

A-level **GERMAN**

Unit 1 Listening, Reading and Writing
Report on the Examination

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This paper produced a slightly wider spread of performance to that of previous series. Many students were evidently well prepared and some produced German of very high quality for AS level, showing a secure understanding of the specified grammar and appropriate topic-related vocabulary. On the other hand, some students struggled not only with the extended writing task but also with the non-verbal questions, suggesting that they had not covered the specification in sufficient depth. As noted in previous reports, a few students lost potential credit by answering Question 1 in German instead of English. Illegibility seemed to be a bigger problem this year, especially in Question 9 where only correctly spelled answers gained marks. Once again a few students wrote one answer on top of another in the non-verbal questions, which meant no mark could be awarded.

Section A

Question 1

This transfer of meaning task on sport was well understood by most students. In a few instances, responses included insufficient detail for marks to be awarded.

- (a) Many students conveyed three out of the four possible points successfully. Some mistook *Gehirn* for *Gehör*.
- (b) There were many correct responses, but some students omitted 'almost'.
- (c) This item was well answered.
- (d) Most students knew the meaning of *Glotze*, but some thought it meant screens in general rather than TV.
- (e) This was the most demanding item in Question 1 and produced a wide range of attainment. The word *fördern* and the phrase *mit Sportvereinen zusammenarbeiten* presented particular challenges for students. Some students confused *Schule* with *Schüler*.

Question 2

This non-verbal listening comprehension task was fairly well handled. Part (b) was marginally the most difficult item, perhaps because students had to infer that Jan was getting married from his reference to the wedding day and invitations to relatives.

Question 3

Many students coped well overall with this multiple-choice listening task. The most accessible items proved to be parts (e) and (f) and the least accessible were items (a) and (g).

Question 4

This listening task on IT in the classroom required students to answer questions in German. The accuracy of their German was not assessed, but they had to convey all required information unambiguously and in a few instances linguistic errors impeded communication. Those students who tried to transcribe lengthy sections of the recording often failed to gain marks because they included incorrect or irrelevant material.

- (a) This item produced many correct answers. No credit was given for *Urteil* written as a single word as this betrayed a lack of comprehension of the phrase *um Teil der Gesellschaft zu sein*.
- (b) This item was generally well tackled. The inclusion of *jedes Kind* or a similar indication of 'one netbook per child' was essential.
- (c) This was the most challenging item in Question 4. Students had to realise that the verb *verstehen* referred to the lessons, not the netbooks, so answers such as *Sie haben die Netbooks besser verstanden* were not acceptable. For the second marking point many students struggled to convey the word *konzentrierter* in a clearly recognisable form.
- (d) There was a good number of correct responses, but some students had difficulty unravelling the word order of the recorded sentence and therefore did not convey the meaning clearly enough.

(e) In part (i) there was some confusion between *aufgeben* and *ausgeben*. Part (ii) produced a good number of correct responses, with many students choosing to convey the required idea – that parents didn't want to spend 900 euros on a netbook – in their own words.

(f) This item was a good discriminator. Some students mistook *immer* for *immer mehr*, which invalidated their response.

Question 5

Most students coped fairly well with this matching task on the topic of friendship. Part (b) gained the largest number of correct responses and part (c) proved to be the most challenging, perhaps because the word *eifersüchtig* was unfamiliar.

Question 6

This gap-fill task was mainly a lexical exercise but students also had to take into account the different verb endings, third person singular and plural. Many students found the task as a whole quite challenging. The most accessible items proved to be the second and seventh gaps, while the least accessible were the fourth and eighth gaps, perhaps because students did not know *ersetzen* and *sich erholen*.

Question 7

This non-verbal task on the topic of advertising was well tackled on the whole. The statements which students most often correctly identified as false were 'C', 'F' and 'P'. The statement that was least often correctly identified was 'D', while the statement that was most often incorrectly identified was 'B'. The fact that statement 'B' was already in the negative form may have confused some students. A very small number of students appeared to have misread the rubric and specified the true instead of false statements.

