

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
in German(4GN0/03)  
Pearson Edexcel Certificate  
in German(KGN0/03)

Paper 3: Speaking in German

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## International GCSE German Paper 3 Speaking in German Examiner Report

### General Comments

With the introduction of the new specification for 4GN03 and the new Edexcel Certificate KGN03 the speaking element became compulsory this year and consequently there was a very large increase in entries.

As last year, in the vast majority of cases students were able to express themselves well in German producing some pleasing performances.

This year a new mark sheet replaced the one used in previous years although a small number of centres continued to use the old one. A very small number actually marked the tests, but this was of course ignored by Edexcel examiners.

Students are expected to participate in 3 conversations on 3 different topic areas, one for Section A and two for Section B. These three topic areas should be chosen from the five areas detailed in the specification.

The chosen topic areas, of which only that in Section A should be known by the candidate in advance, should be written on the mark sheet and also recorded at the start of each section. It is not necessary to note sub topics, but teacher examiners must be careful not to ask questions which are not part of the topic area being covered. The teacher examiner must not choose two conversations from within the same topic area. Each conversation should be based clearly on a different topic area. All topic areas should be covered in a centre with a reasonable number of candidates. The same topic area should not be chosen for every candidate and certain topic areas should not be avoided. As an example, in one centre with 15 candidates, every one was asked about Topic Area B and none about Topic Area D. This is not good practice.

Just as in a written examination, the timing of this test should be adhered to. The specification states that the two conversations in Section B should be **up to** 3 minutes each. It is therefore not appropriate to have a conversation lasting 4 or 5 minutes. It is also not appropriate to have one conversation lasting 4 minutes and the other 2 minutes.

Teacher examiners should avoid using the suggested questions as a prescribed list. This tends to produce a rather stilted conversation. Questions should be constructed around the answers given to the previous question, developing responses or asking for further details. Under no circumstances should the candidate have prior knowledge to any of the questions throughout the whole test.

Some examiners gave the impression of not being well prepared for the tests, this being particularly noticeable at centres where it appeared examiners had been brought in specifically to do the tests as German was not part of the normal school curriculum. There were noticeably long

pauses, probably concerning for the candidates, whilst the examiner tried to think what could be asked next. Some examiners failed to ask questions requiring a range of tenses which ultimately penalised candidates.

When a test is too long, the examiner will not listen beyond the required length of each part of the test. Tests which are too short will tend to be self penalising.

## **Section A**

### **Presentation and discussion based on a single picture.**

For this part of the examination the students choose a single picture which they then introduce with a presentation lasting up to one minute. This is followed by a discussion based on the picture lasting up to a further three minutes. The picture chosen must be linked to one of the topics in the specification, and this topic may then not be chosen for Section B.

The first conversation was generally done well. Students appeared to be settled by the fact that the first minute of their oral could be based on familiar language which they could prepare and learn. However, it should be remembered that this presentation may not be written by or corrected by the teacher, but must be the candidate's own work.

The role of the teacher examiner is particularly important in Section A where pupils need guiding through the three stages of questioning relating to the picture. Good examiners asked open questions, followed up on candidates' answers, calmly rephrased or moved on when questions were not understood and adhered to the timings. Less successful examiners asked closed questions and/or irrelevant questions and did not try to elicit a range of language and tenses from their candidates. In some cases candidates were left to speak in a lengthy monologue, which could not be described as a conversation.

On the whole, timings were well managed although there were some examples of bad timekeeping, which disadvantaged candidates. It is important to note that some pupils and native speakers who were called in to examine the candidates sometimes asked questions that were far too challenging and this did not allow candidates to succeed.

Teacher examiners must ensure that they ask questions on three topic areas and that the questions that they ask in the discussion of the picture must be relevant to the chosen topic area. Asking a set list of questions with no deviation is not the best preparation for a spontaneous conversation. Most teacher examiners referred to the picture in the Section A although some did not ask sufficient questions that were directly relevant and some spent the whole discussion asking for descriptions of the picture which limited the level of language that the candidates could produce.

All five topic areas were well represented in the choice of pictures, although Topic A was the most popular. Topic D produced some very interesting discussions for more able candidates. Pictures that caused problems either

lacked people/objects and interaction or actually had too much going on. Pictures that were of personal interest to the candidate were often a good springboard for discussion.

Some pictures could be based in several topic areas and it is important that the candidate and the teacher examiner focus on the chosen topic area. A picture of a house for Topic C should not lead on to a discussion of the local area (which would count as Topic area A). A family picture of a holiday for Topic A should not lead on to a discussion on family (which would count as Topic area C). Most candidates had prepared the picture thoroughly and had looked up the necessary items of vocabulary.

