

# Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2010

GCE

GCE German (6GN01) Paper 1

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# Unit 1

## Assessment Principles

This paper carries 50 marks. It consists of a conversation between the visiting or teacher examiner on an AS topic area chosen by the candidate.

### General Topic Areas are:

Youth Culture and Concerns  
Lifestyle: Health and Fitness  
The World Around Us  
Education and Employment.

Stimulus cards are provided for each area. Before starting the examination, the candidate has 15 minutes to prepare him/herself for the examination with the stimulus card provided. He or she may make notes of up to one side of A4 in this time, and may refer to these notes during the examination.

The conversation lasts between 8 and 10 minutes and is made up of two parts. In Part A, the candidate is asked 4 questions relating to the stimulus card which are set by Edexcel. These questions are mandatory and may be repeated, but not re-phrased in any way, although the examiner may change them to use 'Du' rather than 'Sie'. This is the only change that can be made. They must be asked in the order provided and at the outset of the examination. The first two questions relate specifically to information in the stimulus material, the second two to the wider issues developing from the stimulus material. It is expected that the candidate will give answers which are as full and detailed as possible. The candidate's understanding of this stimulus-specific topic area is marked out of 4.

In Part B, the examiner should move away from the specific topic on the stimulus card and develop a wider conversation about the general topic area. The candidate's understanding of the general topic area is marked out of a total of 10.

The marks of 8 for Quality of Language (Accuracy), 8 for Quality of Language (Lexis) and 20 for response apply to the test as a whole.

## Candidates' Responses

As is often the case in January, the range of candidates varied from very good candidates who are taking the examination early and weaker candidates who were re-sitting. There was also a good proportion of native or near-native speakers.

'Lifestyle, Health and Fitness' remained the most popular topic choice, perhaps because it seems to offer the most seamless transition from GCSE, but 'Youth Culture and Concerns' is growing in popularity. 'The World Around Us' was relatively unpopular, and there were few candidates who tackled 'Education and Employment'. Candidates who chose the more unpopular topics often performed well, perhaps because they have a genuine interest in these topics, perhaps because there is a clearer idea of progression from GCSE.

Candidates and teachers should bear in mind that this examination requires the candidate to demonstrate the ability to express and justify opinions and conclusions, based on good understanding and knowledge of the topic area. Candidates need therefore to research and prepare the sub-topics carefully. Native speakers, especially those from international centres, should bear in mind that it is not enough simply to have a conversation in fluent German. They must have evidence of good understanding and reflection upon the sub-topics - they cannot rely on residual knowledge only.

Examiners reported that the stimulus texts were well-selected and appropriate to the demands of the examination. Some teacher-examiners did not adhere to the prescribed distribution of cards at the front of the teacher-examiner handbook. This is a requirement of the examination. Equally, teacher-examiners must remember that asking supplementary questions in Section A is not permitted: questions may be repeated, 'Sie' may be changed to 'du', but these are the only changes to the questions allowed. Examiners reported that there were instances where candidates were interrupted when they began what appeared to be a wrong answer and questions being repeated after the candidate had completed a wrong answer. No credit can be given for answers in such cases.

## Comments on particular stimulus cards:

### Youth Culture and Concerns stimulus 1

Both teacher-examiners and candidates offered varied pronunciations of 'Emos'. A number of weaker candidates had difficulties with questions 2 and 3, despite repetition. Quite a few candidates heard 'Ihnen' as 'ihnen' in question 3 and answered about the Emos' choice of clothes, despite the 'persönlich' being there.

### Youth Culture and Concerns stimulus 2

Again, varied pronunciation of 'Clique' by both teacher-examiners and candidates. Candidates often performed well on the questions for this card.

### Lifestyle, Health and Fitness stimulus 1

Some candidates struggled to answer questions 1 and 2, although many managed extensive and appropriate answers to questions 3 and 4.

### Lifestyle, Health and Fitness stimulus 2

A number of candidates found it hard to answer question 2, but many managed very good answers to question 4.

### World Around Us stimulus 1

Candidates' responses to question 3 sometimes did not fit the question, with answers being more suited to 'was machst du für die Umwelt zu Hause?'

