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Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In German (WGN04/01)
Unit 4: Research, Understanding and Written
Response

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This paper, worth 90 marks, is split into three sections: Section A Listening, Section B Reading and Grammar and Section C Writing. Many candidates cope well with the first two sections but are less secure in their manipulation of grammar in Question 8 and in their ability to produce a coherent argument in their final essay.

Section A – Listening

Question 1 – Die Max-Brauer-Schule

While many candidates scored full marks in this question, less successful candidates were unable to identify the link between *verdoppeln* and *vergrößern* in (a) and *eine riesige Schulgemeinschaft* and *Schülerzahl* in (c).

Question 2 – Recycling

The most frequent error was at (b) where less successful candidates failed to realise that it was the companies rather than the consumers who would bear the postage costs of the waste packages. Nevertheless, it was clear from the number of candidates gaining full marks here that the topic of recycling was familiar.

Question 3 – „Speed Friending“

Many candidates scored the full four marks for this searching question, However, amongst even the most successful candidates there were some who did not pick up the detail that the events were successful because they were kept small. Many gave the answer wrongly as *Minderung* or *Regelmäßigkeit* rather than *Größe*.

Question 4 – Ein Leben in der Musikindustrie

This was an accessible passage for most. Candidates need only respond with short answers. Full sentences are not necessary and candidates who simply copy out sections of the transcript run the risk of not answering the questions with the precise detail. Candidates should heed the advice in the rubric: *Benutzen Sie möglichst Ihre eigenen Worte*. This does not mean finding synonyms for every single word they hear, but rather rephrasing what they hear to give a focused answer the question.

Common barriers to gaining marks here were stating in (a) that Ulrich was simply very famous rather than that he had an international reputation and failing to give accurate detail in (f). Some candidates misunderstood what was said and thought that Ulrich worked with a label whilst other musicians did not.

Section B – Reading and Grammar

Question 5 – Frauen bei der Polizei

It was necessary to take great care when reading the passage to deduce the correct answer from the multiple-choice options. For example, candidates had to recognise that the variety of activities in Anita's working day listed at the very beginning of the first paragraph meant that her days were rarely monotonous. This and parts (b) and (e) were generally answered correctly. However, part (c) required very careful deduction: candidates had to recognise that options A, B and D were not suggested by the text before opting for the correct answer C. Only the most successful candidates managed to score a mark here.

Question 6 – Eine Silvestertradition

This was a very accessible test with most candidates scoring at least two marks. However, many failed to gain a mark at (b) for omitting the idea that the shape of an egg was visible in the water, and in (c) less successful candidates confused the correct idea that the sets contained too much lead with the fact that the EU established new rules about lead content in the sets.

Question 7 – Jugendliche und Religion

The first two and last two questions caused few problems and were generally correctly answered. However, there were varied fortunes in the questions in between. In (c), candidates only scored a mark if they identified that young people had a positive attitude to religion rather than stating the fact that they wanted to be more involved. The details in (d) required candidates to state the opposite of the situation for the youth of today, i.e. older people regretted not being listened to or not being able to influence decisions. Nevertheless, many candidates managed to give correct answers here as they did also at (e), correctly inferring that increased interest in religious matters suggested by the statistics would lead to a greater uptake for places in the study week. Part (f) was a good example of a question which required subtle rephrasing of the text: many successful candidates scored marks if they were able to answer using the future perfect or to rephrase the ideas in the text using a *wenn* clause. Despite the volume of text to read and the demands of the questions, many candidates scored well and even the least successful managed to score one or two marks on the more straightforward questions.

Question 8

8(a): candidates often failed to score a mark by omitting a verb at the end of the *obwohl* clause.

8(b): this was correctly answered by almost all candidates.

8(c): most candidates managed to give the correct answer. It was not necessary to find a synonym for *erkennen*, although this was acceptable if the resulting clause made sense.

