



Pearson

Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2020

Pearson Edexcel International A level
In German (WGN01)
Spoken Expression and Response

edexcel 

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Examiner's Report

General comments

As with January 2019, the cohort for Paper 2, Spoken Expression and Response, was fairly small and varied this session.

Introduction

This is an 8–10 minute assessment in two sections that total 40 marks with 15 minutes of preparation time.

In advance of the examination, the candidate chooses two of the four specified general topic areas (GTA) to prepare.

The GTAs are:

- Youth matters
- Lifestyle, health and fitness
- Environment and travel
- Education and employment.

A randomisation grid informs the teacher which of the two chosen areas will be tested. The candidate is told this immediately before the preparation time begins.

Section A requires candidates to respond to four set questions on a stimulus related to one of the candidate's chosen GTAs.

Section B requires the teacher/examiner to engage the candidate in a discussion that, although still related to the same GTA and its linked subtopics, moves away from the main focus of the stimulus.

Stimulus cards are provided for each area. These form the assessment for Section A. Before starting the examination, each candidate has 15 minutes to prepare with the stimulus card provided. He or she may make notes of up to one side of A4 sheet of paper in this time, which they may refer to during the examination.

In Section A, the candidate is asked four questions relating to the stimulus card. These questions are mandatory and may be repeated, but for the purpose of fair assessment across all centres, they **must not be re-phrased**. The first two questions relate specifically to information in the stimulus material, the second two relate to aspects of the subtopic, upon which the stimulus text is based.

For Question 1, it is expected that the candidate will manipulate the wording of the text in order to arrive at a complete answer to the question. A lift of information from the stimulus text will not provide sufficient information to answer the question completely. This question targets information in the first paragraph of the stimulus text. There are three possible elements to the answer to Question 1 in the first paragraph and candidates should try to include as many of these elements as they are able. For Question 2, it is expected that the candidate will find the answer in the second paragraph. It will be necessary to manipulate the language found in the stimulus text to arrive at a complete answer.

For Questions 3 and 4 it is expected that the candidate will give answers which are full and detailed, drawing on the research that they undertook on the GTA, in preparation for the examination.

The candidate's understanding of this stimulus specific topic area is marked out of four. The four marks are not directly allocated as one mark per question. The statement in the mark grid, which best matches the entire performance of section A, will dictate the mark awarded.

In Section B, the teacher examiner must initiate a discussion about the general topic area chosen by the randomisation grid. The teacher examiner must move away from the subtopic of the stimulus card to more general discussion of the topic area and its linked subtopics. The subtopics of each area are stated in the specification. The candidates must attempt to show a clear understanding of the chosen topic and use the research they have completed in advance of the examination in order to do this, ideally citing sources they have used in their research.

The candidate's knowledge and understanding of the general topic area is marked out of a total of ten. The marks of five for Quality of Language (Accuracy), five for Quality of Language (Range of Lexis) and sixteen for Response apply to the test as a whole.

It is important that the full test lasts at least eight minutes. If the test is too short, examiners follow the guidance stated in the "Unit 1 Further Marking Guidance" which is available to centres via the Edexcel website. The examiners will stop assessing tests beyond ten minutes and will base their judgements on the performance offered up to that time limit.

Choice of General Topic Area (GTA)

As in previous sessions, Youth Matters as well as Lifestyle, Health and Fitness remain the most popular combination of topic choices as these are perhaps perceived as "easier" by candidates. The disadvantage of these topic choices is that the sub-topics do not, perhaps, require as much subject-specific vocabulary as do the topic areas of Environment and Travel or Education and employment. Therefore, candidates who do choose these latter two topics tend to score well for Quality of Language (Range of Lexis) and generally demonstrate very good or excellent knowledge of their chosen General Topic Area. Successful candidates are able to use sophisticated lexical items when talking about Youth Matters and Lifestyle, Health and Fitness, but less successful candidates tend to use rather

pedestrian vocabulary, often drawing on their IGCSE knowledge, offering anecdotal evidence, or talking about personal preferences rather than reflecting about the wider topic area.

Application on the Marking Criteria

Understanding Stimulus Specific AO2

To arrive at a mark, examiners consider primarily the mark band descriptions, rather than the number of "correct" answers. A response attains full marks when the candidate correctly identifies **all three elements to Question 1**, together with the correct response to Question 2, sufficiently manipulating the language in the stimulus text to directly answer the question. Manipulation of pronouns, verbs and tenses may be required, as well as summarising information in the paragraphs, in order to answer the question directly, without including irrelevant details, or details which suggest the question and the text have not been fully understood. The candidate should then also go on to provide developed, justified answers to Questions 3 and 4 that consider more than one implication and use examples to illustrate answers.

