

Report on the Units

January 2008

3862/7862/MS/R/08J

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622
Facsimile: 01223 552610
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE German (7862)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE German (3862)

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Components	Page
2661 Speaking	1
2662 Listening, Reading & Writing	4
2663 Reading & Writing	7
2665 Listening, Reading & Writing 2	9
Grade Thresholds	11

2661 Speaking

General Comments

Role-play

The three role-plays set for this series seemed equally accessible to candidates. They each contained easier sections, with which weaker candidates could cope, and more difficult sections designed for stronger candidates. Thankfully, very few treated the role-play as a translation exercise and candidates conveyed the stimulus material in a variety of ways. Most candidates used their preparation time well and managed to convey at least half of the stimulus material adequately. Many teacher/examiners listened attentively to what their candidates were saying and are skilful in eliciting further information from the stimulus material where candidates have omitted detail. This improves the chances of awarding higher marks on criterion 1A Response to written text. Those candidates who do not attempt considerable proportions of the text cannot expect high marks on 1A. The two initial questions still cause problems: simply reading out *wie lange der Briefpartner/die Briefpartnerin noch in der Schule bleiben muss* is not acceptable, even with an appended question mark. Timing of the role-play was mostly good. Centres now seem to be fully aware that assessment of the role-play ceases after five minutes.

Comments on Individual Questions

Role-play A: Sankt Johann

The first in the now familiar randomisation sequence, this role-play was done by most candidates. Many proved capable of conveying a good deal of the invented text, which encouraged candidates to apply for the post of Tourist Office Assistant in Sankt Johann, Austria. Most understood the situation, but several candidates misread it, claiming that they were to be employed as ski teachers or working in a hotel. Others thought that the teacher/examiner was the person looking for a winter job in Sankt Johann.

A surprising proportion could not explain why Sankt Johann needed someone with English as his/ her mother tongue, despite that fact that this was clearly stated in the third sentence of the text. Similarly, the word *Fremdenverkehrsamt* often seemed unknown, even though it appeared at the end of the stimulus material, candidates offering *Touristbüro / Touristamt*. The title itself occasionally caused pronunciation difficulties, with candidates suggesting the resort was called *Sankt John / Sankt Johanna* and even *Skant Johann*. For the most part, teacher/examiners played their role very well, many enjoying suggesting that the payment was poor / the hours seemed long / that one spoke a funny sort of German in Austria (apologies to all Austrians at this point). Many details were correctly conveyed, and the best candidates had not only a good overview of the text, but were able to provide all or virtually all the details. Too often, however, the situation still arises where candidates score 3/5 on 1A, where judicious questioning from the teacher/examiner might have encouraged candidates to provide more details and score a little higher. Numbers were better with this role-play, with very few suggesting that the *Hotel Alpenblick* (occasionally *Alpenblink*) was situated 200km from the tourist office instead of 200m. The name *Uwe Bientricht* was often poorly pronounced as *Ui Beinricht*. The final bullet point, asking candidates to suggest the advantages of such a winter job, was done soundly by most.

Role-play B: Chatsworth

This role-play, the third and last in the randomisation sequence, was attempted only by those centres with five or more candidates. Since most centres have small numbers in the January series, it was heard infrequently. Those candidates attempting it made at least adequate attempts to convey the information involving a visit by the exchange partner's father / mother to

Chatsworth. Numbers seemed rather more problematical here, especially 1555 and 18th century. Otherwise the few candidates who were given this role-play coped reasonably well with the many details and final bullet point.

Role-play C: The Deep

Candidates attempting this role-play were able to express in German many of the details in the stimulus material on Hull's aquarium, The Deep. The text itself was very accessible and offered a variety of information. In paragraph one, many did not know deepest, offering largest instead. In the bullet pointed section, candidates often gave some of the information, but omitted one of the bullet points. Wet was sometimes unknown, and sharks being fed caused quite a few problems, from *Lebensmittel der Haifische* to *man kann sehen, während die Haifische werden gefressen*. Occasionally, one could *reiten* in the underwater glass lift. The details on eating, shopping and location are a common feature to role-plays and were done reasonably well. It is pleasing to report that many teacher/examiners are adept at gleaning further information from unforthcoming candidates without providing the vocabulary. Questions such as *kann man da etwas einkaufen?* are far superior to *Gibt es einen Andenkenladen, wo man ungewöhnliche Spiele und Bücher kaufen kann?* Many candidates made sound suggestions as to an interesting programme for the day in response to the final bullet point stimulus.

