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Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International AS Level
In German (WGN0) Paper 1
Spoken Expression and Response

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Introduction

This is an 8–10 minute assessment in two sections that total 40 marks with 15 minutes preparation time.

In advance of the examination, the candidate chooses two of the four specified general topic areas (GTA) to prepare.

The GTAs are:

- Youth matters
- Lifestyle, health and fitness
- Environment and travel
- Education and employment.

A randomisation grid informs the teacher, which of the two chosen areas will be tested. The candidate is told this immediately before the preparation time begins.

Section A requires candidates to respond to four set questions on a stimulus related to one of the candidate's chosen GTAs.

Section B requires the teacher/examiner to engage the candidate in a discussion that, although still relating to the same GTA and its linked subtopics, moves away from the main focus of the stimulus.

Stimulus cards are provided for each area. These form the assessment for Section A. Before starting the examination, the candidates have 15 minutes to prepare with the stimulus card provided. They may make notes of up to one side of A4 sheet of paper in this time, which they may refer to during the examination.

In Section A, the candidate is asked four questions relating to the stimulus card. These questions are mandatory and may be repeated, but for the purpose of fair assessment across all centres, they **must not be re-phrased**. The first two questions relate specifically to information in the stimulus material, the second two relate to aspects of the subtopic, upon which the stimulus text is based.

For Question 1, it is expected that the candidate will manipulate the wording of the text in order to arrive at a complete answer to the question. A lift of information from the stimulus text will not provide sufficient information to answer the question completely. This question targets information in the first paragraph of the stimulus text. There are three possible elements to the answer to Question 1 in the first paragraph and candidates should try to include as many of these elements as they are able.

For Question 2, it is expected that the candidate will find the answer in the second paragraph. It will be necessary to manipulate the language found in the stimulus text to arrive at a complete answer.

For Questions 3 and 4 it is expected that the student will give answers which are full and detailed, drawing on the research that they undertook on the GTA, in preparation for the examination.

The students' understanding of this stimulus specific topic area is marked out of four. The four marks are not directly allocated as one mark per question. The statement in the mark grid, which best matches the entire performance of section A, will dictate the mark awarded.

In Section B, the teacher examiner must initiate a discussion about the general topic area chosen by the randomisation grid. The teacher examiner must move away from the subtopic of the stimulus card to more general discussion of the topic area and its linked subtopics. The subtopics of each area are stated in the specification. The students must attempt to show a clear understanding of the chosen topic, and use the research they completed in advance of the examination in order to do this, ideally citing sources they have used in their research.

The student's knowledge and understanding of the general topic area is marked out of a total of ten. The marks of five for Quality of Language (Accuracy), five for Quality of Language (Range of Lexis) and sixteen for Response apply to the test as a whole.

It is important that the full test lasts at least eight minutes. If the test is too short, examiners follow the guidance stated in the "Unit 1 Further Marking Guidance" which is available to centres via the Edexcel website. The examiners will stop assessing tests beyond ten minutes, and will base their judgements on the performance offered up to that time limit.

Choice of General Topic Area (GTA)

The most popular combination of topic areas chosen by candidates was once again Youth Matters combined with Lifestyle, Health and Fitness. Therefore, these two topics were tested almost equally as often. It was pleasing, however, to note an increase in the number of candidates choosing a combination of the topics of Environment and Travel; and Education and Employment. These latter two GTAs perhaps have more specialised topic-specific vocabulary relating to them, and so candidates who do choose these topics tend to score well for Quality of Language (Range of Lexis) and generally demonstrate very good or excellent knowledge of their chosen General Topic Area. Good candidates are able to use sophisticated lexical items when talking about Youth Matters and

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness, but less successful candidates tend to employ rather pedestrian vocabulary, often drawing on their IGCSE knowledge, offering anecdotal evidence, or talking about personal preferences.

Application on the Marking Criteria

Understanding Stimulus Specific AO2

To arrive at a mark, examiners consider primarily the mark band descriptions, rather than the number of “correct” answers. A response attains full marks when the candidate correctly identifies **all three elements to Question 1**, together with the correct response to Question 2, sufficiently manipulating the language in the stimulus text to directly answer the question. Manipulation of pronouns, verbs and tenses may be required, as well as summarising information in the paragraphs, in order to directly answer the question, without including irrelevant details, or details which suggest the question and the text have not been fully understood.

