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Edexcel

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2019

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
German (WGN03)
Research, Understanding and Written Response

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Format of the Test

There are two sections.

Section A includes an optional introduction of the chosen topic lasting up to one minute followed by a debate on the chosen issue in which the interviewer and candidate maintain opposing standpoints.

Section A should last for a maximum of 5 minutes in total.

Section B is an unpredictable discussion of at least two further issues taken from the General Topic Areas (GTAs) given in the specification and should last for between 6 and 8 minutes.

The test should conclude within 11-13 minutes, but section A must finish at 5 minutes.

Assessment Principles

This unit assesses communication in spoken language and critical analysis. It also covers understanding, which is in essence, a test of listening skills.

It is marked positively out of 40, by Edexcel examiners.

Spontaneity and development is marked out of 20 and assesses performance in relation to spontaneity, discourse and development during both sections of the test.

Quality of language is assessed out of 10 marks with 5 marks available for Accuracy and 5 marks for Range of lexis. Pronunciation, intonation, the

structures employed, lexis and grammatical accuracy are all taken into consideration when awarding these marks.

Reading and research accounts for up to 5 marks and assesses evidence of the candidate having read German texts and sources in preparation for the debate. **Candidates should refer to at least two such sources.** These marks are awarded purely for Section A.

Critical Analysis is awarded up to 5 marks. Here, examiners assess how well the candidate is able to link ideas and whether he/she gives a full evaluation of the key issues.

Centres should be aware that Pearson Edexcel publish the guidance to examiners on the website. This explains and defines the standards for spontaneity, discourse, development and other key assessment principles.

Candidates' Performances

Section A

In this section it is essential that candidates provide evidence of having read German texts in order to prepare for the debate. They may, in addition, mention audio visual sources, or provide statistics, but the Reading and research marks refer to AO2 (Understand and respond to written language) and so there must be evidence that a candidate has done this. Candidates should mention the text/s they have read by name.

There were some imaginative and interesting issues chosen by candidates in this session such as:

- I am in favour of re-introducing wolves to Switzerland
- I believe the advantages of electric cars have been overstated
- I am in favour of compulsory vaccination for all children
- I believe the voting age should be lowered to sixteen

Popular issues were legalisation of cannabis, same sex adoption, abortion and euthanasia.

Not all topics chosen lent themselves to debate. 'I am in favour of investing more in public transport' makes it quite challenging for the teacher/examiner to argue the opposite case, certainly for five minutes. 'Nutrition' on its own is clearly not an issue which can be debated. 'I believe we should all be vegans' would, however, be very suitable for debate. Candidates should be guided towards choosing an issue which can be debated, and not only discussed, with the candidate taking a definite stance. Candidates must be given the opportunity to demonstrate a knowledge of the language of debate and they should show that they are able to defend a point of view.

In this examination session again, some teacher/examiners treated this part of the assessment as a chance for the candidate to say everything he/she knew about a given topic without there being any debate. This led to a poor outcome as candidates cannot access the higher mark bands for Spontaneity and development if there is no evidence of discourse. Effectively this means that what the candidate says should be challenged. This could simply take the form of the teacher/examiner asking, 'Why do you say that?'

In some cases, the debate lasted much longer than five minutes. It should be noted that examiners do not listen past thirteen minutes overall, so debates which exceed five minutes erode the time available for section B.

Section B

Most centres chose suitable follow on topics for section B, which allowed for a wide range of questions, an opportunity for sophisticated development, such as the use of abstract concepts and also a wide range of lexis and structures.

A few teacher/examiners, however, engaged candidates in conversation about GCSE style topics, frequently employing personal questions. In these cases, it was unlikely that the student provided sufficient evidence to access the higher bands of the assessment grids for Spontaneity and development and Critical Analysis. If candidates seek to draw on their own experience, the teacher/examiner should steer them away from that.

The topics from the AS specification are, of course, suitable for use in this examination, however, there needs to be evidence of progression from AS. Re-producing AS Level work leads to a poor outcome. A2 requires students to show an ability to handle abstract concepts. If a teacher/examiner asks questions in this examination, that were asked in an AS Level examination, then the evidence of progression may well be limited. This is one reason why apparently fluent and spontaneous performances are not awarded as many marks as one might expect, as they do not satisfy the highest criteria for Spontaneity and development, nor for Critical analysis.