The OCR AS role-play has proved to be an excellent test of what candidates are able to do after one year of post-GCSE study. It offers weaker candidates the chance to express some basics, whilst allowing stronger candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their linguistic strengths, as well as put their initiative and imagination to good use. The quality of language heard this series was comparable to that of previous series. Weaker candidates tend to express themselves in simple sentence patterns only. They do not attempt to use ambitious language, restrict themselves to *es gibt* and forms of the verbs *sein/haben* and often have difficulties with basic verb forms, modals and word order. Stronger candidates have not only a sound command of the basics, but also impress with their use of complex structures such as relative clauses, subjunctives and even passives.

Topic

Most candidates were well prepared for this part of the examination. A few were over-prepared. Most presentations were well timed at between two and three minutes, but some were still overlong. Centres are again reminded that in such cases teacher/examiners **must** intervene after three minutes. The discussion part of the topic should last 7-8 minutes and follow the candidates' headings on the Oral Topic Form, starting with the first heading, unless this has been the subject of the presentation. It is recognised that the presentation is likely to be learnt by heart, but once the presentation is over, the discussion should contain a great deal of spontaneous language. Teacher/examiners should react to statements made by candidates and challenge what is being said, especially if it contains generalisations about what Germans do. Not all Germans (there are over 80 million of them) eat Sauerkraut and play football. The best discussions are undoubtedly those where a great deal of genuine interchange takes place. This occurs naturally when discussions have not been over-rehearsed in preparation for the speaking test. Pre-rehearsed "mini-monologue"-style recitations demonstrate anything but spontaneity, and candidates penalise themselves on criterion 1E. Mini-monologues were the exception and topics were almost entirely related to a German-speaking country. Headings on the Oral Topic Form were mostly well presented, although some are still far too detailed. They should be headings, not sentences, and limited to a few words. Their function is to remind candidate and teacher/examiner what the candidate would like to focus on in the discussion. Timing of the topic was good in most cases. Where topics are overlong, assessment ceases after ten minutes.

Topics chosen by candidates ranged from the familiar to the unusual. Markers and moderators welcome discussions where candidates have put time and effort into private research and are able to converse knowledgeably on a chosen topic. It is pleasing that centres with several

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

candidates encouraged them to offer different topics. Mispronunciations still occur (e.g. *Rheinland Flatz*), and weaker candidates still struggle with accuracy, subject/verb agreement, verb second idea and word order in subordinate clauses.

Most recordings are good, but the occasional cassette is heard where background noises make listening difficult. This can occur due to misplaced microphones, poor equipment or outside pupil noise. Centres are reminded that precautions should be taken to ensure quiet while recording takes place. It is evident that some centres are starting to send recordings on CD rather than cassette. It is essential that centres check that recordings have actually been made before sending CDs to markers and moderators, and that they are audible. Several recordings this series could only be heard at full volume. It is rewarding to hear successful interchanges of ideas and opinions. The most successful discussions are always spontaneous, lively, accurate and liberally sprinkled with solid factual information on the chosen topic. Good candidates often research their chosen topic through reading from a variety of sources including the internet. However, not all of these sources provide information in a format which can be used directly in a speaking test. It is the candidates' role to change the form of words into a naturally spoken form, in order to ensure a genuine discussion.

2662 Listening, Reading & Writing

General Comments

Once more the candidature of some 400 was composed partly of re-takers, partly of first-time sitters, with a sizeable minority of native speakers. Some of the retakers could well have been sitting the examination for the 3rd. time, and a growing level of competence could be discerned. It tends to be the more able candidates who continue with AS German into the 2nd year of their Sixth Form course, as the weaker ones drop the subject at the end of Year 12. The marks obtained covered the whole range from the low twenties to almost the maximum, but very poor scripts were few and far between. Candidates have become quite sophisticated in organising their time round the varying demands of this paper, and it was rare to find a script incomplete because of lack of time. Only four candidates this time failed to tackle question 7, either because of lack of time or because they were overwhelmed by the task. Candidates seemed to find the paper accessible, and tackled it with a degree of confidence. A general comment would be that their understanding of spoken and written German is at a high level: problems arise with their construction of written German, in particular with case, gender, prepositions, adjectival endings and word order.