The candidate should then also go on to provide developed, justified answers to Questions 3 and 4, which consider more than one implication and use examples to illustrate answers.

Quality of Language – Accuracy

To access three or more marks, candidates need to show accuracy in basic principles, such as subject/verb agreements, tense formation and word order. At three marks, communication may be impeded at times, either due to pronunciation issues, or grammatical errors. To access full marks, communication must be clear at all times, and the candidate will demonstrate the ability to pronounce German well enough to be understood without undue difficulty. There may be minor errors in case agreements and complex structures, as well as the occasional major error, but these will be outweighed by a generally accurate response.

Quality of Language – Range of Lexis

To assess the performance in this area, the grammar list in the specification is considered, and examiners listen for a wide range of specified structures in order to award the higher marks. In addition to this, the GTA is important, as examiners are standardised to listen for and reward a range of **topic-specific** lexis.

Spontaneity and Development

Candidates are assessed on the ability to communicate spontaneously in speech. Spontaneous use of language occurs when students use their knowledge of structures, lexis and the GTA and apply it appropriately in response to questions. The discussion should develop naturally, and build on the answers to previous questions. It should not be a list of pre-determined questions devised in advance of the examination.

A well developed discussion is one where the candidate expands on an idea, justifying, illustrating and clarifying and where the teacher examiner responds to what the candidate says. The teacher examiner might, for example, ask, "Wie meinen Sie das?", "Warum?" or "Können Sie ein Beispiel geben?". When giving examples, candidates should draw on their research, not on anecdotal evidence, or personal experience, as doing so will not enable them to demonstrate understanding of the GTA.

Knowledge and Understanding - GTA

It is expected that candidates will undertake preparatory work in their two chosen topic areas in advance of the examination. There must be evidence of knowledge and understanding, beyond what is considered general knowledge and awareness, in order to satisfy the criteria for the highest marks in this section. Good or excellent knowledge and understanding can be demonstrated by referring to independent research which has taken place in preparation for the examination. This could take the form of mentioning a statistic or referring to a named source, such as an article online, which the candidate has used.

Knowledge which is based entirely within the candidate's personal experience is not sufficient to satisfy the terms "many" or a "wealth" of ideas, as stated in the mark grid. Many candidates – even linguistically very able ones - rely on anecdotal or general knowledge to illustrate their ideas, and they can only be credited in the "some relevant ideas" band of this mark grid.

Specific Comments on Stimulus Card tasks

Youth Matters Stimulus Cards 1A/B

Question 2 prompted candidates to identify, based on the text, why the music festival in question can be called "innovative". This question proved problematic, even for the most successful candidates, and was often not answered correctly. Questions 1, 3 and 4, however, were well understood by the majority of candidates and many could demonstrate at least a satisfactory understanding of the text. Questions 4 on both stimulus cards 1A and 1B allowed the candidates to talk more widely about the wider GTA.

Youth Matters Stimulus Cards 2A/B

Most candidates gave all three pieces of information required in response to Question 1 which related to a ban on mobile phones in Bavarian schools. Question 2 proved difficult for most candidates, even though the answer could be found in the final sentence of the text, and there was only a handful of correct answers. Questions 3 and 4 on stimulus cards 2A and 2B were excellent in prompting individual candidate responses, often with good justifications and development.

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness Stimulus Cards 1A/B

The stimulus text, which referred to the difficulties in choosing a sustainable diet regime, was generally well understood by candidates of all abilities, although not all offered the required three items of information in response to Question 1. Many candidates were unfamiliar with the term “nachhaltig” that the mark scheme insisted on. Question 3 on stimulus card 1A, which prompted candidates to define a varied diet, resulted in some candidates offering a long list of vocabulary items, and generated some overly long responses, so was less successful than Question 3 on stimulus card 1B, which prompted candidates to reflect on useful dietary advice.

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness Stimulus Cards 2A/B

This stimulus card, which referred to a website that helps users identify a sport suitable for them, proved to be successful, with the majority of candidates able to respond to all four questions. Because Question 3 on stimulus card B was rather general in nature (it prompted candidates to outline the benefits of modern technology for the sporting world), some candidates offered responses not related to sports. The equivalent Question 2 on stimulus card A, which asked candidates to outline the benefits of membership of a sports club, proved more accessible for the majority of candidates.