Quality of Language – Accuracy

To access three or more marks, candidates need to show accuracy in basic principles, such as subject/verb agreements, tense formation and word order. At three marks, communication may be impeded at times, either due to pronunciation issues, or due to grammatical errors. To access full marks, communication must be clear at all times, and the candidate will demonstrate the ability to pronounce German well enough to be understood without undue difficulty. There may be minor errors in case agreements and complex structures, as well as the occasional major error, but these will be outweighed by a generally accurate response.

Quality of Language – Range of Lexis

To assess the performance in this area, the grammar list in the specification is considered, and examiners listen for a wide range of specified structures in order to award the higher marks. In addition to this, the GTA is important, as examiners are standardised to listen for and reward a range of **topic-specific** lexis.

Spontaneity and Development

Candidates are assessed on their ability to communicate spontaneously in verbal speech. Spontaneous use of language occurs when candidates use their knowledge of structures, lexis and the GTA and apply it appropriately in response to questions. The discussion should develop naturally and build on the answers to previous questions. It should not feature a list of pre-determined questions devised in advance of the examination. A well-developed discussion is one where the candidate expands on an idea, justifying, illustrating and clarifying his or her points, and where the teacher

examiner responds to what the candidate says. The teacher examiner might, for example, ask, "Wie meinen Sie das?", "Warum?" or "Können Sie ein Beispiel geben?". When giving examples, candidates should draw on their research, not on anecdotal evidence, or personal experiences, as doing so will not enable them to demonstrate understanding of the GTA.

Knowledge and Understanding – GTA

It is expected that candidates will undertake preparatory work in their two chosen topic areas in advance of the examination. There must be evidence of knowledge and understanding, beyond what is considered general knowledge and awareness, in order to satisfy the criteria for the highest marks in this section. Good or excellent knowledge and understanding can be demonstrated by referring to independent research which has taken place in preparation for the examination. This could take the form of mentioning a statistic or referring to a named source, such as an article online, which the candidate has used.

Knowledge which is based entirely within the candidate's personal experience is not sufficient to satisfy the terms "many" or a "wealth" of ideas, as stated in the mark grid. Many candidates – even linguistically very able ones - rely on anecdotal or general knowledge to illustrate their ideas, and they can only be credited in the "some relevant ideas" band of this mark grid.

Specific Comments on Stimulus Card tasks

Youth Matters Stimulus Cards 1A/B

Question 2 prompted candidates to identify, based on the text, why belonging to a peer group can be detrimental. This question proved problematic for many candidates and many candidate answers were not based on the stimulus text. Questions 3 and 4 on both stimulus cards, in contrast, allowed candidates to talk more widely about the wider GTA. These questions were handled successfully by the majority of candidates.

Youth Matters Stimulus Cards 2A/B

These stimulus cards concerned the enduring importance of the radio for young people as a means of listening to music. Most candidates gave all three items of information required in response to Questions 1 and 2. Questions 3 and 4 on the 2A/B stimulus cards were successful in generating thoughtful candidate responses, often with good development.

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness Stimulus Cards 1A/B

The stimulus text referred to the lack of physical exercise undertaken by Austrian youths. Questions 1-4 on the 1A/1B card were all successfully answered by the majority of candidates. Where marks were lost, this occurred mainly as a result of fluent candidates being unaware that three items of information from the first paragraph of the stimulus text are required, rather than one item only. Particularly good development and justifications were noted in the candidate responses to Question 4 on the 1A card and the 1B card. These two questions prompted candidates to consider on why some sports are particularly popular among young people, and to reflect on how young people can be encouraged to practise more sports.

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness Stimulus Cards 2A/B

This stimulus card dealt with the trend in the decreasing ability to cook among the German population. It proved successful, with the majority of candidates able to respond to all four questions. It was noted however, that not all candidate responses to Questions 4 on the 2A and 2B stimulus cards were as developed and detailed as they could have been, even though these nature of these questions made them accessible and open-ended (candidates were prompted to consider why many people do not consume meat and to what extent nutrition affects our life).

Environment and Travel Stimulus Cards 1A/B

This stimulus card that dealt with the challenges faced by commuters on public transport was particularly successful. Questions 1 and 2 were competently handled by the majority of candidates who attempted it, and Questions 3 and 4 triggered some interesting and individual candidate responses debating the merits and demerits of public transport, suggesting ways in which traffic jams can be reduced, and offering candidate opinions as to which form of public transport is best for commuters and why. These responses helped the most successful candidates attain the higher mark bands. In a small minority of cases, candidates added a little too much detail about their own experiences of public transport, which reduced the time available for their General Discussions, but this did not affect their overall marks.

Environment and Travel Stimulus Cards 2A/B

This stimulus card revolved around the harmful impact of house cleaning on the environment. The stimulus text included some specialised vocabulary items such as "Hausputz" and "Reinigungsmittel" but these were well understood by almost all candidates. It was noted that despite their good understanding of the stimulus text, however, many candidates only offered one item of information from the first paragraph in response to Question 1, whereas three items are required. By contrast, Question 2, which asked candidates to identify, based on the second paragraph of the stimulus text, why household cleaners are always detrimental to the environment, was answered successfully by all candidates who attempted this stimulus card. Questions 3 and 4 on each stimulus card were also competently handled by the respective candidates.