### World Around Us stimulus 2

Candidates generally responded well to this card.

### Education and Employment stimulus 1 & 2

There were relatively few candidates who chose this topic. Candidates who did choose it often performed very well.

## Quality of Language

The marks are allocated for accuracy, and for range of lexis and structures. Weaker candidates often had difficulties with tenses, agreement with subject and verb, gender, adjectival endings and word order, and the range of lexis and structures used was limited. Such candidates are often defeated by subordination and offer only 'weil' and 'dass' as connectives, frequently with inaccurate word order. The stronger candidates were able to use a wider variety of structure and expressions, some being impressive.

The better the candidate has prepared him/herself for the linguistic and thematic demands of this examination, the greater the range of lexis and structures he/she should be able to employ. Some candidates had obviously pre-learnt whole swathes of text, which they then reproduced in the examination. This tended to depress marks as candidates' intonation and pronunciation was often negatively affected by this and also because the candidate is expected to speak spontaneously. Teacher-examiners need to interrupt long recitations of pre-learnt material to ensure that the candidate can display genuine communication skills.

Although the questions in Section B are to an extent predictable, a candidate who has rehearsed endlessly will not produce a spontaneous or genuine performance. Some teacher-examiners persist in asking the same questions, in exactly the same order, of candidates choosing the same topic in a centre. This does not tend to produce a genuine conversation. Teacher-examiners should have a wide variety of questions on the topic, and should also bear in mind the need to move away from the specific topic area on the card and explore other sub-topics. It is also important that the questions asked allow the candidate to show progression from GCSE. Personal questions such as 'Treibst du persönlich viel Sport?' are often not very productive, producing long lists of sports or even days of the week. An alternative would be 'Treibt man genug Sport in der Schule?' which would allow the candidate to formulate an opinion rather than be merely anecdotal.

## Response

Candidates' responses varied considerably, and often depended on the way the examination was conducted. Teacher-examiners should bear in mind the need to enable the candidate to demonstrate his or her own fluency in spoken German.

As mentioned above, examiners should not permit the recital of long passages of pre-learnt material - it is the best policy to interrupt the candidate and ask a follow-up question. Candidates should never be encouraged to respond to a pre-arranged series of prompts. A rehearsed recited performance cannot achieve high marks.

## Understanding

The performance of candidates in Section A depended on how well they had understood the passage, and how well they could respond to the set questions. Examiners felt that although the specification envisages a 50/50 time split for Parts A and B, in practice a reasonable amount of time for Part A is 2 - 3 minutes.

Good, well-prepared candidates who did not perform particularly well in the unpredictable Part A were able to gain good marks for understanding in Part B, the General Topic Area. As mentioned above, candidates do best when they have thoroughly prepared and researched all the sub-topics mentioned in the specification. Examiners should be aware of the need to cover a variety of sub-topics in Part B so that candidates can show the range of their understanding and knowledge.

## Conduct of the Examination

The majority of teacher-examiners conducted the examination well. There were, however, a number issues which arose:

- Timing was accurate overall, with most tests between 8 and 10 minutes. Most examiners realised that continuing section A for 4 minutes was unrealistic: many candidates gave full and accurate answers in about 2 minutes. This is not a problem, as section B is the more taxing part anyway, and is a better discriminator. Please note that very short tests are subject to penalties.
- Recording quality: cassette tapes continue to be the most popular recording choice, although CDs are increasing popular. Some centres even submitted work on USB sticks. Whatever mode of recording is chosen, it is vital that the recordings are clear, with both teacher-examiner and candidate audible. A few centres submitted material where there were no recordings, others had to be advised to request special consideration for candidates who could not be reliably assessed due to the extremely poor quality of the recording.
- Oral forms: it is greatly frustrating to examiners to have to fill out forms for centres. Each candidate must complete the OR1 form, which must be submitted with the recordings.
- Some examiners tried to rephrase the questions in section A, or asked supplementary questions in this section, which is not permissible. As stated above, the questions may only be changed by the use of 'du' and must otherwise be asked in the format and order on the examiner version of the stimulus card.



