



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

German

GERM1

(Specification 2660)

Unit 1: Listening, Reading and Writing

Report on the Examination

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Unit 1

General comments

Overall, the standard of performance in this paper was high. The mean mark was 85.2. Most students appeared to be well versed in the different question types, as well as being familiar with the key vocabulary and structures required at AS level. There were very few rubric infringements and most students completed all sections of the paper. As in previous series, students' responses to Section B were often far longer than required; this was not always a problem but it sometimes led to a lack of focus or the inclusion of irrelevant material. Illegibility was occasionally an issue, especially in Q9 where credit could only be given for correct spellings, but also to some extent in Section B.

Section A

Question 1

Most students coped well with this transfer of meaning task. A very small number of students wrote answers in German, for which no credit could be given. A few offered alternative answers; in such instances marks could only be awarded if both answers were correct.

- (a) Well answered, apart from the occasional instance of '1960'.
- (b)(i) Another straightforward question, which was usually answered correctly.
- (b)(ii) Well answered.
- (c) For many students, this item provided the first real challenge of the paper. Not all knew *Leinwand* and a surprisingly large number of students seemed not to recognise the verb *stören*. Some did not latch on to the mention of *Vorteile* in the recording and gave very general answers such as 'you don't have to go to the cinema'.
- (d) Most students knew the meaning of *Lautsprecher*, but a few gave incorrect answers such as 'the sound was loud'.
- (e) Very well answered.
- (f) Almost all students rendered *Schnee* correctly, but *Nebel* caused widespread difficulty. Some students were misled by the last word on the recording, *abgebrochen*, and misinterpreted this sentence to mean that '(the equipment was) broken'.

Question 2

On the whole, marks were high in this question. Items (a) and (b) produced the highest number of correct responses within the question. Items (c) and (g) proved to be the most difficult items, perhaps because the words *Geduld* and *Ehrlichkeit* on the question paper were not widely known.

Question 3

Most students coped well with the format of this question, in which short phrases or in some cases single words were sufficient. Indeed, those who tried to cram sentences into the grid sometimes introduced confusion into their answer. The most common sources of error were:

- The spelling of *Bayern*. It was reasonable to expect students to recognise this well-known German region and spell it correctly. Some students wrote *Vorbayern*, not realising that *vor* was a separate word on the recording.
- The meaning of the phrase *das perfekte Ziel für Segelfans*. The best answer here was simply *Segeln*. Those who transcribed the single word *Segelfans* did not show comprehension. Some students were led off course by the supposedly English 'ä' sound in *Segelfans*, resulting in wrong transcriptions such as *Segelfence*, while a few thought that *Segel-* was a reference to seagulls.
- Some students missed the reference to *Kultur* for Hamburg and homed in wrongly on the sentence *Keine andere deutsche Region ... stärker gesteigert* instead.
- The spelling of *Rhein*. Once again it was reasonable to expect students to produce an easily recognisable spelling of Germany's greatest river.
- *Geschichte*, which was sometimes wrongly rendered as *Gesichte*.

Question 4

Marks were generally high in this question. Parts (c) and (e) proved to be particularly accessible. Part (f) caused greater difficulty, perhaps because students were unfamiliar with the verb *fördern*, as did part (a), perhaps because the phrase *tägliche Portion* was not understood.

Question 5

This question discriminated well across the attainment range. A good number of students scored full marks, but equally well there were some poor performances, including confusion between parts of speech, e.g. the selection of a verb when the context made it clear that a noun was required. The commonest source of error was the fourth gap, where a number of students wrote I (*tragen*) instead of E (*leisten*).

Question 6

Many students performed competently in this question. Items (f) and (h) were particularly well answered. The only item which stood out as difficult was item (c), where some students did not make the connection between *Ich will meine Privatsphäre schützen* and *Ich will nicht, dass jeder weiß, dass ich gerade Krach mit meiner Freundin hatte*.

Question 7

Students' attainment in this question was generally high. The answer that was most commonly omitted was H, perhaps because students did not realise that *Schülerinnen* referred specifically to girls.

Question 8

Most students found the stimulus text to be accessible and managed to write correct answers to most of the questions. In a few instances students included too much irrelevant material from the text, resulting in a confused answer for which no credit could be given. A small number of students manipulated the language of text unnecessarily; in this question type it is perfectly acceptable to lift words and phrases from the text as long as the correct meaning is conveyed.

- (a) Very well answered; indeed many students gave all three points even though only two were required.
- (b) Generally well answered, although some students did not take account of the mention of *Familie* in the question and wrote an inappropriate answer such as *Sie ist Ärztin*.
- (c) Again, many correct answers. Unfortunately a few students seemed unfamiliar with the verb construction *sich kümmern um*; no credit could be given for a confusing answer such as *Er kümmert das Haus*.
- (d) A good number of students correctly specified (*die*) *unter 30jährigen*, but some wrote *junge Frauen und Männer* which was not precise enough.
- (e) Well answered. A very small number of students seemed to have misread the question word *Wo?* and wrote an inappropriate answer such as *ältere Leute*.
- (f) Well answered.
- (g) Generally well answered, although some students gave only one of the two required points.

