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Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCE
in German (9GN0)
paper 3: speaking

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Introduction

In the A Level speaking examination, students are assessed on their ability to demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding of the cultural context by giving ideas, examples and information on one of the themes and on a chosen subject of interest they have researched linked to the social and cultural context of the language studied;
- analysis of aspects of the cultural context by presenting and justifying valid arguments, viewpoints and conclusions, illustrated with relevant examples and evidence;
- the ability to interact and hold a natural, spontaneous and fluent discourse;
- skill in manipulating and pronouncing language accurately;
- response to written language in speech.

These aspects are assessed via two distinct tasks conducted entirely in German, which are carried out in consecutive order in one session.

Task 1 (discussion on a theme)

Content for this task is based on any one of the twelve sub-themes from one of the four overall themes listed on pages 8–9 of the specification. Students choose one out of two sub-themes to discuss immediately before the preparation time. Stimulus cards are a springboard to the discussion, which the teacher-examiner broadens onto other sub-themes of the wider Theme.

Task 2 (presentation and discussion on student's independent research project)

This task is in two parts. Content for this task is based on the subject of interest that students have chosen for their independent research project. This may be based on any of the four themes of study listed on pages 8–9 of the specification or on a subject of interest of the student's choosing. However, it must relate to the cultural and social context of a German speaking community.

The key features of this examination are:

- Task 1 focusses on Germany and discussions are based on themes 1, 3 and 4;
- A focus on the German Speaking World for task 1 discussions on theme 2 and for the entire task 2;
- The level of knowledge and understanding of the Germany and the German speaking world is assessed once in each section by the AO4 mark grid, and is worth a total of 24 marks;

- There is no longer a requirement for the student to take a definite standpoint on any issues discussed, as in the legacy examination section A, although the student may make their own standpoint clear as part of the discussions;
- There are prescribed topic areas for task 1 and prescribed questions, which the teacher examiner must ask at the start of this task;
- Interaction, including the ability to partake in a spontaneous, naturally developed discussion, is assessed discretely by the AO1 mark grid, and this skill is twice during the course of the new examinations, worth a total of 12 marks;
- The ability to respond in speech to written German is assessed in task 2 part 1 by the AO2 grid. The presentation given in this part of the test must clearly reference specific, named sources. These sources must be written in German. There was no requirement to do this in the previous speaking assessment;
- The new examination is, in total, between 5 and 7 minutes longer than the legacy assessment.

A summary of candidate performance

Task 1

The cards proved to be an effective way to stimulate discussion and the wording of the statements and supporting points were accessible to nearly all students.

The answers given to the two prescribed questions inform the overall mark for AO4 for task 1 and are considered along with any subsequent knowledge and understanding which is offered by the student in the discussion which follows.

The best answers were from students who listened carefully to the questions and drew on their knowledge to formulate a direct answer.

Some students focussed only on parts of the question and did not address all of the implications. In considering the mark for AO4 for this section, the degree of relevance plays an important part. Those students who addressed the question directly provided good evidence of relevant ideas. They also provided some evidence of “perception”, which is another key term in the higher bands of this mark grid.

Examiners noted some patterns in student performance, which may have led students to offer answers which could not be considered as completely relevant or highly perceptive. For example:

- Card GN1 – the word “Nachhaltigkeit” was not always directly addressed and responses strayed into more general environmental issues;

- Card GN3 – the idea of Arbeits**kosten** did not always feature as part of the answers offered. Also, the most successful responses linked the ideas of “Vielfältigkeit” and “Erfolg”;
- Card GN4 did not always show an understanding of the implications of “einzigartig”;
- Card GN5 often elicited responses which were substantiated with examples from outside of the German speaking world;
- Card GN7 responses were more successful when they focussed on the idea of “Kulturen” which was present in the question;
- Card GN8 posed a challenge to some in terms of the exact meaning of “Herkunftsland”;
- Card GN10 – the most perceptive answers addressed the idea of “Versagen”;
- Card GN12 – the idea of “nachhaltig geprägt” was more successfully rendered when students talked about lasting difference between East and West Germans, which have endured since the fall of the wall, rather than talking about differences that existed whilst Germany was still divided.

