

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2011

GCE

GCE German (6GN01) Paper 1A

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Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response in German

Assessment Principles

This paper carries 50 marks. It consists of a conversation between the teacher/examiner on an AS topic area chosen by the student. The general topic areas are:

Youth Culture and Concerns
Lifestyle, Health and Fitness
The World Around Us
Education and Employment.

Stimulus cards are provided for each area. Before starting the examination, the candidate has 15 minutes to prepare him/herself for the examination with the stimulus card provided. He or she may make notes of up to one side of A4 in this time, and may refer to these notes during the examination.

The conversation lasts between 8 and 10 minutes and is made up of two parts. In Part A, the candidate is asked 4 questions relating to the stimulus card which are set by Edexcel. These questions are mandatory and may be repeated, but not rephrased in any way, although the examiner may change them to use 'Du' rather than 'Sie'. This is the only change that can be made. They must be asked in the order provided and at the outset of the examination. The first two questions relate specifically to information in the stimulus material, the second two to the wider issues developing from the stimulus material. It is expected that the candidate will give answers which are as full and detailed as possible. The candidate's understanding of this stimulus-specific topic area is marked out of 4.

In Part B, the examiner should move away from the specific topic on the stimulus card and develop a wider conversation about the general topic area. The candidate's understanding of the general topic area is marked out of a total of 10.

The marks of 8 for Quality of Language (Accuracy), 8 for Quality of Language (Lexis) and 20 for response apply to the test as a whole.

Candidate Responses

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness remained the most popular topic choice, followed closely by Youth Culture and Concerns. The World Around Us is still relatively unpopular, and there were few candidates who selected Education and Employment. Candidates who chose the more unpopular topics often performed well, perhaps because they have a genuine interest in these topics, perhaps because there is a clearer idea of progression from GCSE. Examiners remarked that The World Around Us, for example, often allowed candidates to demonstrate good understanding of the general topic area combined with a detailed knowledge of subject-specific lexis. Candidates and teachers should bear in mind that this examination requires the candidate to demonstrate the ability to express and justify opinions and conclusions, based on good understanding and knowledge of the topic area. Candidates need, therefore, to research and prepare the sub-topics carefully. Native speakers, especially those from international centres, should be aware that it is not enough simply to have a conversation in fluent German: what they say should be relevant and knowledgeable about the topic area chosen.

There was a wide range in the quality of candidate performance, with not only native speakers achieving full marks. There were also, however, a number of candidates who did not demonstrate progression beyond GCSE.

The Response mark is extremely important in this examination: it carries 20 of the 50 marks available. A weaker candidate, in terms of Accuracy or even Range, can still achieve a satisfactory or good mark for Response so long as the appropriate descriptors are fulfilled. The key to this is spontaneity in responses. Candidates who show by their pronunciation and intonation that they are reproducing rehearsed phrases, and on occasion fairly extensive pre-learned material, are limited on their mark for Response. However, candidates with the confidence and ability to give extensive spontaneous responses in a natural conversation with the teacher-examiner could achieve very good marks for Response.

Nearly all candidates demonstrated at least a satisfactory standard of both Stimulus and General Topic Area understanding. Many gave sufficiently full answers to achieve the maximum mark for Stimulus understanding. High marks could also be awarded for General Topic Area understanding when the candidates demonstrated a wide range of knowledge and opinions/justification. Centres are again encouraged to investigate the World Around Us and Education and Employment topics where it is possible to show a very good understanding of a very wide range of issues.

Some teacher-examiners did not adhere to the prescribed distribution of cards at the front of the teacher-examiner handbook. This is a requirement of the examination. It is not permissible for teacher-examiners to choose the stimulus material they think best suits their candidates. Equally, teacher-examiners must remember that asking supplementary questions in Section A is not

permitted: questions may be repeated, 'Sie' may be changed to 'du', but these are the only changes to the questions allowed.

Most teachers moved on to the section B discussion reasonably quickly, the average being after about 2 to 2 and a half minutes. That said, whereas answers to questions 1 and 2 may be very short, questions 3 and 4 on the stimulus cards are designed to invite expansive and detailed answers. Candidates can only score the full 4 marks for 'full and detailed answers to prescribed questions'. It seems that some teacher-examiners may be prolonging the discussion of the sub-topic area from Part A until the half way mark, and then moving on to Part B. This is not necessary and it is expected that the discussion will move on to the other sub-topics as soon as the four set questions from Part A have been dealt with.

Comments on stimulus cards:

YCC1: most candidates dealt reasonably well with this, although quite a number missed the point in Q4 that it was a ban on drinking in public

YCC2: was accessible to most candidates, but examiners did feel that Q3 and Q4 did rather overlap, with the majority of candidates opting for friends in Q3 and then revisiting much of the same material in discussing friends vs. family in Q4.

LHF1: a number of candidates had difficulty with Q4, as they did not grasp the key point of 'wie kann man lernen....'

LHF2: most were able to cope with this, but a number of candidates clearly did not understand the concept of 'Extremsportarten'

WAU1/2: as reported above, there were few candidates who took this option. However, for those who did the stimuli worked well and the candidates found a lot to say in response to Q3 and Q4.

EE1: mostly candidates did well

EE2: again, candidates who chose this topic found a lot to say in response to Q3 and Q4.

Quality of Language

The marks are allocated for accuracy, range of lexis and structures. Weaker candidates often had difficulties with tenses, agreement with subject and verb, gender, adjectival endings and word order. Their range of lexis and structures used was limited. The stronger candidates were able to use a wider variety of structure and expressions, some being excellent.

Some candidates had obviously pre-learnt large amounts of material, which they then reproduced in the examination. Teacher-examiners need to interrupt long recitations of pre-learnt material to ensure that the candidate can display genuine communication skills.