8(d): the best responses here correctly used a present tense verb after *seit*. A past tense verb was not accepted.

8(e): even some otherwise successful candidates failed to gain a mark by adding an umlaut to the correct version of the regular verb *anfasst*.

8(f): more candidates than in previous examination series recognised the necessity of using a present subjunctive here.

8(g): this was well answered, but some candidates were unable to establish the link between the present passive and a straightforward present tense and wrongly produced a future tense with *werden* in the answer.

8(h): it was necessary to reflect the conditional nature of *hätten* in the rephrasing. Few candidates managed this.

8(i): many recognised the need to produce a relative clause and an adjective with no ending, but some candidates failed to notice the comma in the stem of the new phrase.

8(j): various answers were possible here and most candidates managed to explain *nächtliche* as *in der Nacht* or *bei Nacht*.

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 important that some examination time is spent planning the response to the specific question asked. While some candidates clearly have been trained to do this, others write fluent essays in German of a very high quality which score low marks for the other two categories because their response lacks relevance or is simply a regurgitated version of everything they know 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.

The best essays are written in clear paragraphs with a main sentence to introduce the paragraph, followed by several examples. A final evaluative sentence then often refers back to the essay title in some way.

Geografisches Gebiet

There were some interesting responses to both options, with Switzerland or a Swiss canton being the most popular areas of study. The best essays in response to (b) mentioned a range of branches of the economy, e.g. the pharmaceutical industry and tourism, and evaluated their positive influence on the region often by citing relevant statistics regarding GDP or employment levels.

Geschichtliche Studien

Topics which addressed option (a) were the Hitler era and the reign of Maria Theresia. Candidates were able to show how the state in these instances were able to introduce measures to establish an orderly society. Sometimes, the essays lacked incisiveness and listed measures taken by the state rather than evaluate the success of each one. A balanced argument which gave evidence of the extent of the state's failures to ensure law and order as well as its successes secured a higher mark for the third mark category.

Literatur

The most popular choices were *Der Besuch der alten Dame* and *Stern ohne Himmel*. Essays about the role of the Teacher in the Dürrenmatt play were often interesting and managed to establish with evidence from the text that he was an exception only up to a certain extent, but ultimately that he shared the same human failings as his fellow townspeople. The most successful essays chose to analyse Claire's manipulation of men and weighed up the reasons for this, coming to a strong conclusion about whether or not the audience could sympathise with her situation. There was an equal distribution of essays on the two options for the novel by Ossowski. Clearly inspired by the plot and themes, candidates often wrote compelling accounts of the end of the war or the horrors of the Nazi dictatorship, but sometimes did not give enough concrete evidence from the text, relying rather on historical information or only giving patchy evidence. The least successful essays dwell too long on facts about the origins of the work or on relating the plot without selecting only material relevant to the essay question. For example, some very weak essays on the role of the Teacher did not mention this character until well into the main body of the essay.

Film

Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland was clearly enjoyed by many candidates who wrote mostly solid essays showing a wealth of knowledge from the film. In general, (a) was the more popular option and candidates were able to assess the immediate effects of the family's migration in comparison to their later developments. Essays about the role of Cenk often concentrated too much on the scenes in school without going into detail about his experiences in Turkey. Better planning with a clear introduction and a firm conclusion summing up the argument would have ensured higher marks for the third mark category for many candidates.

Conclusion

To prepare for success in this paper, candidates should:

- familiarise themselves with all topic areas listed in the specification
- develop as wide a range of vocabulary as possible
- practise reading and listening to passages of German with a view to extracting the most important information and become used to rewording the details in the written or spoken text succinctly
- become familiar with German grammatical usage, concentrating on complex verb forms and the fine details of declension of adjectives and nouns
- study their chosen topic, literary text or film in detail, gathering a range of information that can be called upon to support opinions
- practise the skill of planning and writing an essay which focuses on analysis rather than on narrative.