Education and Employment Stimulus Cards 1A/B

This stimulus card treated a new coding initiative at German primary schools. The introductory paragraph was extremely short but nevertheless, not all candidates offered the three required items of information in response to question A. This appeared to be due more to a generalised misunderstanding (i.e. candidates believing one item of information is sufficient) rather than to a lack of understanding of the stimulus text. Question 2 was successfully answered by almost all candidates. Questions 3 and 4 on both stimulus cards were also generally well understood and many candidates were able to reflect in detail and with good justifications on the benefits of teaching coding at primary school level, jobs that require particular computer knowledge, the disadvantages of too much computer work, and which school subjects are important at primary school level and why.

Education and Employment Stimulus Cards 2A/B

This stimulus card that referred to trends in German apprenticeships contained some fairly complex topic-specific vocabulary such as "theoretische Ausbildung", "duales System" and "Jugendarbeitslosigkeit". Education and Employment remains one of the lesser-chosen topic areas, and thus there was a smaller number of candidates attempting Cards 2A and 2B, but they were generally handled convincingly by these candidates. Questions 3A and 3B, which asked candidates to reflect on the qualities a good employee should demonstrate, and the extent to which it can be challenging to be a good employee, produced some particularly interesting and individual candidate responses.

Summary

For subsequent series, the following points should be noted.

- Rephrasing questions for Section A will render a candidate's response void, as it may give an unfair advantage. It is, however, acceptable to change 'Sie' to 'du'. Care should be taken by the teacher examiner to read questions out exactly as printed as even small vocabulary changes such as changing "Weisen" to "Weise" count as rephrasing.
- Question 1 on the stimulus card refers to the first paragraph only and will **have at least three possible elements for the answer**. Three of these elements must be communicated by the candidate in his or her own words, in order to be considered a full answer. Question 2 will relate to the second paragraph, and the candidate must manipulate the language from the text in order to answer the question. Questions 3 and 4 must be developed in order to be considered as complete answers.
- Pronunciation is an important aspect of the accuracy mark, and centres should encourage their candidates to develop their pronunciation skills, in order not to impede communication.
- Knowledge and Understanding (GTA) must show evidence of research into the topics chosen, ideally citing at least one source. General knowledge, or personal experiences alone, will not demonstrate "many" ideas or a "wealth" of ideas, which are required for marks of 7 or higher. Teacher examiners should therefore discourage candidates from delivering long personal anecdotes and should steer them towards debating the wider general topic area chosen.
- The question words on the stimulus card are important – for example "inwiefern" must have an answer which addresses this specific question word, i.e. both sides of the argument. A comparison question must show an ability to compare in the answer.
- Topic-specific lexis and the specified grammar contents are important considerations when awarding marks for Quality of Language (Range of Lexis).

- Whilst candidates should give detailed and developed answers in response to Questions 3 and 4, they should be discouraged from giving overly long answers as this will limit the time available for the discussion in Section B and will have an impact on the overall marks that can be awarded for Understanding (General Topic Area).
- Section B should be a discussion. It is not good practice for the teacher examiner to pose a question, for the candidate to reply – sometimes at length – and for the teacher examiner to ask another question on a different subtopic. Fewer topics being covered in Section B usually leads to a more natural and in-depth discussion that will allow candidates to access the higher mark bands for Spontaneity and for Understanding (General Topic Area).
- Care should be taken by the teacher examiner not to ask questions in Section B that are in fact printed on a related Stimulus Card i.e. a candidate who has attempted Stimulus Card 1A on any given topic should not be asked, during the wider discussion, any questions printed on the Stimulus Card B of the same topic area.
- The questions asked in Section B should relate to the same General Topic Area as the stimulus card that has been covered, as otherwise the mark that can be awarded to Understanding (General Topic Area) will be adversely affected.
- Questions should be challenging enough for candidates to demonstrate that they have moved on from IGCSE level. Asking about the candidate's personal preferences or interests, for example, does not achieve this, nor does inviting candidates to offer long lists of vocabulary items or long pre-learnt sequences of speech.
- Even in the case of large centres, it is helpful if examiners do not work from a "list" and refrain from asking identical questions to candidates of different linguistic abilities. Instead, the teacher/examiner should comment on individual candidate responses and should challenge responses to enable the candidates to access the higher mark bands for Spontaneity and for Understanding (GTA).

The examiners marking on the unit would like to thank centres for the effort they put in to ensure the assessments run smoothly for their candidates and to allow them to reach their full potential. The hard work that goes into preparing candidates for examinations is also appreciated and we seek to reward this whenever possible.

Grade Boundaries

Much work has taken place on the comparability of the speaking units for French, German and Spanish. The senior examiners continue to work closely together to ensure their application of the common marking guidelines is consistently applied across the three languages.