

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE German (6GN01) Paper 1A

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Assessment Principles

This paper carries 50 marks. It consists of a conversation between the visiting or 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 he or she 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 re-phrased 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 subtopics of each area are stated in the specification. 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.

Candidates' Responses

Examiners reported that they had assessed the full range of performance by candidates, from those who were very good indeed to those who showed little evidence of progress from GCSE. As has been the case in recent years, there were a significant number of entries by native or near-native speakers.

'Lifestyle, Health and Fitness' remained the most popular topic choice, followed closely by 'Youth Culture and Concerns'. 'The World Around Us' and 'Education and Employment' continued to attract far fewer candidates than the other two topic areas. Candidates choosing the more unpopular topic areas continued to perform well: as mentioned in previous PE reports,

it may be that candidates have a real desire to research these topics, or it may be because candidates have the scope to demonstrate more clearly progression from GCSE. 'The World Around Us', for example, often allows 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. Teacher/Examiners should also take note of the subtopic areas stated in the specification: a few teacher/examiners persisted in asking questions inappropriate to the topic area, which can only mean candidates do not score as well as they could have. It is important to read the specification carefully to ensure that teacher/examiners do not disadvantage their candidates. It is worth reminding centres again that Edexcel has released guidance on its website that , for the purposes of this examination, alcohol, drugs and smoking were permissible subjects of discussion for **both** 'Lifestyle, Health and Fitness' and 'Youth Culture and Concerns'. Native speakers, especially those from international centres, should bear in mind 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.

Examiners reported that the stimulus texts were appropriate and in general worked well. 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. 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. Examiners reported that there were still a few instances where candidates were interrupted when they began what appeared to be a wrong answer and questions being repeated after the candidate had completed a wrong answer. No credit can be given for answers in such cases. Most teachers realised that the timing as envisaged in the specification (half on the stimulus material and half on the Section B discussion) was impractical and moved onto to the section B discussion reasonably quickly. That said, whereas answers to questions 1 and 2 may be very short, centres do need to train candidates to understand that questions 3 and 4 on the stimulus cards are designed to invite expansive and detailed answers. They can only score 4 marks out of 4 for 'full and detailed answers to prescribed questions'. A few teacher/examiners stayed on the stimulus specific topic area until half way through the examination, by expanding on questions relating to the subtopic area targeted by the stimulus card. This is permissible.

Comments on stimulus cards:

Edexcel has acted on comments that in the past the stipulated questions in Part A have strayed into the general topic area. This series the paper development team made sure that the cards did relate as closely as possible to one particular sub-topic.

YCC 1A/B: Some candidates had trouble understanding 'wer' it would seem, as a few could not give an appropriate answer (an examiner reported that the answer 'Hannover' was given by a number of candidates at one centre). The other questions were found to work well, although a few candidates were stumped by the word 'Vorbilder', which one would expect to be a key item of lexis in this topic area.

YCC 2A/B: A number of candidates struggled to express the answer to Q1 and 2. Q2 in particular required candidates to express the cause of the bad marks as explained in the text: it was not just a question of lifting the information. Most candidates did manage to cope well with Q 3 and 4, however.

LHF 1A/B: Some candidates struggled a little with linking '4 Wochen' in the question with 'einen Monat' in the text, and both Q4s presented problems to a number of candidates. Perhaps the context of the smoking ban could have been more defined (eg. in public places), nonetheless, if a candidate chooses this topic area, legislation to do with health is a legitimate issue to expect.

LHF 2A/B: Q1 was often not properly understood, perhaps candidates could not understand 'eher egal'. This card allowed candidates an opportunity to comment extensively on eating disorders, although very few showed any enthusiasm for a vegetarian lifestyle. In 2B responses were well delivered and well thought through by most candidates.

WAU 1A/B: As mentioned above relatively few candidates chose this topic area, yet it allows scope for candidates to use excellent lexis and show good knowledge. The best candidates were able to deliver excellent and well-researched responses making references to recent natural disasters in Japan and Iceland. Q 3 and 4 in card 1A were challenging, but a number of candidates still managed to make full and considered responses. On card 1B, some candidates struggled to define climate change and to speculate on life in 50 years if no action to combat it is taken.

WAU 2A/B: This was well-answered by those who had chosen this topic, some candidates revealing excellent research into alternative energy sources and the issue of nuclear power in Germany.

EE 1A/1B: This was chosen by few but generally well done, some candidates had problems with answering 3 and 4, but unemployment is a subtopic of this topic area and so is a legitimate target for questions.

EE 2A/2B: Again, this was chosen by few but in general very well done, with many able to express personal experience of school stress due to too many exams and high expectations from parents.