Question 8

Like Question 4, this question required students to give answers in the target language, but the assessment was purely on the basis of successful communication. The sub-questions were phrased in such a way as to encourage students to pick out key words and phrases from the text rather than copying lengthy sections of the stimulus text. Those who did the latter often gained little or no credit because their response was not a clear answer to the sub-question.

(a) This item was a good discriminator. The syntax of the first sentence was complex and students had to work hard to identify *Verbindung* as a key concept.

(b) This item was far from straightforward but many students tackled it successfully. A few students mentioned the Porsche inappropriately, perhaps because they had not understood how the phrase *besser als andere* fitted into the sentence.

(c) Almost all students scored the point in part (i), whereas part (ii) proved to be much more elusive, with many students appearing not to understand the phrase *gewannen ... an Beliebtheit*.

(d) The required answer here was short – a single word would suffice – but this sub-question proved to be an effective discriminator, testing comprehension of the prepositions *von* and *auf* when used with the verb *sich verbreiten*.

(e) Again a single word was sufficient, but the correct answer required comprehension of the complex sentence *Der Öko-Boom ... aufgenommen* and many students found that challenging.

(f) This item was well answered, despite the rather unconventional product being described.

(g) As with parts (d) and (e), all that was required here was a single word, but students had to understand the whole of the last sentence in order to identify that word. The success rate here was relatively low.

Question 9

This is the only question in GERM1 where spellings have to be 100% correct in order for a mark to be awarded. As in previous series, some students failed to gain potential credit either because they did not distinguish clearly enough between different endings, such as *-en* and *-em*, or because

they misspelled the given word, e.g. they miscopied *riesig-* as *reisig-*. That said, some students scored a good mark in this question as a whole, showing a thorough grasp of verb formation and adjective endings.

- (a) The wording of the first sentence *Früher war...* indicated that the gap needed to be filled by a past tense verb, but many students wrote *könnte* or *kann* instead of *konnte*.
- (b) Very few students produced the correct imperfect tense form *wusste*.
- (c) There was a good number of correct answers here.
- (d) Adjectival endings before plural nouns often cause difficulty, and many students wrote *passenden* instead of *passende*.
- (e) This item was well answered.
- (f) Some students wrote the plural form *lassen* instead of the third person singular *lässt*.
- (g) Surprisingly few students knew that *fernseht* was written as one word at the end of a subordinate clause.
- (h) This item produced a lot of correct answers, but the wrong ending *-es* was sometimes given.
- (i) Relatively few students were able to produce the correct perfect tense form of *zunehmen*. Some may not have realised that most verbs with a prefix are conjugated in the same way as they are without the prefix, i.e. *zunehmen* follows the same pattern as *nehmen*.
- (j) Correct answers here were elusive, perhaps because many students did not register the past time clue *vor drei Jahren*.

Section B: Extended writing questions

Most students chose a title about which they had something worthwhile to say. Many responses showed a good understanding of the requirements of the task. In a few instances the response matched the topic but not the set question, perhaps because the students concerned were reusing material from a previously written essay. Most students wrote at least 200 words as recommended on the examination paper and some wrote significantly more, albeit not necessarily to their advantage as long responses sometimes lacked focus and direction.

A high Content mark was awarded to those students who remained focused on the question throughout their response, presented their ideas in a logical sequence and backed up their opinions with suitable evidence. As in previous series, many students began with an engaging introduction, but the quality of concluding paragraphs was much more variable, with some students apparently finishing in mid-air with no real attempt to bring their ideas together. In a few cases vocabulary errors hindered communication and therefore affected the Content mark; future students are advised never to guess German words and stick to what they know to be correct.

Some responses showed a high level of linguistic awareness and included a broad range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, such as conditional clauses, verbs with *zu*, the pluperfect tense, the genitive case and adjectival nouns. However examiners do not use a tick list of specific structures to assess the quality of students' language; rather they look for unpretentious idiomatic German which conveys nuances of meaning clearly. Among the common sources of error in this series were:

- confusion between *müssen nicht* and *dürfen nicht*
- *meinen* instead of *bedeuten*
- misuse of *hilfsbereit*, where *nützlich* would have been more appropriate
- *streng* instead of *stark*
- *überall* instead of *im Großen und Ganzen*
- confusion between *einige* and *eigene*
- confusion between different possessive adjectives e.g. *dein/sein*
- *spenden* instead of *ausgeben* or *verbringen*
- *Zeit passieren* instead of *Zeit verbringen*
- confusion between *Geschichte* and *Gesicht(er)*