Environment and Travel Stimulus Cards 1A/B

The final two questions on each stimulus card encouraged candidates to reflect on the future challenges of energy production. These questions triggered some interesting candidate responses debating the merits of renewable energy, safety concerns in energy generation, and the advantages of nuclear energy.

Environment and Travel Stimulus Cards 2A/B

This stimulus card dealt with the failure of the bottle and can deposit scheme launched some years ago in Germany. Question 1 proved more challenging for many candidates as only a few were able to identify correctly from the first paragraph the three items of information required. Question 2, which asked candidates to identify how supermarkets influence the purchase of single-use bottles, was also problematic for some candidates who perhaps did not understand the stimulus vocabulary item of ‘Sonderangebot’. Questions 3 and 4 on both stimulus cards, however, produced some interesting and individual responses that helped the most successful candidates attain the higher mark bands.

Education and Employment Stimulus Cards 1A/B

Although the introductory paragraph on this stimulus card was fairly short, not all candidates offered three items of information in response to Question A. Questions 2, 3 and 4 on both stimulus cards were generally well understood and many candidates were able to reflect confidently on the level of assistance for the jobless population. Question 3 on stimulus card 1B, which asked candidates to outline whether they would choose poorly-paid employment over unemployment, produced some particularly interesting and individual responses from more successful candidates.

Education and Employment Stimulus Cards 2A/B

These stimulus cards consisted of the first-person accounts of two students retaking a school year. All candidates attempting either stimulus card 2A or 2B were able to explain why re-taking the year was beneficial for the female student, but not for the male. It was noted, however, that not all candidates gave the required three items of information in response to Question 1. Candidates were able to put forward proposals for how the internet could help boost student grades and to consider whether good school grades are important or not.

Summary

For subsequent series, the following points should be noted.

- Rephrasing questions for Section A will render a candidate's response void, as it may give an unfair advantage. It is, however, acceptable to change 'Sie' to 'du'.
- Question 1 on the stimulus card refers to the first paragraph only and will **have three possible elements for the answer**, which must be communicated by the candidate in his or her own words, in order to be considered a full answer. Question 2 will relate to the second paragraph, and the candidate must manipulate the language from the text in order to answer the question. Questions 3 and 4 must be developed in order to be considered as complete answers.
- Pronunciation is an important aspect of the accuracy mark, and centres should encourage their candidates to develop their pronunciation skills, in order not to impede communication.
- Knowledge and Understanding (GTA) must show evidence of research into the topics chosen, ideally citing at least one source. General knowledge, or personal experiences alone, will not demonstrate "many" ideas or a "wealth" of ideas, which are required for marks of 7 or higher.
- The question words on the stimulus card are important – for example "inwiefern" must have an answer which addresses this particular question word, i.e. both sides of the argument. A comparison question must show an ability to compare in the answer.

- Topic-specific lexis and the specified grammar contents are important considerations when awarding marks for Quality of Language (Range of Lexis).
- Whilst candidates should give detailed and developed answers in response to Questions 3 and 4, they should be discouraged from giving overly long answers as this will limit the time available for the discussion in Section B and will have an impact on the overall marks that can be awarded for Understanding (General Topic Area).
- Section B should be a discussion. It is not good practice for the teacher examiner to pose a question, for the candidate to reply – sometimes at length – and for the teacher examiner to ask another question on a different subtopic. Fewer topics being covered in Section B usually leads to a more natural and in-depth discussion that will allow candidates to access the higher mark bands for Spontaneity and for Understanding (General Topic Area).
- The questions asked in Section B should relate to the same General Topic Area as the stimulus card that has been covered, as otherwise the mark that can be awarded to Understanding (General Topic Area) will be adversely affected.
- Questions should be challenging enough for candidates to demonstrate that they have moved on from IGCSE level. Asking about the candidate’s personal preferences or interests, for example, does not achieve this, nor does inviting candidates to offer long lists of vocabulary items or long pre-learnt sequences of speech.
- Even in the case of large centres, it is helpful if examiners do not work from a “list” and refrain from asking identical questions to candidates of different linguistic abilities. Instead, the teacher/examiner should comment on individual candidate responses and should challenge responses to enable the candidates to access the higher mark bands for Spontaneity and for Understanding (GTA).

The examiners marking on this unit would like to thank centres for the effort they put in to ensure the assessments run smoothly for their candidates and to allow them to reach their full potential. The hard work that goes into preparing candidates for examinations is also appreciated and we seek to reward this whenever possible.