

A-level **GERMAN**

Unit 3 Listening, Reading and Writing
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

Students were entered appropriately for the examination and the completion rate of the paper was evidence of its accessibility. There were some very strong performances across the range of questions and some outstanding answers in Section B, where students showed not only knowledge but an enthusiasm for the topics studied.

Very few scripts were difficult to read because of poor handwriting but students should still be reminded of the importance of legibility in a written paper. This applies across the paper and not just to long written responses, such as Questions 9 and 10 and Section B. When students are asked to write the correct letter or number in a box it is essential that the letter/number is easily identifiable. It is easier to cross out an incorrect answer and write the correct one alongside rather than write over it and make the intended response unclear and difficult to read.

Section A**Question 1**

Students coped well and the question seemed to be an assuring introduction to the paper.

Question 2

This exercise required especially careful listening as it contained a number of percentages and it is pleasing to report that the question was well done.

Question 3

Students were asked to identify six causes of youth criminality from a list of twelve. Performances on this question indicated a good level of comprehension and that students were familiar with the vocabulary.

Question 4

The vast majority of students showed an ability to cope with this more complex question. Students had two elements to consider – whether the speaker was for, against or undecided on the question of a speed limit and then give reasons why. Both parts were well answered.

Question 5

Students were generally successful in selecting the correct answer from three possibilities, although Question (d) caused some difficulty where the choice of answer proved challenging. The vocabulary should not have been a barrier here and this emphasises the need for close and careful reading of the text before selecting and writing the response.

Question 6

Judging by the number of very high marks for this question, students found it to be the most straightforward of the reading section. Vocabulary seemed to be widely known and students displayed good comprehension skills.

Question 7

This question presented some difficulty for students and proved to be a good discriminator and some students did score very highly. Students were asked to select the six most appropriate verbs from a list of ten and although the vocabulary was specialised, it was topic-specific. Students found the third, fourth and fifth boxes the most challenging.

Question 8

Many students were able to identify correctly whether a statement was true, false or not given in the text and entered R, F or NA in the response box. There were, unfortunately, examples of rubric infringement on this question as some students offered T, ?, NT, none of which were requested.

This highlights the need for schools and colleges to emphasise the importance of careful reading of the rubric in all questions.

Question 9

The translation proved to be a good discriminator. There were very few incomplete offerings and some were excellent. Those scoring high marks revealed knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary and an ability to express the text in fluent English. Schools and colleges are reminded that marks are awarded if the sense of the German is expressed in acceptable English, although key words cannot be ignored. For example, *mehrere* needs to be conveyed as *several* and not *many*. *Bereits* and *beraten* were not widely known but other vocabulary was within the scope of most students' knowledge. Some students do not always translate simple qualifiers such as *sehr* or *leider*, which are important and others leave blanks from time to time. Schools and colleges are reminded, however, that marks are awarded in discrete sections and it is, therefore, worth attempting all possible parts of the exercise.

Question 10

Each sentence has four elements, each worth one mark discretely awarded. Although past reports have alluded to areas in need of attention, it is still worth schools and colleges reminding students to be aware of the need to make a clear distinction between upper and lower case as capitalisation is an element of grammatical accuracy. Correct spellings are also important; *Arbeitgeber* and not *Arbeitsgeber*, *obdachlos* and not *obdachloss*. Accurate alternatives are accepted but paraphrases are rejected; *hoffen in diesem Land zu leben* cannot be translated as *hoffen hier zu leben* or *hoffen bei uns zu leben*.

This year the paper tested the comparative, the perfect tense with irregular past participle, *zu* + infinitive, the passive voice, *seit* + present tense, the present participle, cases and adjectival endings.

The topic this year was *Multicultural Society*.

- (a) This question was well done on the whole, but problems included the spelling of *Österreich* often without the umlaut and *dreißig* was too often written as *dreizig* where words were used instead of figures.
- (b) The main problem here was one of vocabulary with many students unable to render *Flüchtlinge* correctly. Very few problems were encountered in relation to the other elements of this question.
- (c) As indicated above, *employers* caused some difficulty, as did the past participle of *anbieten*.
- (d) This question was generally well done, although students might be reminded of the word order with adverbs of time, manner and place.
- (e) The overwhelming number of students found elements of this question very accessible and many tackled the whole sentence successfully.

Section B

It is very encouraging and pleasing to report that many answers to questions in Section B showed thorough knowledge of the topics and by implication careful preparation prior to the examination. However, in order to help students to continue to improve it is useful to underline comments made in previous reports that still pertain.

