AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Secondary Education

German 4665
Specification

46654   Writing (Controlled Assessment)

Report on the Examination
2010 examination - June series

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: www.aqa.org.uk

COPYRIGHT

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

Writing Controlled Assessment – June 2010

General Comments

Although there is no requirement to adhere to the Contexts and Purposes published in the new Specification, understandably, most centres used the Contexts and Purposes as their starting point for testing their candidates. This tended to provide some continuity with the legacy Specifications, allowing candidates and teachers to work on material which was familiar from previous years. Most centres used or adapted AQA tasks which focussed on: Healthy/unhealthy lifestyles, Relationships with family and friends, Free time and the media, Holidays, Home and local area, School/College and future plans. Environmental issues were sometimes explored in the context of writing about the local area.

There was a very wide range in the quality of candidates' written responses to teacher designed or chosen tasks. They varied from extremely minimal and difficult to understand to outstanding, detailed and highly accurate. The teachers' tasks therefore served to discriminate very well in terms of performance.

Teacher designed tasks do not have to be formally 'approved' by AQA. Nevertheless, task design is clearly of critical importance in generating the best outcome for all candidates. The following advice is intended help:

- Keep the assessment criteria in mind when designing tasks. Prompts should aim to elicit ideas, points of view and reasons and different tenses. Open ended prompts of this kind will also tend to elicit more complex structures.

- 6-7 prompts seem to work well. Over-prescription may be daunting for candidates if they think every point needs to be tackled to succeed. Candidates should be selecting from the detailed work done at Stage 1 in order to plan and produce their personal response.

- It is the response to the title which is assessed. Bullet points therefore have the status of guidance (unlike in Speaking tasks.) It is, for this reason, advisable to keep the title separate from the scene setting. If the title and the scene setting are blurred together, it may make it more difficult for the candidate to produce a fully relevant response, especially under the demanding conditions of Stage 3.

- Additional exemplar material, to be further updated, is and has been available on the AQA MFL web-site.

- Controlled Assessment Advisers can be consulted on the suitability of tasks. They have already provided more than 400 pieces of individual, detailed advice to centres.

The plan

Many candidates did not write a plan. The plans which were submitted varied between random words, which seemed to provide little help, to elaborate pictorial sequences.

With a maximum of 40 words permissible in the plan, this is a useful number which can be exploited to provide very effective support to candidates at Stage 3. It is worth giving careful consideration as to how the plan can best be managed in the interests of candidates. Occasionally, conjugated verbs appeared in the plan. In such cases, the clause affected was disregarded for assessment purposes. Clearly, it cannot be acceptable for some candidates to benefit from a conjugated verb in the plan, when others have carefully obliterated them.

Drafts

Given that this is an issue of considerable concern to teachers and candidates, it would be wrong not to address it in this report.

A number of things have to be emphasised.

- Candidates are not *required* to write a draft at Stage 2.

- If a draft is produced, it must be done under direct teacher supervision, must **not** be commented upon and must be kept in school.

- At Stage 2, candidates have access to all resources (**except the teacher)** to inform their planning and preparation. This will include, from Stage 1, their own (corrected) written work, worksheets, text books, on-line resources etc. All of this is potentially accessible, within the 6 hours, in school and at home. If candidates wish or are advised to learn material by heart, knowing the task, then there should be plenty of source material to learn from. It is not clear that learning a complete draft word for word is the best solution to the Stage 3 test conditions.

Knowing their candidates, teachers will, of course, decide upon the best approach.

There was indeed evidence that some candidates had tried to learn a draft word for word. That evidence took the form of work which deteriorated towards the end of the piece and frequent omissions, such that sentences ceased to communicate effectively.

Dictionaries

Dictionaries must be made available to candidates. However, given the proliferation of dictionary errors, candidates would be well advised to turn to the dictionary as a last rather than a first resort at Stage 3.