## Advice and Guidance

- **Topic:** Candidates should choose a General Topic Area which interests them. Further guidance can be found on the Edexcel website. Candidates need to have the opportunity to think in depth about the topic area chosen, and the many related sub-topics. Success comes from good preparation, detailed knowledge and the ability to express and justify opinions.
- **Conduct:** Examiners should pay careful attention to the guidelines as given in the Specification, especially for random sequence of stimulus cards, and for overall timing. The Unit 1 test lasts 8-10 minutes. Short tests cannot access the highest marks, and long tests are not listened to after 10 minutes. Any pre-learned material must be interrupted.
- **Oral Form:** Please note that there is a form to be filled in for each candidate, and should be submitted with the recording. Centres are advised to take note of any comments made on the Oral Form, as in many cases, this is the only feedback.
- **Recording:** Good sound quality is essential. If using cassettes, please use new cassettes. It is also important to have the right balance between the candidates' and examiners' voices. Neck microphones are ideal, but free-standing microphones should be angled towards the candidate, whose voice is normally quieter than the examiner's. Recordings must never be paused or stopped, except in an emergency, which must be fully explained in writing to Edexcel. All mobile phones must be switched off (not just on silent, as there is electronic interference) and there should be no background noise. Centres should check that every candidate has actually been recorded, that it is audible and at the correct speed. Please check the length of the cassette, whether it is C60 or C90 so that the tape does not run out in the middle of the test. Please label the cassette as well as the box and ensure that the cassettes are rewound to the beginning before posting them off. Markers can lose an enormous amount of valuable time if they have to rewind many cassettes.
- **Handbook of Instructions to Centres:** Teacher Examiners should be thoroughly acquainted with this publication, as observing correct procedures is vital. It is recommended that teacher examiners attend training sessions at Edexcel if at all possible. An Oral Training Guide is also available from Edexcel to help teachers to prepare for this examination. It is unfortunate that candidates are sometimes deprived of marks because the test has been incorrectly conducted. Teacher examiners have the responsibility to prepare adequately, in order to bring out the best from their candidates. All information relating to the oral tests is available on [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com)
- **Administration:** Centres should take care to enclose the correct paperwork with the recordings: i.e. the oral forms, the attendance register and a note of any unusual circumstances e.g. fire alarm, candidate illness. Care should be taken with packaging: unfortunately, quite a few cassettes arrive in a damaged state.

## Advice and Guidance for Summer 2010 Unit 3 (6GN03):

### Understanding and Spoken Response

Please note that this assesses listening as well as speaking skills.

1. **Issue:** Candidates should choose an issue which has the potential for debate. A stance must be stated and maintained.
2. **Conduct:** When discussing the chosen issue, examiners must take the opposing viewpoint, to enable candidates to reveal their ability to justify and debate. The presentation must take **no longer than 1 minute**, and must be interrupted if it shows signs of continuing. The subsequent discussion should last **no longer than 4 minutes**. Under no circumstances can the whole oral test relate to the chosen issue, as this reveals nothing about the candidate's ability to discuss unpredictable areas. This part of the oral should last **6-8 minutes**. The whole oral should last for **11-13 minutes**. **Keeping to these times is of the utmost importance**. Centres are meticulous about the timing of written papers: the same rigour must apply to oral tests.
3. **OR3: Oral Chosen Issue Forms;** Centres should ensure that they are using the new form. Oral chosen issue forms and recordings will be returned to centres, and in addition, in certain cases, a letter outlining any particular difficulties e.g. timing, or quality of recording.
4. **Oral Training Guide:** centres may like to access the Oral Training Guide at <http://www.edexcel.com/notices/Pages/otg-german.aspx>. This is a guide with accompanying sound files.
5. **Chaperones:** please check on [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com) for the Handbook of Instructions to Centres, which explains that a chaperone is required if the tests are conducted by a Visiting Examiner.

## Statistics

### Unit 1 Spoken Expression and Response

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	40	35	31	27	23
Uniform boundary mark	60	48	42	36	30	24

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