

GERMAN

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Papers 8683/01 and 9717/01

Speaking

General comments

There was a wide range of entry, from candidates who had a German-speaking parent or grandparent to candidates for whom German was a foreign language acquired at school.

The overall performance of candidates was fair to very good. On the whole, candidates were well prepared and there were some very interesting conversations.

Teachers at Centres which have entered candidates for Speaking in the past seem now to be aware of the various requirements and regulations for this component, in particular the need for the candidate to ask questions of the Examiner in both the Topic Conversation and the General Conversation. On the whole, tests from these Centres were well examined and assessed.

There are two aspects, which need to be considered by new Centres:

- The candidate must ask at least two questions in the Topic Conversation and in the General Conversation. The syllabus states: "Candidates are required to seek information and the opinions of the Teacher." If the candidate fails to ask a question, no marks can be awarded under the heading "Seeking information and opinions". If only one question is asked, then the maximum mark is 3 out of 5.
- All timings of the test should be adhered to. The Sustained Speech should last 3 minutes, the Topic Conversation 7 to 8 minutes and the General Conversation 8 to 9 minutes. Some parts of the test were either too short to constitute a proper test of the candidate's ability, or they lasted too long, and so the examination as a whole was allowed to run on much longer than the stipulated 20 minutes.

Individual Centre Reports will highlight any shortcomings.

Papers 8683/02 and 9717/02

Reading and Writing

General comments

There was a wide range of performance, from candidates who wrote fluently and accurately in stylish German to those who had difficulty in answering the questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Exercise 1

Answers to **(b)** and particularly to **(c)** were those which were most frequently incorrect. Candidates had greater success with **(a)**, **(d)** and **(e)**.

- (b) *Konsumenten, Ladenbesitzer, Leute* were the most common incorrect answers.
- (c) A number of candidates identified *Ziel* here, even though it is a noun. An adverb was clearly required.

Exercise 2

- (a) The idea of *stärken* in the question was often ignored, and so the answer given was *sicher*, instead of the comparative *sicherer*.
- (b) This was mostly correctly answered.
- (c) The use of *trotz* with the genitive in the question was frequently not understood. Candidates, even some good ones, included the genitive in their answers, although *trotz* had been removed, stating: *Obwohl des schwachen Raza-Befundes...*, which had little meaning.
- (d) Some candidates failed to understand that the customer could obtain whatever drugs he wished from the dealer. They simply turned the words around to write: *Der Kunde kann wünschen, was gedealt wird*. They did not convey the real meaning of the passage. It is important to point out that this exercise involves not only grammatical manipulation but also demonstration of comprehension.
- (e) The value of *nie* was overlooked, as candidates wrote simply: *Es ist einfacher*, instead of *Es ist nie einfacher gewesen*, or *Es ist einfacher als zuvor*.

Exercise 3

In questions worth 3 or more marks, for instance (b), (f) and (g), candidates should be urged to give full details. A pleasing number of candidates were able to gain 4 or 5 marks for language in this Exercise.

- (a) This was mostly correctly answered.
- (b) Candidates lost marks by answering in general terms and failing to give the necessary statistics.
- (c) The police figure of 20 was often given, whereas the author's estimate *viel mehr als zwanzig* was required.
- (d) Some thought the answer was *doppelt so viel*, which they had lifted from the text. Those who had considered it more carefully answered: *die Hälfte*.
- (e) Various districts of Berlin were mentioned in some answers, instead of *aus dem Ausland* or a reference to smuggling.
- (f) Candidates lost marks here by failing to mention enough points: three were required.
- (g) Again, not all points were made. Weaker candidates limited themselves to the fact that *Alkohol, Medikamente und Nikotin* were also drugs. The other subtler points contained in the last two sentences of the text were overlooked.

Section B

Exercise 4

The problems in this exercise were twofold: failure to mention enough relevant points and the ability to express the answers with original wording instead of lifting them from the text. The rubric for **Exercises 3 and 4** states: *ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben*. Where the candidate merely copies the relevant part of the text, no mark is awarded. Candidates of average to less than average ability in the language need more practice in the art of finding synonyms to express concepts. The Mark Scheme shows how the text can be reworded with a little modification.

Good candidates were still able to make most points and to gain 4 or 5 marks for language in this Exercise. The following points were the least frequently conveyed adequately to gain a mark:

- (a) Sie hat große Erfahrung mit Suchtkrankheiten.
- (c) Sie hat in ihrem Amt hart gearbeitet.
- (d) Candidates mentioned only one of the following: *Beratung, psychosoziale Hilfe, Therapie*.
- (e) The answer to this question was often lifted, sometimes entirely from the text.
- (f) Candidates forgot to state that Frau Nickels was against the argument.
- (g) Candidates mentioned only *Prävention* or *Aufklärung*, forgetting the following concepts, either of which would have gained the other mark:
Sie will Menschen von der Sucht fernhalten;
Sie will, dass sie nicht abhängig werden.