Application of the Mark Grids

Sections 1 and 2 assess AO1, interaction, AO3, Range and accuracy of Language and AO4, knowledge and Understanding of Germany and, where appropriate, the German speaking world. The mark grids were applied in the same way in both tasks. Below is a summary of how the students’ performances were placed into the mark bands in this session.

AO1 – Interaction - Tasks 1 and 2

The interaction between the student and the teacher examiner is awarded up to 6 marks in this section.

A mark of 0 was awarded in cases when there was a complete lack of spontaneity, but this was very rare, particularly because the student has to respond to previously unknown questions at the start of this question.

1-2 marks were awarded for students who were heavily dependent on prompting by the teacher examiner. Such students may have been unable to complete the points that they were trying to make. These marks may also have applied to performances, in which a natural discussion did not develop. For example, a “one question and answer per subtheme” approach.

For example:

Teacher examiner: “Was halten Sie vom deutschen Bildungssystem?”

...Student responds...

Teacher examiner: “Danke, und was halten Sie von Recycling in Deutschland?”

...Student responds...

3-4 marks were awarded to students who demonstrated some spontaneity. The development of the discussion, and the introduction of new ideas, examples and opinions was likely to be prompted by the teacher, rather than the candidate, at times when a mark in this band was awarded. A mark of 3 may indicate a lack of spontaneity at times, or the occasional need for a prompt or assistance by the teacher to complete the idea that the student was trying to express.

For example:

The teacher examiner **constantly** has to ask questions, such as "Zum Beispiel?", "Und was halten Sie davon?", "Und warum ist das wichtig?"

Students were awarded marks in the 5-6 band if they demonstrated an ability to lead the discussion by adding examples, opinions and justifications without the constant need to be prompted. As part of a natural discussion, the teacher examiner may seek further information, but the development of the discussion will not be dependent on this in cases when 5 or 6 marks are awarded. At this mark band, responses will be entirely spontaneous, and it is likely that fewer aspects of the subtheme will be discussed in greater depth.

Asking Questions

This is one aspect of interaction and it is likely to be evident in all performances, regardless of the marks awarded. Asking a question does not automatically place the performance in any one of the three mark bands.

In the 0-2 mark range, questions may have been asked as part of an entirely unspontaneous performance. They may also have been asked because the student was unable to respond in any other way.

In the 3-4 mark range, the candidate may have asked questions at unnatural times. Also, the student may have interrupted their own development, as they prioritised asking a question over giving a more developed answer. Often in such cases, the teacher examiner was prompted to change the subject after responding to the candidate, and this proved a barrier to the development of the discussion. In both this and the lower band, it was also often clear that the students felt uneasy or uncomfortable with question formation.

At the 5-6 mark range, students only asked questions when necessary, to clarify what the teacher had said, for example. They were confident in seeking clarification. They also did not seek the opinion or agreement of the teacher examiner until after they had given a full and detailed answer of their own.

Supporting Students in AO1

- Encourage students to take the initiative to develop points. They may use strategies mastered in other subjects or qualifications, for example the point, evidence, evaluation strategy used by many in English examinations.
- Encourage students to seek clarification, if needed, **before** answering.
- Practice phrases which allow the student time to change their mind or re-articulate their ideas, e.g. "just a moment", "actually, now I think about it."
- Encourage students to give their best possible answer, before asking for agreement or checking for understanding.
- Ask follow up questions on what the student has said, before changing the focus of the discussion.
- Explain to students that asking a question does not automatically raise their mark.
- Allow students to practise asking questions, so that they feel and sound at ease when they do.

AO2 – Responding to Written German in Speech - Task 2 part 1 only.