Although the questions in Section B are to an extent predictable, a candidate who has rehearsed endlessly will not produce a spontaneous or genuine performance. Some teacher-examiners still ask the same questions in exactly the same order of candidates choosing the same topic in a centre. This does not tend to produce a genuine conversation. Teacher-examiners should aim to develop a wide variety of questions on a topic, and ensure that they react to what each individual candidate says.

It is also important that the questions asked allow the candidate to show progression from GCSE. Personal questions such as 'Treibst du persönlich viel Sport?' are often not very productive, producing long lists of sports or even days of the week. An alternative would be 'Treibt man genug Sport in der Schule?' which would allow the candidate to formulate an opinion. Equally, some examiners reported some rather intrusive and personal questions being asked of candidates, for example, 'trinkst du Alkohol?'. Such questions may intimidate or disconcert the candidate and are best avoided.

Response

Candidates' responses varied considerably, and often depended on the way the examination was conducted. Teacher-examiners should bear in mind the need to enable the candidate to demonstrate his or her own fluency in spoken German.

As already mentioned, examiners should not permit the recital of long passages of pre-learnt material. It is best to interrupt the candidate and ask a follow-up question. Candidates should never be encouraged to respond to a pre-arranged series of prompts.

Teacher-examiners should bear in mind that the Response mark includes the spontaneity of the candidate and that the mark will be limited where there is evidence of recitation.

Understanding

There was a full range of marks awarded for the stimulus. Most candidates now appear to understand that they need to give opinions and justify answers to Q3 and Q4 as fully as possible. Answers to Q1 and 2 can be lifted from the text.

Good, well-prepared candidates who did not perform particularly well in the unpredictable Part A were able to gain good marks for understanding in Part B, the General Topic Area. As mentioned above, candidates do best when they have thoroughly prepared and researched all the sub-topics mentioned in the specification. Examiners should be aware of the need to cover a variety of sub-topics in Part B so that candidates can show the range of their understanding and knowledge. This includes moving away from the merely anecdotal (for example, how often they do sport) to analysis of aspects of the topic area (for example, why exercise is important). Section B **must** move away from the specific topic of the stimulus card and explore the other subtopics. Tests which fail to do so are subject to prescribed penalties.

Conduct of the Examination

The majority of teacher examiners conducted the examination well. There were, however, a number issues which arose.

- Timing was accurate overall, with most tests lasting between 8 and 10 minutes. Most examiners realised that remaining on section A for 4 minutes was unrealistic: many candidates gave full and accurate answers in about 2 minutes. This is not a problem. However, please note that very short tests are subject to severe penalties.
- Recording quality: cassette tapes continue to be the most popular recording choice, although CDs are increasingly popular. Whatever mode of recording is chosen, it is vital that the recordings are clear, with both teacher-examiner and candidate audible.
- Oral forms: it is greatly frustrating to examiners to have to fill out forms for the centre. Each candidate must complete the OR1 form, which must be submitted with the recordings.
- Some examiners tried to rephrase the questions in section A, or asked supplementary questions in this section, which is not permissible. As already stated, the questions may only be changed by the use of 'Du' and must otherwise be asked in the format and order on the examiner version of the stimulus card.

- Teacher-examiners must ensure they move away from the stimulus-specific sub-topic in Section B. They should also note that questions which are irrelevant to the topic will be disregarded (for example, a candidate asked 'werden Sie auf die Uni gehen?' in Youth Culture and Concerns).

Advice and Guidance

- **Topic:** Candidates should choose a General Topic Area which interests them. Further guidance can be found on the Edexcel website. Candidates need to have the opportunity to think in depth about the topic area chosen, and the many related sub-topics. Success comes from good preparation, detailed knowledge and the ability to express and justify opinions.
- **Conduct:** Examiners should pay careful attention to the guidelines as given in the specifications, especially for random sequence of stimulus cards, and for overall timing. Unit 1 lasts 8-10 minutes. Short tests cannot access the highest marks, and long tests are not listened to after 10 minutes. Any pre-learned material must be interrupted.
- **Oral Form (OR1):** Please note that there is a form to be filled in for each candidate, and it must be submitted with the recording. Centres are advised to take note of any comments made on the Oral Form.
- **Recording:** Good sound quality is essential. If using cassettes, please use new cassettes. It is also important to have the right balance between the candidates' and examiners' voices. Neck microphones are ideal, but free-standing microphones should be angled towards the candidate, whose voice is normally quieter than the examiner's. Recordings must **never** be paused or stopped, except in an emergency, which must be fully explained in writing to Edexcel. All mobile phones must be switched off (not just on silent, as there is otherwise electronic interference) and there should be no background noise. Centres should check that every candidate has actually been recorded, that it is audible and at the correct speed. Please check the length of the cassette, so that the tape does not run out in the middle of the test. Please label the cassette as well as the box and ensure that the cassettes are rewound to the beginning before posting them off. Examiners can lose an enormous amount of valuable time if they have to rewind many cassettes.

- **Administrative Support Guide:** Teacher Examiners should be thoroughly acquainted with this publication, as observing correct procedures is vital. It is recommended that teacher examiners attend training sessions at Edexcel if at all possible. An Oral Training Guide is also available from Edexcel to help teachers to prepare for this examination. It is unfortunate that candidates are sometimes deprived of marks because the test has been incorrectly conducted. Teacher examiners have the responsibility to prepare adequately, in order to bring out the best from their candidates. All information relating to the oral tests is available on www.edexcel.com.
- **Administration:** Centres should take care to enclose the correct paperwork with the recordings: i.e. the oral forms, the attendance register and a note of any unusual circumstances e.g. fire alarm, candidate illness. Care should be taken with packaging: unfortunately a number of cassettes arrive in a damaged state.

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