Specific Comments

1 *Eine neue Soap*

This listening passage proved quite challenging for some candidates, with even able ones finding some difficulties. The paper specification requires answers to these early Listening questions to be of the non-verbal type. Thus letters and not a noun were needed in questions (b) and (e). Moreover the rubric makes this very clear. Some candidates also wrote out the required numbers in full in (a), (c) and (d). Generally these were marked correct, although technically a rubric infringement, but candidates do lay themselves open to errors of the *siebzig* for *siebzehn* variety

2 *Ein sonderbarer Fall für die Verkehrspolizei*

This question was generally well-answered, with (c) being the usual difficulty where there was one. Here some candidates failed to untangle the fact that a Scotsman could be living in Australia.

3 *Die Gesundheit der Zähne*

Surprisingly this proved the most accessible of the three listening passages with most candidates scoring highly. Some candidates felt the need to have five answers for each section, whereas this time there were 4 and 6. The only questions to pose real difficulty were (i) and (t).

4 *Ein Date im Kino*

There was a different format to this question than has been used in some previous years, but it held no terrors for candidates. Again it is worth reiterating, as for question 1, that answers to questions 1-4 will always be of the non-verbal type. Generally candidates performed well, but a pleasing range of marks was achieved. Overwhelmingly the most difficult question proved to be the first one, with many candidates seemingly not understanding the double negative in the question.

5 **Herr Meier am Telefon**

This question tests both the listening skills of the candidates, and their ability to communicate the answers in German. The first part of the exercise they achieved with relatively little difficulty, whereas the second part proved more challenging. Examiners are mindful of the fact that this is a listening exercise, and are therefore prepared to accept versions that a sympathetic native speaker would be prepared to understand. A few candidates had Herr Meier speaking German because his German had been poor at school and there were still problems with *sein / ihr / Ihr* in question c. In d, most got *südlich* correct but there was a surprising number who put N25 or M24. Most wrote *halb neun* in i but the few who attempted to give the time in figures often lost the mark for 9.30 or even 10.30. In i part 2 the word *Strapazen* was rarely known – though there were good explanations by those who did understand. For question (j) the *Frühstück* really had to be *richtig* and in the second part *Eier und Speck* had to be qualified by *viel*, rendered in some way or other. Irrespective of this there were many pleasing answers, and generally speaking candidates seem to be getting to grips with this challenging type of exercise.

6 **World of Work –Reading**

The format of this type of question is now well-established. Candidates are always asked to write a memo for their employer. Although they will not be penalized for translating, it will allow the rendering to flow much better, and therefore be more cogent if the memo style is adopted. It was noticeable again this year that a good number of otherwise very strong candidates were unacceptably sloppy in their treatment of this question. Although a memo style is accepted, indeed recommended, the exact detail of the stimulus must be given. To write a general memo which picks up the main points of the stimulus is invariably unacceptable. However, it is only fair to the vast majority of candidates to point out that they worked carefully through the stimulus and picked out most, if not all, of the relevant detail. Most candidates understood the distinction between the earlier visit to Birmingham and the proposed one later in the year. Some missed out a reference to July **2008**. It was generally understood that Alton Towers was a fun day out, but also expensive, and examiners insisted on a rendering of the **best** prices. Not all candidates rendered a **school group**, and *Veranstaltungen* caused considerable difficulty. Generally speaking the standard of this question was a marked improvement on that of last year. It seems that points raised in previous examiners' reports have been heeded. A very minor point was that candidates made effective use, where appropriate, of the extra page of lined paper included in the booklet.