A handful of students still do not enter the number of the question in the box provided or sometimes write the incorrect number (e.g. Question 12a and they have answered Question 12b or

they have written Question 13a and have attempted Question 14a). The importance of this simple administrative procedure should be reinforced in schools and colleges.

The introduction to the questions gives sound advice about how to gain the highest marks and attention should be drawn to these bullet points.

The most impressive essays:

- adhere to the set question and make the response relevant
- show detailed knowledge of the topic
- support points made by examples and evidence
- show understanding of the task by appropriate levels of analysis and evaluation and personal comment
- are well-planned and have a logical structure
- use appropriate vocabulary
- are written in accurate German.

On the whole schools and colleges are preparing students well for Section B but, again, a couple of points need to be emphasised.

All questions, irrespective of topic, are marked to the same criteria. It is important that students take heed of the wording of the set question.

Students should not try to be too adventurous in their writing. Some answers do not convey the points the student is trying to make because command of the language does not allow it. It is much better for the student to make points in German they know to be correct and that will be given credit. The content marks determine the marks that can be awarded for vocabulary, complexity of language and accuracy.

If the study of a region is chosen students are advised to ensure that reference is made to the whole region. A single town is probably not enough to allow sufficient breadth, depth or detail. It is better to select a region and use towns/cities as supporting evidence.

Similarly, in the study of a period of 20th century history, some students choose extensive periods which do not allow for sufficient examination and analysis of that era.

For Questions 13 to 15, schools and colleges have a free choice of the many authors, playwrights, poets, film directors, musicians, architects and artists who can be studied in order to answer the range of questions set. Schools and colleges are advised to consult the relevant section of the specification for information and ideas on the areas likely to be examined. Many answers begin with a biography of the author/playwright/director etc and this is not at all necessary unless it makes a valid point relevant to the title. The introductory paragraph should basically set the scene for what is about to follow.

Question 11

The relatively few answers on Question (a) were very well answered. Responses considered a wide range of economic, social, demographic, historic and geographic factors and how they have shaped the region as it is today. Illustrative examples helped to make many of these answers very impressive indeed. By contrast, some answers to Question (b) were rather descriptive and often superficial. It is not enough at this level to detail which shops or restaurants tourists can visit; there has to be more meaningful analysis of the reasons why the region is worth visiting and for which groups.

Question 12

Some answers still do not make the exact period of study clear from the start and the occasional answer does not refer to a period at all. The best answers to Question (a) took advantage of the ample opportunity afforded by the title to explore how life improved/worsened and for whom. Consequences of events or influences of personalities were analysed and points were made more convincing by detailed examples from the period. Similarly in Question (b) some students examined more than one event and provided sufficient evidence to support their conclusions about the most significant one. Essays in the top band used facts to support convincing lines of argument. Examiners were impressed by the overall knowledge of the periods studied but this must be allied to analysis and evaluation.

Question 13

Both questions inspired some very impressive responses. In Question (a) some students argued convincingly as to why they would not recommend the work(s) studied and others gave equally commendable reasons as to why they would. There was an impressive level of personal comment supported by detailed examples and evidence from texts. In Question (b) there was much stimulating discussion about how convincing and believable the characters were found to be and some students did argue that they found certain characters totally unbelievable. When awarding marks for both essays the vital factors were the knowledge and understanding of the task and the level of analysis and not whether examiners shared the students' view.

Question 14

There were too few answers on poetry to offer any meaningful comment. However, answers to both Questions (a) and (b) revealed very impressive knowledge of the chosen plays. Balanced and detailed discussion led to many deserved awards of "Good" or "Very good" for content. Some students wrote convincingly about just one theme (for example the power of money in *Der Besuch der alten Dame*) and others wrote about several themes before saying which one was the most interesting. Both approaches were perfectly acceptable as long as arguments could be sustained when discussing a single theme and the treatment of several themes was not shallow. Students should be aware that direct quotation is not a prerequisite to access the top bands but it is very often a strong supportive tool – as long as the quote is accurate and not a paraphrase or obviously grammatically incorrect.

Question 15

As with other questions, it is very helpful if examiners know from the start whose work is being studied. This was the most popular choice of cultural topic and most students chose a film director as the focus for their answer. In Question (a) the best answers addressed a range of elements that made the work into *etwas Faszinierendes*, including story-line, characters, humour, themes, variety of techniques, entertainment value, all of which were adequately illustrated and well evaluated. Similarly in Question (b) there were many perceptive and thoughtful answers about the intentions of the work(s) expressed in a mature and fluent style. There were some answers that relied mostly on narration and the lack of comment and analysis led to a lower award of marks.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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