Exercise 5

The essential task is to summarise the two texts with original wording, according to the question set. Ten marks out of 20 are awarded for this aspect, as is stated on the question paper. Then the candidate is asked to give their own opinions on the issue for 5 marks. Indeed, some very able candidates express their own views whilst summarising the texts, in order to avoid repeating details.

It is important to organise the response like a mini-essay in order to fit everything into the stipulated 140 words. The answer is cut off at around 150 words or at the end of the sentence after 140 words is reached, and no further marks can be awarded for the remainder. Some candidates wrote at great length and failed to mention enough points in 140 words. Others gave their own opinions with little regard for the set passages, thus losing most of the 10 content marks available. A few summarised the passages very well but neglected their personal response to the texts, thereby gaining only one or two marks out of 5.

Finally, 5 marks are awarded for language. Language marks awarded here were broadly comparable to those awarded in **Exercise 3** and **4**, as candidates maintained their consistency. However, some appeared not to have devoted adequate time to this exercise or forgot to check their answer, because on these scripts more errors appeared than in previous exercises.

Papers 8683/03 and 9717/03

Essay

General comments

All questions were attempted, with a very even spread. The most popular essay proved to be on the theme of *Die Jugend*, but all titles attracted a number of candidates.

There were very few linguistically weak essays as a proportion of the whole entry.

Last year's report pointed out that titles set are intended to provoke discussion, and this is not helped when candidates state their conclusions at the outset, or feel that they must slavishly agree with the quotation given. This proved to be quite often the case, with an opening sentence wholly agreeing with the quotation provided for discussion. Candidates should be encouraged to withhold their enthusiastic agreement with the title until they have proved a case. There were a number of cases where candidates wrote the wrong essay. For example, in the section *Arbeit und Freizeit* there were essays which compared the various claims of work and leisure but with minimal reference to *Menschenwürde* in the title. Similarly, *Ausländer in Deutschland* produced a number of essays on the general theme but with little reference to the actual question of *Identitätsprobleme* as it was set. As a general rule, candidates should note that the essay title is much more specific than the general topic heading. There was some evidence that candidates confused the topic heading with the essay title. There was one case where a candidate wrote a short paragraph on all six titles.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Ausländer in Deutschland

The *Identitätsprobleme* of young foreigners in Germany was tackled by a number of candidates. It was important to focus on the question actually asked and not write a general answer on *Ausländer in Deutschland*. It is worth repeating the point made above, that candidates must distinguish clearly between the topic heading and the essay title. The essay title will always focus on a single aspect of the topic, and the essay must engage with the actual words of the title set. A general essay on the problems of foreign workers is not asked for here. Candidates who did address the question asked were able to draw attention to the problems caused by a clash of cultures, one at home and the other at school and in society at large. Mention was made of the particular problems for young women from Islamic families and for the older generation who had not grown up with the language of the host nation.

Question 2

Bildung

This title gave rise to some lively essays. This is a subject on which all have something to say and where almost all agreed with the terms of the question. Even so, as indicated in the introductory remarks above, it would be best if candidates held back on declaring their support for the premise until they have proved their case.

Question 3

Technologische Innovation

This title produced some thoughtful essays, usually coming to the conclusion that nobody would wish to put the clock back to a more primitive age. The conclusion was that technological innovation might lead to some painful conclusions but that in the long run, human life was improved and that there was still more to do in this field.

Question 4

Krieg und Frieden

This title produced mixed opinions. The general consensus was that protest was important, even if the results of protest were not always apparent.

Question 5

Arbeit und Freizeit

This was an essay title which led to a good deal of irrelevance. Candidates seemed confused between the heading of the topic and the wording of the question. So there were general essays on "*Arbeit und Freizeit*", the importance of productive leisure activities etc., although this was not part of the title. It must be made clear to candidates that it is the essay title which they must write about, not the general topic area. There were some good essays, but nobody really tackled the central issue of the link between work and human dignity and whether such a link is essential.

Question 6

Die Jugend

This was an invitation to write a general essay and candidates referred, above all, to the influence of the media. Not many seemed to think that the older generation had much of a role to play in providing models. The importance of one's own age-group was pointed out and of possible role-models – again from the media.

General comments

Focus on the terms of the question

Candidates have a tendency to overlook the terms of the question set and therefore do not focus on the issues raised. To take an extreme case as example, a candidate writing on the essay title *Besprechen Sie das Thema der Gerechtigkeit* managed to write the whole essay without mentioning the word *Gerechtigkeit* until the conclusion.