7 **Letter to Herr Schmidt**

This letter is invariably topped and tailed for the candidates, and they do themselves no favours by inserting their (sometimes incorrect) beginnings and endings. Similarly small is beautiful, and the most successful candidates can answer the task very well by constructing the bare minimum of perfectly formed sentences. As this is invariably a business-orientated letter, revision of the adjectives and pronouns associated with the polite form (Sie, Ihr, Ihnen etc.) will pay dividends. This is not primarily a vocabulary exercise: candidates will (and generally did) find most of the words they need in question 6. Teachers are to be congratulated on directing their pupils to question 6 to obtain the necessary vocabulary, as most did, even some of the weaker ones. *Du / Sie* and the use of the capital letter with *Sie / Ihnen* still cause great difficulty. Advanced booking was difficult - with most candidates opting for *früh* but using it in such a way that they suggested early in the day of visit. Wales seemed an unknown quantity for most candidates with many writing *in Cardiff* or even *in Welsh*. The tourist office presented many problems: the spelling of Tourist (no u); whether to add e, en or nothing; bureau de tourismus was a favourite; *Reisebüro* (usually missing the Umlaut) and *Reiseberuf* were both found not infrequently. It was pleasing to see that most knew *empfehlen*, even if

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

spelling left a little to be desired. It is worth reiterating that candidates disadvantage themselves by quoting pre-learnt sentences and formulaic constructions of doubtful relevance to the task in hand. Similarly candidates need to render in an acceptable German form the ten key points of the answer (see detailed mark scheme) before their grammatical accuracy is considered. There were quite a number of delightfully concise and accurate answers showing an ability to manipulate structures suitable for the task. Otherwise this question produced the usual range of German of varying competence.

2663 Reading & Writing

1 General Comments

Once again the paper produced a wide range of performance but, as is often the case in January, with a predominance of more capable candidates. The comprehension tasks discriminated successfully, as did the essay and the Cloze Test. There were no problems with candidates misunderstanding the rubric in the essay questions and non-completion of this task was extremely rare. Some did, however, overlook the fact that they were asked for their opinion on German pupils wearing school uniform.

2 Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

- Q1** The text and task, which involved choosing the 7 correct sentences, proved accessible to all but the weakest candidates. They managed to follow the intricacies of the plot but were attracted to the *dumme Blondinen* in (c) and (m) the *wirklichen Friseurgeschäft*. Some native speaker candidates curiously went for the incorrect option (j) that the plot was stolen (rather than bought)!
- Q2** In general, candidates found this task more challenging. 5 was most frequently incorrect, as candidates seemed to be unsure of the meaning of *eng*.

Section B

- Q3** The text was about the introduction of school uniform in German schools and proved to be quite challenging, although the subject matter was on a theme familiar to all the candidates. In answer to (i) they were asked to describe the debate about uniform. Out of the 15 points on the Mark Scheme, they needed to pick out just 10 to score full marks for Comprehension (Grid 3B) but only the best candidates achieved top marks. *Klamotten-Hänseleien* was not widely known but many recognised it as some sort of problem and guessed from the context. Candidates who interpreted identification with the school as identification of the school the pupils attended, were not awarded the comprehension point. Weaker candidates picked out vocabulary but were unclear about the points being made in the text or what Günter Behr's position on uniform was..

In part (ii) of Question 3 candidates were asked for their opinion about the introduction of school uniform in Germany. Quite a few – and some good candidates among them – only debated the virtues of school uniform without reference to Germany and consequently had 2 marks deducted from their mark for 3C. Nearly all candidates had plenty of ideas on the subject and, now that they are no longer obliged to wear it, very many seem to approve of school uniform! There are still some candidates that need reminding that there are equal marks available for parts (i) and (ii) and that an excessively lengthy answer to (i) cannot compensate for a four line answer to part (ii) and, less commonly, vice versa. The Response is assessed by according a tick to an opinion and a plus to a development or justification of that opinion. Using the ticks and pluses as guidance, the Examiner awards the mark according to Grid 3C.

The Language is assessed over both parts (i) and (ii) according to Grid 3A. Most candidates had sufficient vocabulary at their command to cope with this task and there were some impressive essays. There were the usual problems with singular/plural, basic word order, random punctuation and capital letters. It is a shame that these sorts of errors mar what is often quite a fluent piece of writing. The level of language produced in the two

parts of Q.3 is often uneven: some candidates are good at manipulating text but go to pieces when asked to write their own ideas, whilst others struggle with the text and are quite fluent in part (ii). Very few lift more than they should from the text but, at the other end of the scale, there are still candidates who tie themselves in knots trying to find alternative ways of expressing the information. They need to be reminded that they are expected to manipulate the text and not re-invent it.

There were few recurring difficulties particular to this series. The gender of *Uniform* caused a few problems (it was given in 6 of the Cloze Test for those who wanted to check) and as usual *einige*, *eigene* were confused.