Quality of Language

The marks are allocated for accuracy, and for range of lexis and structures. Weaker candidates as usual had difficulties with tenses, agreement with subject and verb, gender, adjectival endings and word order, and the range of lexis and structures used was limited. The more able candidates were able to use a wider variety of structure and expressions, with one examiner reporting that the standard was sometimes amazingly high given the jump from GCSE to AS.

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.

Obviously, the better the candidate has prepared him/herself for the linguistic and thematic demands of this examination, the greater the range of lexis and structures he/ she should be able to employ. As in previous series, some candidates had obviously pre-learnt whole swathes of text, 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. 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 depressed where there is evidence of recitation.

A development reported by visiting examiners concerned candidates using the 15 minutes preparation time to fill their A4 sheets with pre-learnt material relating to the whole topic area, from which they then read out appropriate passages. Such notes were also found amongst the materials sent by teacher/examiners. Centres need to be aware that spontaneity is crucial to this examination and the lack of it is penalized. It is far better practice to bring in bullet points to which the candidate can speak rather than pre-prepared texts.

Edexcel understands that the questions in Section B are to an extent predictable; but as this report mentions every series, a candidate who has rehearsed endlessly will not produce a spontaneous or genuine performance. Some teacher/examiners still persist in asking 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 the topic, and ensure that they react to what each individual candidate says, not just plough through a list of questions.

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.

On the whole, teacher/examiners did conduct the tests fairly and appropriately and have clearly benefitted from reading previous PE reports or Inset. Teacher/Examiners are using previous years' stimulus materials to prepare candidates and to find a range of appropriate questions.

Understanding

As mentioned above, there was some variety of performance in Section A (SSU) and the full range of marks were awarded. The majority of candidates seemed to understand that a fuller response was required in Q3 and 4, although a number as always lacked the ideas/language to respond in a detailed way.

Good, well-prepared candidates who did not perform particularly well in the unpredictable Part A continued to be able to gain good marks for understanding in Part B, the General Topic Area. As is mentioned every year, 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 TEs conducted the examination well. There were, however, a number of issues which arose:

- Timing was accurate overall, with most tests between 8 and 10 minutes. 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 and memory sticks are increasing in popularity. Digital recordings have the advantage of producing the best quality of sound. 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. There were far fewer instances of oral forms being omitted this summer.
- A few examiners still persisted to rephrase the questions in section A, or asked supplementary questions in this section, which is not permissible. Again, the number of instances was vastly reduced this series.
- 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.
- It seems to be increasingly the case that centres are entering native or near-native speakers as an 'add-on' AS. This is acceptable, but such centres must ensure that the person conducting the examination is aware of its proper conduct. A number of otherwise very good candidates were disadvantaged by examiners who clearly had no idea of the examination requirements!

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. The Unit 1 lasts 8-10 minutes. Short tests cannot access the highest marks, and any material is disregarded after 10 minutes. Any pre-learned material must be interrupted.
- **Oral Form:** Please note that there is a form to be filled in for each candidate, and should be submitted with the recording. Centres are advised to take note of any comments made on the Oral Form, as in many cases, this is the only feedback.
- **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, whether it is C60 or C90 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. Markers can lose an enormous amount of valuable time if they have to rewind many cassettes. CDs and memory sticks are very practical and provide the best recording quality. Centres need to ensure that any memory sticks submitted are free from computer viruses.
- **Handbook of Instructions to Centres:** 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 few cassettes/CDs arrive every year in a damaged state.

Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response

Marking guidance for oral examiners

Tests that are too short

A test is too short if it is less than 7 minutes 30 seconds. Candidates are allowed a 30 second tolerance.

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark across the following assessment grids:

- 'Quality of Language – Accuracy'
- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis'
- 'Response'

e.g.

4-5	Accuracy variable but errors rarely impede communication; pronunciation and intonation inconsistent but comprehensible.
6-7	Generally accurate but some errors in more complex language; pronunciation and intonation generally good.
8	Highly accurate with perhaps some very minor errors; pronunciation and intonation authentic.

If a candidate would have scored 7, they should be given 5, if they would have scored 6, they should be given 4. This will not affect the other assessment criteria 'Understanding – Stimulus specific' or 'Understanding – General Topic Area'.

Test that are too long

Once the 10 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence.

Tests that do not move away from initial input

Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see the grids.

- 'Quality of Language - Range of lexis' – limited to a maximum of 3 marks
- 'Response' – limited to a maximum of 8 marks
- 'Understanding - General topic area' – cannot score more than 0

Please note:

Understanding – Stimulus specific should only be used to mark **Section A** of the oral test.

Understanding – General topic area should only be used to mark **Section B** of the oral test

When marking the oral exam, examiners are advised to immediately allocate a mark for Section A, prior allocating marks for the rest of the test (Section B).

These are the only adjustments to be made.

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