Structuring the essay

The essay must be properly structured, introducing the theme, presenting evidence and leading to a conclusion. Many candidates start their essay by agreeing with the title and thus begin with their conclusion (one essay began *Diese Behauptung trifft den Nagel auf den Kopf*). Other candidates do not conclude in any noticeable way - their essay just stops.

Storytelling

It is clear from the published criteria for marking the essay that simple retelling of the story gains low marks. Candidates must demonstrate knowledge of the story, but this must be tied in to the title of the essay, and evidence from the book must be relevant to the title.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Goethe – Iphigenie auf Tauris

A limited number of attempts at this text. There was some confusion about the background to Iphigenie's story, eg confusion between Aulis and Tauris. Otherwise the nature of Iphigenie's conflict was understood and well expressed.

Question 2

Frisch - Biedermann

- (a) Candidates were able to discuss the situation quite well, although nobody drew attention to the humour in the piece chosen. Although candidates knew the play well, they found it quite difficult to talk about Biedermann and his apparently contrary patterns of behaviour.
- (b) This question required some explanation of what candidates understood by *Herz* and *Herzlichkeit*, but this was rarely given. This is an example of the point made earlier, about the need to focus on the terms of the question.

Question 3

Mann - Der Tod in Venedig

- (a) Candidates were able to discuss the language used quite well. Most know why Elke was suffering from a fever at this point in the story, but one or two answers showed clearly that the plot had not quite been assimilated. The second part of the question which dealt with the relationship between Hauke and Elke was, on the whole, tackled very well, with a number of relevant quotes taken both from the given passage as well as other passages of the story. In many cases the third part of the question, which should have dealt with the problem of both religious intolerance, ignorance and superstition, was disappointing.

- (b) This question was, on the whole, tackled well. Weaker candidates, however, simply re-told the story, without including their own opinion or other discussion of the question.

Question 4

Storm - Der Schimmelreiter

- (a) Many candidates were able to discuss the situation well, although a few included details which did not belong to the story.
- (i) This question was answered mostly to the point and good reference was made to the extract.
- (ii) The second part-question was used by most candidates successfully to refer to other passages in the book.
- (iii) This question was only answered satisfactorily by some candidates. For others there was insufficient depth.
- (b) Most candidates offered some in-depth discussion of the statement, but as mentioned before, a tendency to revert to re-telling the story kept marks down.

Section 2

Question 5

Böll - Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum

- (a) Many candidates opted for **Question (a)**.

In general candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the story. Most candidates discussed the question satisfactorily, showing some knowledge of the background and Böll's intentions in writing the novel. Only in very few cases did a limited knowledge of the text become apparent.

- (b) Only very few candidates attempted this question. The answers lacked a deeper understanding of the idea that underlies the concept of *Mensch ohne Moral* and that this is, of course, quite the opposite of what Katharina really stands for.

Question 6

Andersch - Sansibar oder der letzte Grund

- (a) Most candidates opted for **Question (a)**. The question was more complex than it seemed at first sight requiring looking back (*Herkunft*) as well as looking forward. It also required a subtle approach to the nature of freedom rather than just assuming it meant escape from the Nazis. The best essays understood this and pointed out how freedom is not a general concept but a highly personal aim for each character. There was therefore a need to get beyond the storytelling about why a character needs to get out of Rerik and to look below the surface of personal crises and conflicts.

Question 7

Brecht - Der kaukasische Kreidekreis

- (a) This question, which required a discussion of the differences between justice and the law of the land, was not very well done. Examiners were also hoping for an awareness of the links between justice and power, or between justice and money. To tell the story of Asdak taking bribes and handing out his version of justice was only the beginning of an answer to this essay.

- (b) This question, on the unity of the play, attracted some good answers. The question suggested that the play concerns two stories. This could be taken to be the story of Gruscha and the baby, and then the story of Asdak, the two strands coming together at the judgement on the baby's true mother. Some candidates treated the two stories as the main part of the play and the framing scenes, which was taken as an acceptable interpretation. There was a chance for candidates to talk about the techniques of epic theatre, if they so wished, and one essay did so very persuasively.

Question 8

Horváth - Jugend ohne Gott

- (a) Apart from one or two exceptions, this question was not very well done. In some cases the points made did not really refer to the task set, but talked about the political background of the book. Very good answers included the historical context, and also used more than just one or two characters from the book to argue their point.
- (b) This question on the alternative title of the novel attracted some interesting answers. Candidates argued both for or against the title *Der Neger*. Only one or two answers, however, covered both the allusions to the concept of being different and therefore synonymous with *Der Neger* as well as the references made to *Neger* in the story. Some candidates ignored the final sentence of the novel "*Der Neger fährt zu den Negern*".