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Edexcel

Examiner's Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In German (WGN04)

Research, Understanding and Written Response

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Introduction

Candidates had been well prepared for this paper and were clearly familiar with the topic areas covered. Most candidates were able to attempt all parts of the paper, with only a few omitting some more challenging questions. Whilst many fared well with the comprehension questions in Sections A and B and were able to rely on their own experience of the language to select relevant detail and draw conclusions, Section C provided more of a challenge.

Section A – Listening

The opening multiple-choice questions were accessible to most and even the more challenging parts such as 1(b), 2(b) and 2(d) could be deduced by elimination of wrong answers.

It is vital that candidates do not rush into committing themselves to an answer. At this level, they should listen for the gist of the whole passage: a word which is mentioned in the recording does not necessarily lead them to the answer in the question paper.

Hörtext 4 (the hearing text) was particularly well answered. Most candidates were able to identify '*Grünanlagen*' as the correct answer to (a) although many were unable to make the link to the correct answer (*Vormittag*) in (b). The majority of candidates were able to insert a word in the gaps which was grammatically suitable; weaker candidates often ended up with a sentence which made no grammatical sense.

In the final question of this section, candidates fared well and were mostly aware that short answers are sufficient. For example, in (c), one mark could be gained simply for identifying that people thought of the German colonial period positively. Their desire to learn the German language was not a correct answer.

Here as in Section B it is important for candidates to be familiar with a range of interrogative forms so that they answer the question which is being asked rather than the one which they imagine they are reading. For example, in (e) many candidates failed to secure the mark by writing something along the lines of *Es ist schade für Kamerun*, thus merely reiterating the gist of the question rather than explaining the correct reason for Herr Toukam's disappointment, i.e. that the expatriate Cameroonians could not help to rebuild their own country.

Targeted lifts are sometimes possible in this section, but more usually it is sensible for candidates to attempt an answer in their own words which reflect their understanding of the spoken passage. This would have helped many candidates in (d); the answer was often given as *Sie denken, Deutschland sei ein reiches Land* which was insufficient. The correct answer, showing people's thwarted expectations, was *Es ist schwierig, viel Geld zu verdienen*.

Section B – Reading and Grammar

Again, candidates made a confident start to this section often gaining full marks for Question 5. Part (d) proved the most challenging since the whole of the third paragraph had to be digested before the correct answer could be chosen.

Answers to Question 6 were often very clearly expressed, but often candidates failed to score a mark because of their omission of a crucial detail. For example, in (b) it was necessary to state that rock musicians brought money from the west rather than merely that they earned a lot of money; in (c) it was necessary to mention the loss of socialist ideals specifically amongst young people.

A few candidates thought that socialism was a western ideology. This therefore made their answers to (c) wrong.

Some candidates were tempted to write far too much in their answers. Reference to the published mark scheme will show the essence of each answer. Longer answers can often miss the point or may start with a wrong detail before eventually giving the correct answer which is therefore negated by what has come first.

In Question 7, specific understanding of the text was necessary to gain the marks. Whilst most managed (a) and (b) the other questions often caused problems because candidates were tempted to copy a complete passage verbatim from the text without any attempt to process the information. In (c) for example, the differing statistics given in the third paragraph were not a sufficient explanation of the varying effects in Germany and the US. Nor was it correct to write that there is more industry in Germany. Candidates had to read beyond the words of the text to understand that Germany laid greater store by its industry than America.

Question 8 was a challenge even for some clearly fluent speakers of German.

8(a): The transfer from the present passive to the present active with *man* was impossible for some who produced a nonsensical sentence such as *Wenn man leer ist, bringt man den Topf zurück* (sic).

8(b): This was well answered by those who were familiar with the conditional perfect tense of modal verbs, although some lost the mark by adding *sollten* rather than *sollen* at the end.

8(c): Some candidates failed to spot the comma at the end of the new stem and therefore failed to produce the required relative clause.

8(d): Many candidates reformulated this correctly using a conjugated verb in a suitable tense in the *damit* clause.

8(e): There were many acceptable versions of the new sentence which meant that the majority of candidates scored a mark here. Some lost out by changing the verb form which either did not agree with the subject or was incorrect (e.g. *übergenehmt*).

8(f): This time the relative clause was mostly correctly produced.

8(g): Many candidates were clearly aware of the rules of subordinate word order.

8(h): The use of *nach* meaning “according to” was necessary to score a mark here. Whilst many knew the meaning they were not all able to use the dative case correctly if the plural article was inserted.

8(i): A clause with *damit* or an infinitive clause with *um...zu...* was often used successfully here.