This mark grid assesses the student's ability to give a spoken response to **written** German.

The mark grid has a range of 0-12 marks and likely performance of students awarded marks in each band is detailed below;

No marks were awarded to students who did not present evidence that they were responding to written language. For example, the presentation may have been a general introduction, similar to the section A introduction in the legacy exam, which did not mention any of the sources. Students who spoke only about sources, which were not written in German, were also not awarded marks in this section. Similarly, students who only made reference to non-written sources, such as documentaries or online videos did not provide the evidence required to score under this assessment objective.

1-3 marks were awarded to students who did mention written sources, but did not make the focus on the author's points clear. This may have been a passing reference to sources, followed by some general background information. Also, students who only made reference to one source in this task were awarded a mark in this band. There were also students who talked about more than one source, but the additional sources were not suitable for the reasons mentioned above. If the second source was referred to beyond the 2 minute time limit, the examiners did not consider it when awarding the marks.

4-6 marks requires that the student refers to at least two written sources. The summary may have been unbalanced, focusing on one source for the majority of the two minutes. In other instances, the summary may have been balanced evenly across two appropriate sources, but there may have been a lack of personal response to the author's ideas. Or, the summary may have been unclear to the point that it was difficult to distinguish which information came from which source.

7-8 marks were awarded to a presentation, which mentions two appropriate sources. The majority of the ideas presented by the student will also have also been clearly linked to their original source, although this will not always have been clear. Furthermore, there will be a personal response to each source and some, but not all of this response will be justified.

10-12 marks were awarded to presentations that gave a summary of two appropriate sources, in which the originating source was always clear to the examiner. The personal responses will have been consistently justified.

The full range of marks were awarded for AO2. Examiners noted that students of all abilities were able to access full marks for this assessment objective. It should be noted, that quality of language is not assessed in task 2 part 1 and appropriate, understandable presentations will be awarded marks, as long as they are providing evidence that they are a response to written German. The presentation must be the student's own work, and when examiners suspected that the student had had additional assistance for this task, the examination was referred for further investigation.

Supporting Students in AO2

- Practice the summary presentation task as frequently as possible throughout the course. For example, if the topic of recycling has recently been covered in class, ask the students to take two of the texts used and create a presentation based on those. Adhere to the two minute time limit strictly when practising, so that they know how much they can cover in that time. **(You must not practise using the actual written sources, which the student wishes to use in the examination);**
- Explain what needs to be covered in the presentation – at least two German written sources, points from each clearly presented, a personal response which is justified;
- Encourage students to be sensible about the length of their written sources. If they are too long, the summary will be difficult within the time constraints.

A03 – Tasks 1 and 2 - Accuracy and Range of Language

The mark grid used to assess the quality of language covers for main features:

- Accuracy – conjugation, agreements, word order, tense formation.
- Range – lexis appropriate to the topic of discussion and structures, as listed in Appendix 3 of the specification;
- Pronunciation;
- Intonation;
- The examiners consider all of these points and, when the student's performance falls into different marks bands for each of the characteristics, they arrive at a best fit mark.

For example, if the accuracy and range are worthy of the top mark band, but the pronunciation is weaker, the mark may be awarded at the bottom end of the top band, or the top of the box below, based on the merits of the performance.

All four elements are given as equal a weighting as possible.

Therefore, a student who attempts to use a wide range of lexis and structures, with good pronunciation and intonation, but who also makes mistakes with adjective endings and word order, may be awarded a similar mark to an accurate student, who operates within a more limited range of structures and lexis, even though the two performances may sound very different. Non-native speakers must have access to the full marks available here, and the examiners are standardised with this fundamental principal in mind.

Students awarded a mark of 1-3 are likely to have been frequently unable to express ideas, due to limited range of lexis and structures at their disposal. It is likely that the examiner, due to accuracy, pronunciation or intonation difficulties, did not readily understand many of their ideas.