When selecting the topics for Section B centres must refer to the GTAs given in the specification. The IA2 General Topic Areas are Technology in the German-speaking world, Society in the German-speaking world and Ethics in the German-speaking world. If candidates are asked questions on these IA2 specific General Topic Areas which do not place the issues in the context of the German-speaking world, these candidates will be unable to access the full range of marks for Critical Analysis. Unfortunately, this occurred quite frequently. A discussion about abortion in this section of the examination, for example, should have reference to the German-speaking world.

There was variation in the number of topics covered in Section B. While most examiners covered two topics, there were a few centres where the candidate was questioned on four or more topics, making it very difficult for candidates to be other than superficial.

Spontaneity and development

Spontaneity

Most performances were clearly spontaneous however, a few were not. A question and answer approach does not work well here. Instead, teacher/examiners should respond to what the candidate says, thus providing candidates with an opportunity to move away from prepared material. To access a mark of 11 or above candidates must demonstrate many examples of spontaneous responses to questions. 'Many' implies that spontaneity is a clear characteristic of the test. The candidate would be unlikely to demonstrate spontaneity with material which is largely recited.

Discourse

Discourse is also assessed as part of Spontaneity and development. Examiners seek evidence that both the candidate and examiner are interacting with each other, beyond a simple "one question per issue"

format. When this approach was taken, it was difficult to find evidence that the discourse element of the grid had been addressed, and so marks were unlikely to be in the highest band.

Fluent discourse refers to a natural conversation within the context of an assessment. Discourse describes the exchange of opinion and information on an issue between the candidate and teacher/examiner. This means that each participant addresses the points made by the other.

Development

Development pre-supposes that the candidate has fully understood the question, and is then able to produce a detailed response, giving not a single sentence reply, but several sentences, expanding on an idea and point of view. The ability to present two opposing points of view and the reasons for these, along with an evaluation would demonstrate excellent development.

Quality of Language (Range of lexis)

Examiners look for evidence of topic specific lexis as well as comparing what they hear to the specified list of grammatical structures. Progression from GCSE and AS level is required here; therefore, the most able performances would feature active use of a wide range of these elements.

Quality of Language (Accuracy)

This accounts for 5 of the 40 possible marks. As long as communication is clear, it is most likely that a mark of 4 will be awarded. A mark of 5 does not constitute faultless language. Native speakers will often, but not necessarily, score 5 marks here. Non-native speakers must have access to the full marks available here, and the examiners are standardised with this fundamental principal in mind. It should be noted, that 5 out of 40 marks is a relatively small proportion. This will explain why many grammatically perfect performances do not achieve full marks overall, as they must also satisfy the criteria in other mark grids.

Reading and Research

5 marks are allocated for evidence of Reading and Research. This applies purely to Section A where candidates **must cite written German sources as evidence of their reading and research.**

Critical Analysis

Evidence of an ability to respond using beliefs, morals and political views beyond the realm of the more concrete topics which form the basis of AS and GCSE work is required at this level. Candidates should attempt to link ideas and to show an ability to evaluate, rather than simply providing facts. The highest performing candidates provided frequent examples of the ability to do this.

Advice for Future Examination Sessions

Spontaneity should be a clear characteristic of the test.

For Section A candidates must select an issue which can be debated, and not only discussed, with the candidate taking a definite stance. Issues which cannot be debated will have an adverse effect on the marks awarded for Spontaneity and development and Critical analysis.

For Section A candidates must provide evidence of having read written German source materials. They should mention target language newspaper/magazine articles and/or other written materials. They should refer to a minimum of two such sources.

In Section B the issues discussed should only come from the list of General Topic Areas. There should be a discussion of at least two topics, but two topics is quite sufficient, as this will probably lead to greater depth.

If the issue being discussed in Section B is part of the GTA Society in the German-speaking world, for example equality, there must be reference to a country where German is spoken.

If the issue being discussed in Section B is part of the GTA Technology in the German-speaking world, for example technological innovations, there must be reference to a country where German is spoken.

If the issue being discussed in Section B is part of the GTA Ethics in the German-speaking world, for example genetic modification, there must be reference to a country where German is spoken.

Summary

The examiners marking on the unit appreciate the efforts of centres to make the assessments run smoothly for their students, and to allow them to reach their full potential. The hard work that goes into preparing candidates for examinations is also appreciated and the examiners seek to reward this whenever possible.

Grade Boundaries

Much work has taken place on the comparability of the oral units for French, German and Spanish. The senior examiners have worked closely together to ensure their application of the common oral marking criteria is consistently applied across these three languages.

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