Section C

The marks for the Cloze Test were generally quite good, as might be expected with competent candidates. Q.4 was where they seemed most unsure and unable to remember what effect *denn* has on the position of the verb. There was otherwise little consistency in the pattern of error.

2665 Listening, Reading & Writing 2

A full range of marks was awarded throughout this paper, candidates generally performing equally well (or badly) in all sections. As usual in January, the entry was small, but there was a pleasing number of candidates who performed very well indeed. Some of these, but by no means all, were native speakers. There were a number of candidates who were not sufficiently familiar with topic-specific vocabulary, however, possibly because they were still halfway through their A2 course. All candidates finished the paper and there were few omissions apart from by the very weakest candidates. Rubrics were generally clearly understood, and there were few cases of candidates answering in the wrong language. Candidates continue to lose marks unnecessarily, however, through failing to read individual questions properly. Marks were also lost by inaccurate copying of the German, something that could easily be remedied by careful checking.

Section A Listening

Weaker candidates lost comprehension points and language marks by simply writing down what they thought they heard, whether it answered the question or not. Candidates' marks were similar on both tasks, indicating that both passages were equally accessible to them.

1a This required some sifting out of material to identify the correct answer.

1b There were a number of misspellings of *Markt* and *Forschung*, revealing lack of comprehension.

1c The question was not always understood (*vorhaben*)

1h Few candidates offered *das Saarland*. This question proved to be quite a challenge, with even quite able candidates ignoring the *im Westen Deutschlands* in the question.

2a Even able candidates found the distinction between *steigen* and *steigern* difficult, but were given the benefit of the doubt by examiners. Less mercy was shown, however, if *erneuerbar* was not known.

1h Few candidates offered *das Saarland*. This question proved to be quite a challenge, with even quite able candidates ignoring the *im Westen Deutschlands* in the question.

2a Even able candidates found the distinction between *steigen* and *steigern* difficult, but were given the benefit of the doubt by examiners. Less mercy was shown, however, if *erneuerbar* was not known.

2f Few candidates managed to answer this question directly. Otherwise questions proved to be quite manageable by the majority.

Section B Reading

Question 3

Better candidates were able to answer questions precisely, realising that some manipulation of the language was involved. Some candidates tried overhard to find synonyms, which is not required.

The questions requiring definitions were answered poorly overall.

Report on the Units taken in January 2008

3f Although *Fernweh* is a slightly difficult concept to explain, a surprising number of candidates associated it with *fernsehen*, *fern* itself clearly being unfamiliar. *Heimweh* proved to be equally baffling to many.

3n This was thought by some to be a male hairdresser. Those who did understand it often had difficulties expressing *bauen*, *bilden* being a common alternative.

3o Few understood that these were the people in charge. Question 4

4a Most candidates scored two of the three points, confusing understanding and comprehensibility.

4c *Launisch* proved unfamiliar as did *anspruchsvoll*. The English word 'elitist' was clearly not part of the vocabulary of some candidates.

4e Most candidates understood *Bussgeld* correctly, but there were some who thought it had something to do with bus fares.

4i Not many explained that it was modelled on an American site, and gave imprecise answers.

4n This was understood by many, but a surprising number thought that he paid students' fees for them. (How nice!)

Section C Writing

It was encouraging to see that many Centres prepare candidates well for this section, as was demonstrated by the colourful use of highlighter pens to identify the correct section in the English text and, particularly, in the eloquent memorised expressions of opinion in question v. Candidates nearly all had something to say on the question of whether women should or should not have babies. Many found it more difficult to put concepts from the text into German.

Difficulties arose from trying to say 'More people die than are born', with several candidates talking about the enormous number of Germans killed each year. *Bundeskanzlerin* also was not known by a surprising number of candidates. Not surprisingly, however, most candidates had problems with the plural of *Vater*

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE German 3862 and 7862
January 2008 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
2661/01	Raw	60	47	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2661/02	Raw	60	47	41	36	31	26	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2662	Raw	80	68	62	56	50	44	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2663	Raw	60	50	44	39	34	29	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2665	Raw	80	61	53	46	39	32	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3862	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7862	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3862	31.1	47.0	67.6	87.8	96.7	100.0	151
7862	20.0	70.0	80.0	90.0	100.0	100.0	10

161 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

14 – 19 Qualifications (General)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

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