' inability to use the perfect tense accurately. Students often seemed to lack awareness of basic word order rules (e.g. inversion in main clauses, placing an adverb or *nicht* between subject and verb); after a modal verb the final infinitive was frequently omitted. As mentioned above, grammatical errors were rarely barriers to comprehension but examiners felt that with more consistent and careful attention to some basic rules of grammar many more students could have moved into the top band of marks.

### **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](http://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](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.