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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary

In German (WGN04) Unit 1: Research,
Understanding and Written Response

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International A Level German

WGN04 Paper 4

Research, Understanding and Written Response

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The small entry for this session consisted mostly of able candidates whose first-hand knowledge of German allowed them to show good comprehension skills in listening and reading. Most were able to attempt all parts of the paper. Whilst many were able to rely on their own linguistic experience to select relevant detail and draw conclusions in Sections A and B, Question 8 which targets grammatical accuracy and Section C often proved more challenging.

Section A – Listening

The four listening passages were clearly well understood by candidates who often scored full marks on the first three questions.

In the multiple choice questions, only 1(c) and 2(d) caused problems. It is important to listen for gist rather than opt for the answer which seems to have the most obvious link to what has been said.

Question 4 requires candidates to give short answers. Those who wrote lengthy responses to the questions often negated their answer by giving too much irrelevant detail or by starting with a wrong answer followed by two correct answers. In 4(f) for example, a candidate might have written about the duration of the project which was not an acceptable answer followed by two acceptable ideas. This meant that only one mark could be awarded since only the first two ideas are accepted as an answer.

Candidates should also aim for precision. In 4(b) *es gibt keine Kurven* was insufficient as a response since it was necessary to state that there were *keine engen Kurven*. Similarly, some candidates were able to identify that some people were unable to travel on the first train through the tunnel but failed to give the vital detail that they had failed to secure a ticket.

Targeted lifts are sometimes possible in this section, but it is also possible for candidates to attempt an answer in their own words which reflects their understanding of the spoken passage.

Section B – Reading and Grammar

Question 5 allowed candidates to make a confident start to Section B. However, it was necessary to read the passage carefully to deduce the answers. In 5(b) for example, some candidates failed to make the link between the required 3.3 million and the reason given in option D, and the link between *Betreuung* and *Aufsicht* was not always known.

Answering questions in German is a skill which needs focused practice. As a general rule, candidates should read the passage carefully, think about the question and then extract only the relevant detail from the text which matches what is being asked rather than what they assume is being asked. The relatively straightforward answer to (a) was often missed because *jeder will sie essen*, which was occasionally given, simply restates what is in the question. In (c), the answer had to relate directly to the *Transportweg*: the fact that the avocados used packaging, albeit an environmental issue, was not sufficient to gain a mark. In this answer, candidates had to make a link between the long journey and the amount of fuel required or between the electricity required for the refrigeration process.

Similar trends in responses were evident in Question 7 and candidates often lost marks because of carelessness rather than because of a failure to understand the whole text. The most common errors were lack of detail in (a) with the omission of the amount of prize money and in (c) when many candidates simply stated that robots could imitate human movements which was not accepted.

Question 8 discriminated well between those who were able to write accurately and those who simply gave an approximation of the new phrase. Very few candidates scored full marks here. The most common errors were:

- failure to replicate a conditional tense in (a)
- use of the wrong tense in (b) and (c)
- a lack of a passive construction in (d)
- no evidence of the subjunctive for indirect speech in (e)
- omission of a verb in the relative clause in (j)
- incorrect use of the separable verb in (j)

Overall, however, many candidates provided good evidence in Section B that they were very at ease with and could understand relatively complex German.

Section C

Centres have clearly prepared candidates well for this section of the paper and many write with conviction and a good depth of understanding. It should be noted that only one essay should be written.

It is crucial that candidates understand the nature of what is expected in the final essay. Since marks awarded for Content and Communication (out of 15) and Critical analysis, Organisation and Development (out of 20) as well as for Quality of language (out of 5), it is crucial that some examination time is spent planning the response to the specific question asked. Many candidates who wrote fluent essays in German of a very high quality often scored low marks for the other two categories because their response lacked relevance, were simply a regurgitated version of everything they knew about the topic or work or lacked sufficient detail.

Essays should be clearly divided into paragraphs. In a good essay it is often possible to read the first key sentence of each paragraph to understand the candidate's argument. Many responses, which were otherwise linguistically sound, failed to reach a higher mark band for Critical analysis, Organisation and Development simply because their essays were more like a stream of consciousness with no attempt to marshal their thoughts. In addition, candidates who take an objective stance are more likely to hit the correct tone; those who give superficial personal responses fail to impress.

Most importantly, candidates should realise that the thrust of the questions set is mostly in the second part. The descriptive first part is simply a *Sprungbrett* to allow them to show relevant knowledge resulting from their reading or research. To access the higher mark bands they must engage in an analysis of the issues. Essays which relied too much on description and less on evaluation fared poorly.

Geografisches Gebiet

The chosen geographical area must be in a German -speaking country. Essays which referred only to other areas in the world score no marks. There were some interesting essays this time on the effects of the German government's policies on migration in response to Question 9(b). However, to score well here it is vital that candidates have firm evidence, e.g. of statistics or of legislation, to back up their ideas. An essay which simply gives a general outline of the problems and solutions will not gain high marks for Content and Communication.

Geschichtliche Studien

The historical period chosen must relate directly to a German-speaking country. Essays about Russian or Portuguese political figures, as were seen in this series, could not gain marks because they lacked the required cultural link.

Candidates who answered Question 10(b) often were able to describe an event in convincing detail but often failed to address the second part of the question about how the event influenced the course of history. A good response referred to the fall of the Berlin Wall and how that affected east-west-relations and the stability of Germany in the ensuing years.

Literatur

It is not necessary to introduce the essay with general information about the genesis of the work. In fact, this produced a poor start when it appeared. Better candidates provided an opening paragraph which identified the issues to be addressed in the essay with direct reference to the essay question set.

The most common text continues to be *Der Besuch der alten Dame*. Those who chose Question 12(a) mostly focussed on the final scene of Act 2. However, they often failed to describe the impact of the scene of the characters, describing rather the preceding and ensuing events, sometimes in too much narrative detail. Those who chose Question 12(b) were often unable to state clearly what Claire's methods were, and resorted again to regurgitating the plot. However, there were some very good essays which showed an outstanding ability to select and analyse details from the play in order to support a clear argument.

Film

There were some interesting responses on the Samardeli film *Almanya, Willkommen in Deutschland*. Question 19(a) gave candidates an opportunity to describe the problems of integration for the various family members. Only the best answers categorised and evaluated the various family members' ability to deal with the issues they encountered and to draw conclusions.

Conclusion

Centres should remind candidates to indicate in Section C which question they have answered by crossing the appropriate box on page 20 of the question paper.

Overall this was a paper which discriminated well. Centres had clearly prepared candidates well for the varying demands of the paper. Candidates showed real understanding of complex German in a variety of contexts and were often able to produce German of an impressive standard.