8(j): Few of the candidates were able to manipulate the verb to produce a present subjunctive to indicate indirect speech.

Section C

It is crucial that candidates understand the nature of what is expected in the final essay. Since marks awarded for Content and Communication (out of 15) and Critical analysis, Organisation and development (out of 20) as well as for Quality of language (out of 5), it is crucial that some examination time is spent planning the response to the specific question asked. Many candidates who wrote fluent essays in German of a very high quality often scored low marks for the other two categories because their response lacked relevance or were simply a regurgitated version of everything they knew about the topic or work.

Most importantly, candidates should realise that the thrust of the questions set is mostly in the second part. The descriptive first part is simply a *Sprungbrett* to allow them to show relevant knowledge resulting from their reading or research. To access the higher mark bands they must engage in an analysis of the issues. Essays which relied too much on description and less on evaluation fared poorly.

Geografisches Gebiet

There were interesting and well-informed submissions for example on Switzerland with its limitations on cows which produce too much methane gas, Munich with its municipal efforts to reduce air pollution in the heart of the city, the benefits to the economy of Bavaria with the Oktoberfest or to that of Berlin with its Christmas markets. The best candidates were able to support broad statements with recent statistics or information about specific laws.

The geographical area must be in a German-speaking country. A handful of candidates wrote about countries in other parts of the world. In line with GCE and with other languages at International A-Level, such essays could not be credited with any marks. Similarly, essays which did not mention a specific German-speaking area and merely referred to environmental issues in general were irrelevant.

Geschichtliche Studien

Many of the essays on historical subjects were full of relevant information and managed to present facts to support general ideas and to draw conclusions required by the questions set. The predominant area of study was the GDR, with good evaluations of the influence of Walther Ulbricht or Erich Honecker and mention of 1953 or 1989 as a pivotal year in German history. However, there were also interesting and well-informed essays on Bismarck and Hitler, although

essays on the latter tended to rely on vague generalisations rather than providing detailed evidence.

Literatur

It is not necessary to introduce the essay with general information about the genesis of the work. In fact, this produced a poor start when it appeared. Better candidates provided an opening paragraph which identified the issues to be addresses in the essay with direct reference to the essay question set.

The most common text studied was *Der Besuch der alten Dame*. Most candidates chose 12(a) over 12(b) but only the very best managed to focus on the role of the people of Gullen in Ill's death. Some fell into the trap of relating the whole story from the beginning in unnecessary detail. The crucial issue of the element of surprise for the audience was often added only as an afterthought whereas this needed to be at the centre of the essay. Those who attempted to evaluate the use of comedy were often unable to categorise the various types of comedy used, not to mention evaluate the reasons for Dürrenmatt's choice of this genre to entertain, alienate or stimulate deeper thought.

In the responses to this work and to other literary works or films, it was noticeable that many candidates were unaware of the convention of using the present tense to refer to incidents within the work. The correct use of the present tense may have prevented the retelling of the plot since candidates may have been able to select only the most relevant details and to martial them into a coherent argument. In addition, some candidates referred to the play as a book or even a novel. An awareness of the dramatic genre is necessary for a full understanding of this work. Similar issues were noticeable in other works in this section.

There were also some interesting essays on the role of Willi in *Stern ohne Himmel*. Here, candidates managed to evaluate his role well, but often omitted crucial details in the novel such as the aftermath of his encounter with the train full of Jewish prisoners or of his final demise.

Film

Answers were given to all five films in the specification and it was evident that candidates had enjoyed studying these. The most popular choices were *Die Fälscher*, *Almanya- Willkommen in Deutschland* and *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei*. Knowledge of the plot of each film was good and for the most part answers managed to focus on the thrust of the question. However, there was often an over-reliance on plot rather than on underlying issues of character, technique, themes or the intentions of the director.

Careful planning may well have avoided this. The best essays were in clear paragraph form with a main sentence to introduce the paragraph, followed by several examples. A final evaluative sentence then often referred back to the essay title in some way.

For example, in assessing the importance of the family's return to Turley in the *Samdereli* film, a less good approach was to relate the events leading to and

occurring during the trip. It was more important to give an overall account of the reasons for the journey, the opposition to it and the insistence of the grandfather that the whole family should go, followed by the effects of the experience on each member of the family. Some candidates omitted reference to the significance and the effect of Hüseyin's death or to the reasons for Muhamed's decision to stay in Turkey.

Overall this was a paper which discriminated well. Centres had clearly prepared candidates well for the varying demands of the paper. Candidates showed real understanding of complex German in a variety of contexts and were often able to produce German of an impressive standard.