Although teachers are not allowed to help pupils with the content of the presentation, it is advisable to advise students on their choice of picture. Teacher examiners are advised to take a copy of the chosen picture in advance in order to prepare. Some examiners had obviously not seen the picture prior to the examination. *Wer* was sometimes misunderstood to mean where by candidates.

There were still plenty of photographs of students sat on a sofa, wall, in front of mountain, with nothing going on around them. In these cases it made the task of the examiner very difficult and many should be congratulated on their perseverance. On the other hand, some candidates had clearly been briefed about which questions to expect about their picture, which were the same for every single student at the centre. These questions were not asked spontaneously or in response to a candidate's comment, they were simply reeled off in order for the student to demonstrate their use of tenses. In this case, it made awarding marks for higher level candidates difficult as, despite a polished performance of answers and reasons without hesitation, there was a lack of personal response, a range of ideas/opinions and complex lexical items. They were not 'responding imaginatively' to the picture or 'discussing issues arising from the picture', which they may well have been capable of doing. It is also in breach of the specification guidelines on the preparation for the assessment.

Examiners should remember the appropriate technique when conducting Section A requires them to begin with questions directly on the picture, such as describing a particular person or object. Then they should move on to some questions indirectly on the picture, such as thinking what someone in the picture may have just done or what might happen after the picture had been taken. Finally, they should ask questions related to the topic area such as the candidate's own holiday plans. Many examiners only ask questions on this final part which really makes the picture redundant.

Examiners are reminded that examples of good pictures include busy street scenes, holiday pictures with interesting backgrounds and team photos after sporting successes. Less successful pictures included close up pictures of friends' faces, empty scenes with no people present and pictures of a house. It is also important, in order to access the higher bands for range of language, to vary the questions. Sometimes students are asked to describe everyone in a picture. It is sufficient to do this once. Teacher examiners

should also attempt to increase the level of difficulty of the questions as the test develops.

Centres are reminded that some photographs on the Internet, in books or in magazines may be subject to copyright. It is therefore advised that personal photographs or pictures may well be a better choice.

Centres are also reminded that the students' pictures should be sent to the examiner along with the oral cover sheet and the recording. If this is not possible a note describing the picture should be included.

From 2015, recordings may no longer be sent on cassettes. Almost all centres now use CDs and recordings on a memory stick are also becoming more popular.

## **Section B**

### **Two further conversations.**

In these sections students are required to take part in two conversations with the teacher examiner on two separate topics chosen by the teacher examiner. They must be different from the topic chosen in Section A and must never be known by the candidate in advance.

The transition between the conversation topics should be made plain to help both the candidate recognise that the conversation is moving on and also the examiner to identify the two topics being discussed.

Centres should avoid asking all students questions on the same two topics and also avoid asking each candidate the same questions. The suggested questions given to help teachers are not prescriptive and should not be used as a set list.

Pupils generally performed well in this section of the examination and they often found it easier to include a range of tenses in these two conversations although the level of vocabulary was, on the whole, more impressive in Section A. All topics were covered by centres. The future tense was the tense that was the most difficult for examiners to elicit. Teacher examiners who reacted to pupils' answers rather than working through a list of questions were more successful. Less successful teacher examiners spoke too much themselves and deprived their candidates of time. If candidates ask questions, teacher examiners should answer very briefly and move on.

Similar issues arose in Section B as in Section A. Some students had clearly been very well-prepared and each candidate was asked the same set of questions, not resulting in a 'spontaneous and authentic' conversation. For example, the interviewer would ask, 'What did you do with your friends last weekend?', to which the majority of students would reply 'I went to the cinema'. In a spontaneous and authentic conversation, the next natural question would probably be 'And what did you see?' or 'Did you enjoy it?'. Instead, the examiner would go to the next question on their list. There was also an issue where the teacher modeled a response or corrected a

student response. The candidate was then able to use this for the remainder of the conversation (or not) which provides an inaccurate reflection of their knowledge of language.

As last year the most common topics were 'Education and Employment,' 'Social Activities' and 'House, Home and Daily Routine.' Topic area D (the Modern World and the Environment) was reserved mostly for the stronger students.

The quality of recordings was very good and most teachers completed the paperwork correctly.

Finally, all examiners would like to express their thanks for the hard work undertaken by both the students and the teacher examiners. There were very few administrative issues this year and the International GCSE and Edexcel Certificate Speaking Tests have been delivered very successful.

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