Assessment

Content

The majority of work attracted marks in the Sufficient or Good category. Where work met the criteria for Very Good, the evidence was often patchy so that a mark of 13 was the most frequently awarded mark in this category. Nevertheless, there was some outstanding work which clearly met all the Very Good assessment criteria and attracted full or close to full marks. Marks in the Limited category tended to be a result of very short assignments being presented, so that evidence was necessarily limited. The few pieces of work which fell into the Poor category really did convey very little information.

The question of relevance is threaded through the Content criteria. It should be noted that a benign view was taken of relevance and disregarding sections of work was not a serious issue for examiners to deal with. On the other hand, the amount of information clearly conveyed was affected by its intelligibility.

Expressing ideas and points of view (opinions), explaining and/or developing them are also key factors in the assessment for Content and that was a significant differentiating factor. Almost all candidates were able to express very simple opinions. Most were able to express opinions or points of view and develop them to some extent. The best work expressed opinions and points of view and explained them in a convincing way.

It should be noted that tasks which involve comparing and contrasting demand higher level skills.

Range of Language

The spectrum of performance in this category ranged from staccato unconnected statements with missing verbs, English inserted in desperation or serious dictionary errors, to well constructed complex sentences combined with an impressive variety of vocabulary. Of course, most work fell between these two extremes. Typically, marks in the 5-6 band were awarded to work which rather depended upon repetitive simple connectives. For the 7-8 band, there was clear evidence of a variety of complex sentences created by some use of subordinating and/or adverbial conjunctions. For marks in the 9-10 band, there was frequent and consistent evidence of complex sentences characterised by subordinating or adverbial conjunctions often in sequences of several clauses. Of all assessment categories the 9-10 band proved the most difficult to access. At the other end of the scale, it was equally exceptional to conclude that vocabulary was inappropriate with little understanding of language structure.

The question of different tenses must also be raised here. In order to access the 9-10 band, there must evidence of more than one tense used. This is not the same as reference to different time frames; so reference to the future through the present tense does not constitute a different tense. In fact, this whole area was never a problem. Most candidates did use different tenses even if it was no more than "war" or "*möchte*" combined with the present tense.

Accuracy

A significant majority of candidates scored 3 for Accuracy: the intended meaning was clear despite inaccuracies. Although there was often much variability within each piece of work, usually a sufficient amount was accurate to bar a mark of 2 (many errors which often impede communication, verb forms rarely accurate.) On the other hand, there were often too many inaccuracies to justify a mark of 4.

It should be noted that the question of different tenses affects assessment only for Range of Language and not for Accuracy.

Administration

It would be helpful if centres observed the following:

- Keep each candidate's work together along with the admin form/plan.

- Use treasury tags to keep portfolios together. Paper clips and plastic wallets cause significant handling problems.

- Do not send more than 2 pieces of work for each candidate.

- Make sure the examiner receives the full Controlled Assessment Task relevant to the candidate or group. Marking cannot begin until the examiner knows what task s/he is marking.

Marked work from Summer 2010 exam, with commentaries, will be available on the AQA MFL web-site. They will be accessible in the Autumn term.

1. Exactly what do examiners mark?

- They mark the candidate's response to the title.
- They do **not** mark a response to the bullet points which have the status of guidance. The candidate may choose to ignore the bullet points completely.
- The response must be relevant to the title.

2. Must the title relate directly to the Contexts defined in the specification?

No. The title can be anything.

3. How is the title identified?

- The title is the task.
- The task and the scene-setting may seem blurred or merged together. The focus is the task.

4. What is a relevant response?

- The response must be relevant to the task.
- Candidates are not penalised for not responding to the scene-setting details.

5. What if there is a significant amount of irrelevant material?

- It would affect the mark for CONTENT.
- The relevant material should still be assessed for RANGE OF LANGUAGE and ACCURACY.