Students awarded marks in the 4-6 band are unlikely to have impeded communication due to pronunciation and intonation, but there will have been occasions when communication broke down.

In the 7-9 band, the students will have given the impression that they were not reliant on the same lexis and structures to express themselves. They will have had topic specific lexis and will have been usually able to make themselves understood. Pronunciation and intonation will not be a barrier to communication in this band.

It is likely that there will be errors in the performances of students in the 10-12 band, but they will not have hindered communication. Examples of such errors are incorrect genders, case endings, some lapses in prepositions. They will have demonstrated use of key terms across a range of topics, and have made a clear attempt to avoid mother-tongue interference in pronunciation and intonation.

The full range of mark bands was used in assessing the students in this session. The requirement to show knowledge and understanding of the German speaking world seems to have encouraged many students to broaden their vocabulary in order to present their findings, especially in relation to the IRP. The examiners frequently credited passives, relative clauses, conditional perfects, subordination and varied discourse markers. Whilst a few students seemed unable to cope at this level, most were able to discuss the topics and projects for the full duration of the test.

Supporting Students in A03

- Encourage students to gather a range of topic-specific vocabulary for each aspect of each sub theme;
- Work on synonyms, to avoid repetition;
- Explore ways to make basic opinions more linguistically sophisticated. E.g. "it is good", becomes "it is positive", better still "it is extremely positive", even better still "It is an extremely positive development", or even "It is viewed as an extremely positive development by many Germans." The sentiment is the same, but the linguistic range is instantly lifted. The final version would provide evidence of range of language.

A04 – Tasks 1 and 2 – Knowledge and Understanding of German Speaking Culture and Society.

A04 is worth 24 of the 72 marks in the speaking assessment. The mark grid assesses:

- Relevance to the German speaking world and to the question asked.
- The ability to support an idea with examples.
- The ability to analyse the evidence presented and justify conclusions.

The best fit mark is awarded. Therefore, a list of facts about the German speaking world will be considered as examples, but if they are not relevant, or not used to draw a conclusion, this list alone will not satisfy the highest bands of the mark grid. Similarly, opinions and conclusions on the German speaking world alone will not satisfy the full criteria, if they are not supported by relevant examples.

This session, examiners awarded the full range of marks in this grid.

A mark awarded in the 1-3 band would indicate a performance that made limited reference to specific examples, relying on description. Opinions offered are likely to have been basic, such as positives and negatives. For example, they may say, that recycling is good for the environment because it reduces carbon emissions. Whilst true, it is general, and not focussed on German society.

Students were awarded a mark in the 4-6 band, if there was evidence of some specific examples from the German speaking world, which were relevant to the topics being discussed. The use of exemplification will, however, have been inconsistent. Sometimes irrelevant facts will have been given, or there will have been ideas that were unsubstantiated. For example, the student may say that recycling is effective in Germany and the Germans are pioneers in recycling, but this was not substantiated.

A performance in the 7-9 band will have used examples which were consistently rooted in German society and culture and analysed the significance of this factual information. Some of the examples given will have demonstrated a more in-depth knowledge, and may have gone beyond the standard, well known response. For example, a description of the "Pfandsystem" with relevant personal reactions.

Students were awarded a mark in the 10-12 band if they frequently demonstrated an ability to give more perceptive examples, which showed a deeper understanding. For example, use of the "Pfandsystem" idea is evidence of Germany being environmentally friendly, accompanied by some up to date examples of the negative environmental impact of washing and transporting bottles, or information on the proportion of multiple-use bottles which are actually re-used as intended. The conclusion would then follow based on the balance of evidence provided by the candidate, and this conclusion would be logical in light of the evidence.

The idea of the "Pfandsystem" is used above to illustrate the difference in quality of AO4 at various points in the mark grid. There were, of course, many different examples of students presenting an ability to be perceptive, and to analyse these perceptions.

