

# A-level **GERMAN**

Unit 1 Listening, Reading and Writing  
Report on the Examination

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This paper produced a similar spread of performance to that of previous June series. Most students seemed familiar with the various question types and followed the rubric correctly, although a few answered Question 1 in German instead of English which meant they could score no marks unless the answer happened to be a numeral. Poor handwriting was once again an issue for some students, especially in Question 9 where an illegible ending automatically meant no credit for that item. A disappointingly large number of students failed to gain marks in one or more of the non-verbal tasks because they wrote one answer on top of another and it was impossible to tell which answer they intended to put.

## **Section A**

### **Question 1**

Most students showed satisfactory understanding of the conversation about parenting.

- (a) This item was fairly well answered, but *Grenzen* was sometimes inappropriately translated as 'borders'.
- (b) Many students scored all 3 marks for this item.
- (c) This item discriminated well. The verb *ertragen* was not widely known but many students grasped the overall sense of the targeted sentence. A few students thought that Stefanie was the name of the daughter, despite the wording 'Stefanie's daughter' on the question paper.
- (d) The words *zufrieden* and *Ruhe* both caused difficulties for many students.
- (e) The first part of the answer, targeting the word *verwöhnen*, was challenging, but most students correctly understood the second point about the importance of love.

### **Question 2**

This non-verbal comprehension task was generally well handled. The most accessible items proved to be parts (a) and (d), while the hardest item was part (g), perhaps because the phrase *zu Hause genieße ich auch Momente der Stille* was not understood.

### **Question 3**

This question produced a wide range of performance. The most accessible item was part (a) and the hardest items were parts (e) and (f).

### **Question 4**

This listening task on sport in Mülheim required students to show comprehension of the recorded text by answering questions in German, albeit with no requirement to manipulate the language. Many students tackled the task well, but – as in previous series – a few resorted to transcribing lengthy sections of the recording which often resulted in a confusing and therefore unacceptable answer to the question set.

- (a) Almost all students gave the correct number in part (i), but part (ii) was less successfully tackled, sometimes because of confusion between the numbers 40 and 14. The English spelling 'thousand' was not acceptable here.
- (b) Most students identified the correct words on the recording, but wrong transcriptions such as *Ziegel-* instead of *Segel-* were common. Such answers did not show comprehension and could therefore not be credited. The English spelling *ice-* instead of *Eis-* was also not acceptable.
- (c) This item proved to be difficult, because many students did not distinguish correctly between the town of Mülheim which offered the courses and the sports clubs which supported them.
- (d) The word *Grundlagen* was not widely known. The wrong transcription *Grundladen* was quite common.

(e) Most students gave the correct answer in part (i), although a few did not realise that *BMX* was an acronym. In part (ii), the word *Verleih* caused difficulty, although it was possible to score the mark without using it.

(f) This item was generally well answered, although there was some confusion between *Jugend* and *Jungen*.

### Question 5

This non-verbal task on friendship proved to be reasonably accessible, with generally high scores in parts (a), (e) and (g). The hardest item was part (f), presumably because the verb *trösten* was not widely known.

### Question 6

This question, which required students to match advertisements to the type of product being marketed, was generally well answered. The only common difficulty was in part (c), where some students made a wrong connection between (*Mund-*)*wasser* and *Getränk*.

### Question 7

This question, where students had to match questions to their corresponding answers on the topic of clothing, produced a fairly wide range of responses. The most accessible item was part (a) and the least accessible items proved to be parts (f) and (g), both of which referred to clothing worn in schools.

### Question 8

This question with answers in German, was marked on the same lines as Question 4, ie for communication only. As in previous series, the quality of students' responses varied widely. At the top end of the range some students managed to write concise answers conveying all the required information. A few students copied out too much extraneous material from the text, which resulted in a confusing answer to the question set.

(a) Part (i) was fairly well answered, although a few students seemed to be confused between *Bauer* and *Bauarbeiter*. In part (ii) most students gave the correct information in their answer, but in some instances the inclusion of wrong information such as *Ferienwohnungen* invalidated the response.

(b) There were many good answers, but some students missed the crucial word *nur*.

(c) This question was fairly well answered, although there were instances of careless mis-copying of key words such as *Betreibe(r)* instead of *Betriebe*.