6. What if there is a significant duplication of material across the two pieces of work submitted?

- The same material cannot be credited twice.
- Incidental and occasional overlap do not count as duplication.

7. What if it is clear the wording is identical to model answers in a textbook or to the wording of the tasks from other candidates at the same centre?

The work is referred to AQA Irregularities and Malpractice department.

8. Does the number of words affect assessment?

- The quality not the quantity of work affects the assessment outcome.
- 200-350 words across both tasks if aiming at grades D-G, 400-600 if aiming at grades A*-C, is for **guidance** only.
- Obviously, the shorter the assignment, the more difficult it becomes to meet the upper bands of assessment criteria for CONTENT (and therefore other categories.)
- There is no *upper* limit on the number of words. The whole piece is read and marked.

9. **How does the CONTENT mark affect the marks for RANGE OF LANGUAGE and ACCURACY?**

Content Mark	Maximum Mark for Range of Language	Maximum Mark for Accuracy
0	0	0
1 – 3	1 – 4	1-2
4 – 6	1 – 6	1-3
7 – 9	1 – 8	1-4
10 – 12	1 – 10	1-5
13 – 15	1 – 10	1-5

10. **In the upper band for CONTENT (13-15), what evidence is required for "Well organised structure"?**

- A sound ordering of ideas, a coherent structure – these are sufficient.
- There does **not** need to be a formal essay structure.

11. **The criteria for CONTENT refer to ideas, points of view and, in the 4-6 band, opinions. In terms of assessment are they separated out in order to quantify them?**

- No. They are all viewed as one notion. Ideas, points of view and opinions are the same for assessment purposes.
- In terms of evidence, there must be more than one instance of the above.

12. **The 4-6 band for CONTENT indicates: "Simple opinions are expressed". Must there be more than one opinion expressed?**

- Yes – there should be a minimum of two.
- This could be very simple, eg 'I like French. I like Spanish. France is good.' = 3 simple opinions.

13. **The criteria for CONTENT in the two top bands refer to "explain ideas and points of view." How may that be demonstrated?**

- Opinions should be explained or justified with reasons.
- In terms of evidence, at least two opinions or points of view must be explained or justified.

14. **For RANGE OF LANGUAGE what evidence is required for "verb tenses used successfully" in the 9-10 band?**

- This does **not** mean reference to different **time frames**.
- There must be a combination of a minimum of two different **tense constructions**.
- The use of the present tense plus time marker to refer to the future (eg Nächste Woche fahre ich…) does not count as a future tense.

- All other present tense constructions which refer to different time frames are **not** acceptable as anything other than the present tense.
- The present subjunctive does not constitute a different tense when the rest of the task is written in the present indicative.
- In a given piece of work, there should be a minimum of one instance of a tense used which is other than the default tense used.
- To fulfil the descriptor "verb tenses are used successfully," there needs to be evidence that the candidate can communicate messages successfully in more than one tense. There may be minor spelling errors but provided they do not prevent communication, they can be credited.
- The use of different tenses does not guarantee a mark in the 9-10 band.
- In the 7-8 band, it could be that the use of different tenses constitutes evidence of 'more complex sentences.'
- There is no requirement for evidence of three tenses used across BOTH pieces of work.

15. For RANGE OF LANGUAGE, what would provide evidence of 'more complex sentences' in the two top bands?

- A range of different structures leading to more varied, longer sentences.
- Subordinating conjunctions could be one way of producing more complex sentences but are not an absolute requirement. Adverbial conjunctions, for example, could also provide sound evidence.

16. For RANGE OF LANGUAGE, what would constitute evidence for "attempts at longer sentences using appropriate linking words" in the 5-6 band?

Repeated dependence on simple connectives ('*und……und……und......*') would be an example of this.

17. For ACCURACY, is there an implicit requirement for different tenses to be in evidence?

No. Range of tenses is assessed under RANGE OF LANGUAGE. Examiners do not consider range of tenses when assessing Accuracy.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.