Question 9

Overall, the standard of responses to this question was higher than in previous series. However the handwriting of some students was poor; in some cases for example it was impossible to tell whether a student was trying to write *-er* or *-en* and no credit could be given.

- (a) Relatively few correct answers, perhaps because students were unsure of the gender of (*Radrenn*)*fahrer*.
- (b) This item proved to be quite challenging; not all students realised that this was a verb in the perfect tense. There was also some (perhaps careless) confusion between *wachsen* and *waschen*.
- (c) While many students recognised the passive construction and realised that a past participle was required, wrong forms such as *gefördert* and *gefordert* were quite common.
- (d) Well answered.
- (e) Generally well answered, although on a few scripts it was difficult to be sure whether the student meant *gewannen* or *gewonnen*.
- (f) Most students gave the correct ending, but there were a few instances of mis-copying the word from the question paper, e.g. *olympischen* without the *-m-*.
- (g) The wrong form *bleibt* was disappointingly common.
- (h) This item discriminated well at the top end of the range. Some students thought that the verb was plural, perhaps because it was followed by *Erwachsene*.
- (i) Many correct answers, but also some wrong endings. A few students confused the verb *dienen* with the noun *Dienst*.
- (j) Many students seemed unfamiliar with the sequence of tenses in a conditional sentence and wrote *gibt* or *gab* instead of the required *gäbe* or *geben würde*.

Section B

The overall standard of responses was pleasing. Most students had no difficulty writing at least 200 words on their chosen task and most seemed to have prepared themselves well in terms of arguments and topic-specific vocabulary. Many students were able to structure their response appropriately, with a small number of well-developed points framed by a clear and concise introduction and conclusion. A pitfall for some was the temptation to write a general essay about a given topic, rather than answering the question set. Such responses gained low marks for content. In a few cases, excessive length led to repetition or irrelevance, which again affected the content mark adversely. Poor handwriting was an issue for a small number of students, and occasionally confusion arose because they wrote one word on top of another.

As in previous series, the standard of students' German varied greatly. The language marks were by no means always consistent with the content mark. Some students managed to maintain a high level of attention to detail even when conveying complex ideas, but a significant number appeared to be sacrificing the language for the sake of getting their points across. This can be a difficult balance: while examiners are not expecting grammatical perfection, certain lexical and grammatical errors impede communication and therefore affect the content mark as well as the language marks. A few students seemed to be thinking in English and then attempting to translate their thoughts into German in a word-for-word fashion; typical Anglicisms which would confuse a native speaker included *Es war eine gute Nacht aus* and *Es gibt keinen Punkt*. Commonly misused words included *nur* instead of *einzel* (e.g. *der nur Grund*), *jemand* instead of *jeder*, *sinnvoll* instead of *vernünftig*, and *bei* in various senses of the English word 'by'. On the other hand some of the more persistent errors of the past were pleasingly infrequent in this paper, such as the correct sentence construction after *meiner Meinung nach*.

Question 10

This question, which invited students to write a letter of complaint to a TV station about an advertisement, was the least popular of the three options. It was also the least successfully tackled. While there were a few really impressive responses, in which students expressed their strongly held objections with confidence and persuasiveness, some students either had little to say beyond expressing their anger or, worse still, wrote a general discursive essay on the pros and cons of advertising. In the latter case only limited credit could be given for content, as the mark scheme requires an appropriate 'response to the task', not a discussion of the broad topic. A number of students tried to explain why they were complaining but did not actually refer to the product being advertised, making their line of argument difficult to follow. A few students seemed to have chosen their product on the basis that it allowed them to write about a different topic, e.g. an advertisement for sweets enabled them to write about healthy eating. This approach was risky as it tended to lead students too far away from the proper focus of the task. At AS level it is not necessary for students to refer to target-language speaking society; nevertheless some of the best responses were those that focused on a German product being advertised on German TV. Linguistically, the main pitfall in this question was confusion between the personal pronouns and possessive adjectives, especially *Sie/sie/du*, and *Ihr/ihr/sein/dein*. Such confusion often impeded communication. It was disappointing at AS level to read *im Fern* instead of *im Fernsehen* in a number of responses.

