



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2011**

**German**

**46653**

**(Specification 4665)**

**Unit 3: Speaking**

***Report on the Examination***

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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## General comments

Although this was strictly speaking the second award for the new GCSE Speaking tests, it was the first year of a fully representative candidature in contrast to last year's entry, which was certainly not representative.

It was generally pleasing to note that a lot of centres seemed to have coped well with the administration of the speaking tasks, the preparation of their students, conducting the tests and marking them. Obviously, there have been teething problems and some centres would certainly benefit from attending courses this Autumn, especially with a view to devising tasks and to the conduct of the assessments. The following report aims to highlight some important aspects of this summer's assessments, but also seeks to offer advice to centres and students with a view to next year.

### 1. Devising tasks

It is recommended that centres follow the AQA suggested format when devising tasks, ie as in the booklet "Additional Exemplar Tasks: Controlled Assessment - Writing and Speaking - Autumn 2009" (see Teacher Resource Bank on the website).

Most centres submitted tasks with 5 -6 bullet points plus the unpredictable. In many cases the number of bullet points was adequate and allowed the students to give sufficient information plus developments within the time limit of 4 to 6 minutes.

Centres are reminded that the main bullet points are the task and that main bullet point questions therefore have to be asked. The formulation of these bullet points is therefore very important, because they (and not possible sub-divisions) need to reflect the assessment criteria.

Using sub-divisions resulted, in many centres, in very long and mostly prescriptive tasks. Teachers felt they had to ask each and everyone of the sub-divisions; this led to a catalogue of questions which often did not allow students to develop their answers sufficiently to get into the top bands.

The topics which were chosen by centres were by and large 'safe' titles/tasks, ie familiar themes such as home/ town, free-time, school, holidays, work experience/part-time job, healthy lifestyle. Some centres used or adapted exemplar tasks from the Specification; 'interview with a celebrity' or 'A day in the life of a celebrity' (the latter adapted from an original writing task).

Where centres did devise their own tasks, it is fair to say that not all of these were successful. Often the main bullet points did not allow students to meet the requirements of the assessment criteria. Centres are encouraged to run their planned tasks past their Controlled Assessment Advisers to ensure that they enable all students to achieve their best.

Especially in the topic 'holidays' it became obvious that quite a lot of centres were still working to the criteria for the old specification and over-emphasising the need for tenses/time frames; hence the traditional 'what do you usually do on holidays', 'what did you do last year' and 'what are you planning for next year'. Apart from the fact that this often turns out to be a tense exercise because students refer to the same activities, it raises the question of the suitability of the task: is this type of task advisable for a less able student, when national grade descriptors even for Grade C do not demand different tenses?

Moderators noted that almost all centres set the same task for the whole class. Especially in mixed ability groups this approach did not always lead to the best outcome. It was clear that vocabulary and structures used by higher achieving students simply could not be emulated

by the less able ones. The fact that Speaking is an untiered unit with differentiation by outcome must not prevent centres from setting differentiated tasks; these would give all students the chance to perform at their own level.

Furthermore, the whole set approach also led to some very similar answers from most of the students within a teaching group. To some extent this can be expected as they will have been taught the same material. However, it is hoped that, once centres are more familiar with the demands of the new speaking assignments, more creative and perhaps motivating tasks may be tackled, offering greater individuality in their approach.

## **2. Unpredictable question**

Most centres handled this well. The unpredictable question came last, occasionally followed up if the initial answer was very short. There was evidence that quite a lot of centres had taken last year's advice on board and flagged up the unpredictable question to their students, eg by saying "*Und jetzt die letzte Frage*" (or something to this effect).

If the student does not give an answer or the answer is incorrect, the unpredictable bullet point must be classed as 'not covered' and the table in the Controlled Assessment Handbook on p. 14 comes into force.

Only one unpredictable question should be asked (plus possible follow-up). Centres should have a bank of unpredictable questions and should vary the question from student to student (or after a small group of students, eg after every 3<sup>rd</sup>). Centres must not put the same question to all students.

## **3. Timing**

Centres are reminded that the length of the speaking assignments must be 4 – 6 minutes. Performances short of 4 minutes cannot gain full marks. Where students fell short of the 4 minutes, centres could have used some follow-up questions and/or give students sub-divisions to their bullet points. Once the unpredictable question has been asked and answered and the performance is still short of 4 minutes, further unpredictable questions may be asked in order to reach the minimum time. It must be borne in mind though that it is the very first unpredictable question which determines if this bullet point is covered or not.