- *jemand* instead of *jeder*
- misuse of *wer* as a relative pronoun
- *nur* misused as an adjective instead of *einzig*

Question 10

This question, which asked students to consider whether music-making should be compulsory in schools, was the most popular of the three options but on average the least well done. Most students quoted and expanded on some or all of the quotations provided in the question, sometimes to good effect but sometimes not. A number of students equated intelligence simplistically to the acquisition of knowledge and a few clearly thought that the phrase *rappen gegen Gewalt* meant ‘rapping in a violent way’, i.e. the opposite of its actual meaning. In future students are advised only to use such quotations from the examination paper (a) if they understand them and (b) if they are able to use them as a springboard for developing their own ideas.

Among the good points made in support of having every child learn music were: the benefits of singing in a choir such as team work and going on trips to other communities and countries; the use of technology in music-making; how much discipline it takes to learn an instrument properly; the use of music in lessons to help remember facts in other subjects including German; and the potential to pursue music as a career. Many students expressed appropriate counter-arguments such as: the high cost of individual music lessons and instruments; the fact that not everyone is musical; and there are simply better ways of learning about other cultures. Some responses were spoilt by a one-sided conclusion, e.g. *Musik machen ist bestimmt ein Muss für alle*, when they had expressed a number of negative points in the body of their essay.

A few students did not grasp the implications of the question and wrote merely about listening to music instead of making it. Descriptions of visits to music festivals were occasionally included, but were rarely relevant. Likewise essays which focused on the image of musicians were worthy of only limited credit.

Question 11

A reasonable number of students tackled this question, which asked them to explain the concept of work-life balance and discuss how it might be achieved. Some responses showed real insight and produced plenty of ideas for maintaining the correct balance, such as not working from home, switching off mobiles at weekends and evenings and giving priority to the family. A few students wrote personally about how they suffered from having over-worked parents; such personal accounts were acceptable as long as their wider significance was explained. Very few students agreed with the quotation *Wer länger arbeitet, lebt länger*.

Although the question was intended to refer to the adult world, some students wrote about the challenge of maintaining a balance between their school or college studies and free time. Often these responses were rather shallow, but some made a good number of points and some were able to draw sensible parallels between school or college and paid work. The option of part-time work was recommended by many, although the financial implications of that choice were often overlooked.

The weaker responses to this question tended to focus on issues other than work-life balance. Some students wrote about stress and how to combat it; while stress was certainly relevant to the title a good response needed to cover other aspects as well. A few students wrote GCSE-style essays either on their hobbies and interests or on the importance of a healthy lifestyle; neither of these approaches could score a high mark at AS level.

Question 12

This question, which asked students to evaluate the pros and cons of a multi-generation household, was fairly popular. On average it produced the best answers out of the three options in Section B. Although the question paper provided fewer props for this question than for the other options, most students who chose it were able to put forward a good number of arguments on both sides before coming to a suitable conclusion. A few students wrote about their own experiences of living with grandparents, which was fine as long as they provided suitable analysis and justification.

The most commonly quoted points in favour of multi-generation households included: the usefulness of grandparents in providing childcare; the money saved by having one property instead of two; the value of grandparents passing on their wisdom and experiences to the youngest generation; the opportunity for children to teach their grandparents how to use 21st century technology; the possibility of frail grandparents being better cared for in the home rather than in residential care; and the value of the extended family unit for its own sake. Among the counter-arguments were: the increased stress when people with very different lifestyles and preferences live under one roof; pressure on personal space; and the observation that frail grandparents might actually be better cared for elsewhere.

Examples of irrelevance were fewer in this question than in the other two options. A few students did not grasp the sense of *unter einem Dach* and wrote about visiting their grandparents, while a small number focused too much on the past and wrote an account of how the extended family functioned a century ago. One or two students missed the point altogether and wrote an essay on marriage, perhaps because they misunderstood the reference to *zusammenleben* in the title.

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