Question 11

This question on the pros and cons of music festivals proved to be the most attractive of the three titles. On the whole the standard was high, with many students bringing a wealth of arguments both for and against the events and showing the ability to justify their opinions convincingly. Even those students whose language was poor were often able to score a reasonable mark for content because they used straightforward vocabulary and sentence patterns to express a fair range of ideas. There were some excellent opening paragraphs, some referring to the stereotype of a 'mudbath' and others relating to a real or invented personal experience. In the main body of the response, most students made effective use of the suggested pros and cons of festivals printed on the exam paper, developing and exemplifying them as well as bringing in their own ideas. Among the extra points made were: the benefits of festivals to the music industry, the relative good value of festivals compared with concerts, the negative effect of festivals on the local environment, and the disturbance caused by festivals to the lives of local people. It was fine for students to bring their own experiences of festivals into their response, although whole paragraphs of narration with minimal evaluation gained little credit for content. Conclusions tended to be much less good than introductions; some students just repeated one or two key ideas from the body of their response, while others introduced new evidence which left the reader in mid-air. Examples of good language used appropriately in this task included *Es lohnt sich*, *Stress abbauen* and *vielfältig*. Common errors included confusion between different personal pronouns – though not on the same scale as in Question 10 – as well as the wrong use of *überall* (instead of *im Großen und Ganzen*), *spenden* (instead of *ausgeben*), *halten* (in various senses of the English verb 'stop') and the Anglicism *eine gute Zeit*.

Question 12

This task, which asked students to explain the possible reasons for generational conflicts and to suggest solutions, was fairly popular. There were some very good responses, but on the whole the students who chose this option expressed fewer ideas than those who selected Question 11. The strongest responses often took a balanced approach, looking at the problem from the viewpoint of older people as well as from their own personal viewpoint. However it was perfectly possible to produce a good answer based on one viewpoint only; not surprisingly there were more responses blaming the older generation(s) than there were placing the blame on young people. One or two brave students rejected the premise of the task and argued that the generation gap is often exaggerated. At the lower end of the attainment range, some students did not go beyond simple statements about parents not understanding the needs and tastes of young people in terms of music, appearance and the use of technology. Higher-achieving students often referred to these points but were able to qualify them, e.g. by pointing out that older people are not all technophobes and that they may well have had conflicts with their own parents and grandparents in their younger years. Most students tackled both parts of the question – indeed their content mark was limited if they did not – but some had little to say with regard to solutions. Some of the suggested solutions were rather far-fetched, such as forcing older people to embrace the technology used by young people. A more convincing approach was to

emphasise the need for both sides to communicate, listen and tolerate, while perhaps acknowledging that the problem will never completely go away. However markers have no pre-conceived ideas about what students should write; any viewpoint is acceptable as long as it fulfills the criteria in the mark scheme.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

On-screen marking was used for this unit and students should be reminded that they must answer the questions in the spaces provided, as instructed on the front cover of the question paper. It is also very important that the instruction to students to write in black ink or ballpoint pen is adhered to, as answers written in blue ink or pen are very difficult to mark on screen. Unfortunately, a few students were careless in their writing and some of the letters they used in answering the comprehension questions were very hard to decipher.

Writing Section

Question Paper and Answer Booklet

Students must write using single line spacing when writing their answer for this section. Double line spacing (i.e. writing on alternate lines) must not be used. Those students who cannot complete their answer in the answer booklet must use additional answer sheets; they must not use the essay planning sheet for this purpose as it is not sent for marking.

Essay Planning Sheet

The Essay Planning Sheet must be used for the plan only and will not be assessed. Essay Planning Sheets, together with any questions on inserts, must not be enclosed with the question paper and answer booklets when they are despatched for marking.

Additional Guidance for Responding to the Writing Section

Are students expected to include an introduction and conclusion in their essay? If so, how many words approximately?

Students are not expected to include an introduction or conclusion, but it enhances the structure if there is a brief introduction and a concluding short paragraph, possibly including a personal response. One of the criteria is for a logical structure and this would enhance the overall structure of the essay.

Is a personal opinion valid as a point in the argument?

Yes, we gave ticks for personal opinions as we considered them valid as developments.

Should each point/opinion be backed up with an example?

Generally, yes. There must be plenty of justification of points/opinions in order to gain marks in the higher bands.

Are the examiners looking for a certain number of points/opinions plus examples, eg 3 arguments for one point of view with evidence and 3 against with evidence?

This would be sensible but we have no hard and fast rule on this since a limited number of points very well illustrated and developed would also be considered for the higher mark bands.

How does the marking scheme work in practice? Is there a list of relevant points, some of which the examiners are expecting to be included? If so, how many represents poor versus sufficient/very good?

There is a list of relevant points for the guidance of examiners but these are by no means prescriptive and students will get credit for well-argued points not in the list. Examiners tick every relevant, clearly expressed point and give further ticks for development/examples/opinions etc. Thus a list of bullet point type arguments with no development cannot access the highest mark band. In order to access the highest mark band, students must also ensure that they meet all the other criteria, eg their ideas are clearly expressed, there is logical structure and they have answered fully the question set.

Is it just an instinctive overall rating of logical sequence and therefore individual points are not counted up?

There is no mathematical guide to Content marks - examiners have to make a decision based on the descriptors in the assessment criteria.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion

Web pages

Centres are reminded that a wealth of support documents can be found on our web site at (http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/languages/german_materials.php?id=09&prev=09).

These include the latest version of the specification, past papers, reports on the examination and the Teacher Resource Bank (TRB). For GERM1 the TRB includes for the Writing Section additional specimen questions (to supplement past papers from previous series) and student exemplar work; this is an invaluable resource for preparing students for future examinations.