Supporting Students in AO4

- Encourage students to gather up-to date facts and examples from German language media, which demonstrate current thinking on the topics in the specification.
- For the historical theme, encourage students to gain an understanding of the key dates and turning points, influential people and politics at that time.
- For the media-based topics particularly, ensure that students can give evidence of how these universal issues manifest themselves in the German speaking world.
- Encourage students to adopt a "point, evidence, evaluation" approach, to ensure that they maintain a balance between factual and analytical ideas.
- For the IRP, encourage candidates to formulate their project title or statement of opinion. This helps to keep focus on the analytical aspect of AO4. For example "Nicht alles in der DDR war schlecht." or

“Inwiefern gibt es eine Verbindung zwischen Armut und Rechtsradikalismus in Deutschland?”

- Explain to students the importance of their key findings on the IRP form. These should not be facts, but rather, ideas or questions that the student’s research has raised. For example, beginning each bullet point with phrases such as “The role of...”, “The importance of...”, “The pros and cons of...”, “The meaning of...”, “The reasons for...”, “The different reactions to...”
- When conducting the examination, use the key findings to structure the discussion. Only move on to another key finding when the student appears to have no more to add.

Conduct and administration

Timing

The timing of section 1 is recommended to be 6-7 minutes. Examiners will listen to all that is said, even if it exceeds the time recommendation. However, examiners stop listening at 18 minutes. Therefore, if task 1 exceeds 7 minutes, it will limit the amount of evidence for assessment that examiners hear for the task 2 marks. This did occur relatively frequently. Some teacher examiners extended the test beyond 18 minutes in order to compensate for a long task 1, but examiners did not consider material beyond 18 minutes.

The two minute time limit to the presentation in task 2 part 1 was enforced by all examiners. If only one source was summarised before this time limit, the information on the second source was disregarded. Teachers should, therefore, take note of the mark grid for AO2, which requires at least two written sources to be awarded a mark of 3 or higher, and a balance between sources to be awarded a mark higher than 6.

Forms and documentation

Centres should submit 3 different forms to the examiners. The IRP form, one for each student, which details the title and key findings of the research project. It should be noted that this form is two-sided and that the key findings should be written in English. If students chose to type and print this form, they must not extend the key findings boxes to fit in more information. Key findings should be in bullet point form. Centres should also submit an OR4AL form for each student. The topic section of the form should be completed by the centre, and the card and chosen statement used for task 1 should be filled in towards the bottom. Finally, centres should submit one CS3 form per centre, which all students sign and date. All teachers involved in teaching the students for the A Level German course must also sign and date this form.

Recording

Use the best quality recording equipment that is available. It is also helpful to the students to time the exams around the routines of the centre. For example, avoiding the times that the bell rings, or lesson change overs. Teacher examiners tend to speak louder than students, so place the microphone closer to the student. Avoid writing during the examination if at all possible, examiners noted the distracting effect that this seems to have on students. Often, examinations are conducted in offices with phones and computers. Ensure that these are switched off or unplugged, to avoid any unwanted distractions.

Final comments

Key Points for Teacher examiners:

- Check all paper work is present and complete before sending work to examiners;
- Explain the timing recommendations and restrictions to your students, and explain to them why it is sometimes in their best interests for you to interrupt them if they speak for too long;
- Discuss the support strategies for each assessment objective in this report with your students, and refer to them regularly throughout the course;
- Refer to the guidance on the teacher's role in supervising preparation for the IRP;
- Ensure that students are aware of the full title of each sub theme, so that they can make an informed choice of stimulus card on the day of the examination;
- Ensure that students know which sub-themes belong to each main theme, so that they have an idea of how the task one discussion will develop after the prescribed questions.

The examiners marking this assessment appreciate the efforts of centres to make the exams run smoothly for their students, and to allow them to reach their full potential. The hard work that goes into preparing students for examinations is also appreciated and the examiners seek to reward this whenever possible.

We look forward to working with current Edexcel centres in the future and to welcoming new centres to the Edexcel WCQ a Level in German.

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