(d) Most students gave the correct information in part (i). The phrase *dichter als natürlicher Schnee* caused difficulty in part (ii).

(e) Part (i) was generally well answered. Part (ii) was a good discriminator at the top end of the attainment range, as students had to pick out the word *Naturerlebnis* from the explanation given. The inclusion of the phrase *im Vordergrund* showed incomplete comprehension and therefore invalidated the response.

### Question 9

On the whole students coped better with this question than in previous series. Instances of confusion between different parts of speech were rare and most students showed some

understanding of grammatical principles even if not all their answers were correct. This is the one question on the paper where spellings have to be 100% correct in order to merit a mark, so carelessness such as a missed *Umlaut* is costly.

(a) Many students wrote the correct ending, but some put the ending *-en*, perhaps because they did not know that *viele* behaves like an adjective, not an article.

(b) This item caused widespread difficulty. Not many students seemed to know that the masculine nominative ending after *der* is different from the ending after *ein*.

(c) Some students seemed not to realise that *die Gefahren* was plural and wrote *wird* instead of *werden*. A few students did not take account of the word *heute* and put the verb into the past tense.

(d) Most students gave the correct answer, applying the rule that if the article ends in *-n* then so does the adjective that follows it.

(e) This item was well answered; most students seemed to know how to manipulate a separable verb in a subordinate clause.

(f) The simple past (imperfect) tense of *bringen* was not widely known.

(g) The past participle of *finden* was by no means universally known.

(h) Many students gave the verb a plural ending, perhaps because they thought it went with *die Kinder*.

(i) This item proved to be the least accessible in the paper, with only a small minority of students knowing that *empfehlen* changes to *empfiehlt* in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular.

(j) The genitive adjectival ending seemed unfamiliar to many students.

### **Section B: Extended writing questions**

It was pleasing to read the work of many students who applied their knowledge and understanding of German effectively to their response to the specific task set. A minority of students appeared to be answering a different question from the one set; this may have occurred either because they were intent on reproducing a previously written essay or because they had not read the set question carefully enough.

Students' responses varied greatly in length. It was pleasing to read some high quality work of around the minimum length of 200 words. However most students wrote more than this and in many instances it enabled them to express a wider range of relevant ideas and opinions. In some cases excessive length simply meant repetition, which then had a restricting effect on the Content mark.

Many students structured their response thoughtfully, with clear paragraphing and with sensible introductions and conclusions. Many introductory paragraphs were suitably engaging and paved the way effectively for the main body of the response. The quality of conclusions was more variable. Some students summed up their thinking concisely but others either ended their writing too abruptly or merely repeated points made previously.

The quality of students' language – assessed in terms of Range of Vocabulary, Range of Structures and Accuracy – was not always consistent with the quality of their ideas. Some students had obviously gone to great lengths to learn plenty of topic-specific vocabulary and it was pleasing to see them use it effectively. Others barely exceeded GCSE level in terms of their lexis and therefore scored a low mark for Range of Vocabulary. There was a similar range of achievement in terms of grammatical structures: a strong AS student is able to go beyond the basic GCSE structures of common subordinate clauses, *um ... zu*, etc and use a wide variety of sentence types in order to express complex ideas.

Common linguistic errors in this series included:

*für eine gute Zeit* (meaning *um Spaß zu haben*)

misuse of *überall* instead of *im Großen und Ganzen*

confusion with verb constructions expressing agreement eg *Ich stimme, dass...*

misuse of *nur* eg *das nur Problem*

misuse of *Platz* to convey the idea of 'place'

confusion between *spannend* and *entspannt*

confusion between *ermutigen* and *fördern*

misuse of *Pause* to convey the idea of 'give us/them a break'

confusion between *streng* and *stark*

confusion between *Scheidung* and *Entscheidung*

confusion between *(in) Maßen* and *Maßnahmen*

confusion between *Ausdruck* and *Druck*

confusion between *jeder* and *jemand*

the invented word *Trink* instead of *Getränk*

confusion between *Leben*, *Leber* and *Liebe*

confusion between *Gefahr* and *gefährlich*

confusion between *Gewalt* and *gewalttätig*

confusion between the verb *kontrollieren* and the noun *Kontrolle*

misuse of *halten* in all senses of the English verb 'to stop'

confusion between *bekommen* and *werden*

confusion between *verbringen* and *ausgeben*

misuse of *Krimi* to mean 'crime'

### Question 10

This question, which asked students to write a newspaper article on their proposal to set up a cinema club, was the least popular of the three extended writing options. It produced a few really good responses, which managed to maintain a convincing tone as well as offering a good range of reasons for setting up the club and for the choice of films. A good approach to the second part of the question was to write a separate paragraph on each film or type of film, clearly explaining its appeal. It was not necessary to give detailed descriptions of individual films, but the question did specify *Filme* in the plural, so the mention of a single film or category of film was not sufficient. Stronger responses avoided getting 'bogged down' in basic information about times and meeting places.

A few students presented a compelling case for selecting German films and, although this is not a requirement of the specification, it made for interesting reading. Popular choices from the German-speaking world included *Lola rennt!*, *Die Welle* and *Goodbye Lenin*. A number of students explained appropriately how their club would provide opportunities to discuss as well as watch films, in some cases – rather ambitiously – with the director present.

The weaker responses to this question tended to fall into one of two categories. Some students did not fully understand the question and wrote a general essay about cinema, sometimes missing the point that this task was about a club, not about visits to an established cinema, and sometimes they included negative opinions of film watching which were totally out of place. Others devoted their entire piece to the appreciation of the work of a German director, which would be fine at A2 level but was not appropriate here.

### Question 11

A large number of students tackled this question, which asked them to assess whether alcohol was the worst type of drug and whether its consumption should be more strictly monitored or controlled. The best responses to this question offered a clear line of argument, followed through from paragraph to paragraph and supported by examples and justification. They outlined the problems caused by alcohol before going on to explain whether more restrictions are called for and why. The superlative adjective *schlimmste* in the question required students to compare alcohol with at least one other drug and most students did this; however it was not appropriate to write at great length about the effects of other drugs without making comparisons with alcohol.

Among the valid content points made were:

- Alcohol is too easy to purchase
- But alcohol sales prop up the economy
- Too much drinking by film stars and other role models
- Alcohol may not be the worst, but it is the most widespread
- Logically, alcohol cannot be the worst drug because it is legal
- Conversely, alcohol is dangerous precisely because it is legal
- Alcohol in reasonable quantities does no harm and may even have benefits to health
- Alcohol abuse is costly for the healthcare system
- The requirement to show ID for alcohol purchases should be more rigidly enforced
- The price of alcohol should be raised
- Any kind of advertising for alcohol should be banned

Many students seemed reasonably well informed about the effects of alcohol and other drugs, but some showed little awareness of relative severity when they, for example, referred in the same phrase to alcohol causing 'concentration difficulties and death'. In the second part of the question, some students went as far as to suggest that alcohol should be banned altogether. A few also argued that this might not have the desired effect because people would find ways of drinking illegally. As with all Section B responses, examiners were not looking for specific opinions; what counted was the student's ability to explain and justify whatever opinion they expressed.

### Question 12

This question, which asked students to evaluate the relative merits of marriage and partnership, was a popular choice. It lent itself well to the 'for and against' approach and many students divided the body of their essay into two well defined sections, dealing with the benefits of each lifestyle choice in turn. It was equally possible for students to adopt a definite stance either for or against marriage.

It was fine to use some of the headings from the question paper as starting points, providing that each idea was adequately developed. Some students tried to include too many different arguments and this could lead to a mainly descriptive response providing little opportunity for depth of treatment, which is one of the key criteria for the top Content band.

Opinions on the merits of marriage differed widely and, as noted above, any shade of opinion was acceptable as long as it was appropriately justified. A number of students referred to their own parents or to the parents of friends, which often allowed them to provide good examples of the points they were making. Among the aspects that students mentioned apart from those listed on the question paper were:

- The position of same-sex couples, eg 'marriage is wrong because same-sex couples cannot marry'
- Government initiatives to promote marriage
- Forced marriages
- The importance of marriage for some religions
- The costs of the wedding ceremony and reception

Comparisons across time enabled students to use different verb tenses which, while not a specific requirement at AS level, helped to enhance the mark for Range of Language.

A few students seemed unaware of the distinction between marriage and partnership and wrote instead about the pros and cons of living alone, with or without children. Such responses gained little credit for Content. Indeed lengthy paragraphs about parenthood without reference to marriage or partnership were inappropriate for this task.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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