There were also performances which went way beyond the allowed maximum of 6 minutes, although the tasks consisted of only 5-6 bullet points. In some cases this occurred because students spoke very slowly. Others seemed to be over-prepared and had so much to say that they could not squeeze it into the 6 minutes. Centres are reminded that any new utterance starting after 6 minutes is disregarded for assessment.

## **4. Task Planning Form (TPF)**

This was the last year that drawings were accepted.

The use of conjugated verb forms on the TPF was a significant problem. Although the instructions on the TPF (new and old) clearly state that students must not use conjugated verbs or codes, this was ignored/not checked by many centres. Centres are reminded that the TPF needs to be checked prior to Stage 3 and that any utterance based on a conjugated verb form or code is disregarded for assessment. In some cases, the existence of conjugated verbs on the TPF led to considerable differences in marks between centre and moderator.

## **5. Recordings**

Most of the recordings were of a good quality and the assignments were conducted in circumstances conducive to getting the best out of the students. However, there were incidents where background noise, eg opening and closing of doors to the examination room, clearly disturbed the student in his/her performance.

Centres are reminded of the various ways in which the students' performances can be recorded and how they have to be labelled (see Instructions for the June 2011 AQA Examinations – New GCSE Specification and Controlled Assessment Handbook). The 2012 booklet with the same title will be published in Autumn 2011.

## **6. Conduct of tests and question technique**

Generally, teachers conducted the tasks well. Most displayed a calm, sympathetic manner; some overacted their role and almost said more than the student. Sometimes teachers wanted to be helpful to their students by providing them with vocabulary and/or structures (eg starting a sentence for the student). No credit can be given to the student for these utterances. Some teachers corrected their students, a practice which is strongly discouraged.

Best practice would aim to achieve a 'natural' conversation, ie asking the student a wide opening question (depending on the bullet point) and then following this up where necessary.

Some teachers only asked the main bullet point questions. Whilst this worked well for more able students, less able students were often left to fend for themselves. There were also examples of very prescriptive tasks leading teachers to put the same catalogue of questions to all students irrespective of their ability and not taking the student's answer into account. Often these centres had prepared their students too narrowly and the answers were all very similar which is not in the spirit of the new GCSE where creativity and an individual approach to the task are required.

A small number of centres did not ask the bullet point questions in the order in which they appeared on the task sheet. This should be avoided as it could confuse the students.

## **7. Administration**

As already mentioned above: moderators were generally pleased to note how well most centres coped with the administrative burden inherent in a moderated unit. There was, however, also evidence of some fundamental misunderstandings.

Centres who found this aspect more challenging are strongly advised to

- a) consult their Controlled Assessment Adviser
- b) carefully study the booklets "Instructions for the June 2012 AQA Examinations" and the "Controlled Assessment Handbook".
- c) use the checklist which accompanies the moderator's request for the sample.

## **8. Students' performance**

As one would expect, students' performances ranged widely and almost covered the whole spectrum of the mark range. Although outstanding performances were rather rare, there were a good number of very good performances, with 31% of the students gaining Grade A and 78% gaining Grade C.

Centres with native speaker students may be surprised to learn that these did not always do as well as one might have expected; they simply relied on their knowledge of German, but failed to meet the assessment criteria for the highest marks.

There were some very pleasing performances, where students did not only speak fluently, but also offered a wide range of vocabulary and linguistic structures, ranging from simple inversion to the correct use of subordinating conjunctions. Many students, however, offered rather unambitious vocabulary (often resorting to KS3) and predominantly simple sentence structures with 'und' and 'weil' as the only attempts at more complex structures. Moderators found that less able students were sometimes disadvantaged by questions which were clearly inappropriate for a student at this end of the ability range. Students' performances at the lower end of the ability range could possibly have been better had the teachers' questions been more suitable.

Many moderators commented on students' poor pronunciation, which often seem to prevent students from communicating their ideas unambiguously.

## 9. Assessment

Moderators noted that the marking in many centres was either in line with AQA standards or, if centre's marks were out of tolerance, it was often only by one or two marks. There was, however, also evidence of some significant differences. This occurred both in centres where only one teacher marked the assignments and where more than one was involved. In the latter case, it highlighted the need for thorough internal standardisation.

Not observing the rules about maximum time and about conjugated verbs on the TPF also led at times to marked differences between centre and moderator marks.

### 9.1 Communication

There was a general tendency to be slightly generous. When deciding on an assessment band the tendency seemed to be to go to the top mark within a band. This is only justified if all descriptors in this band have been met. Quite often centres tend to accept too readily what a student intended to say rather than what he/she actually said. You can only mark what you really hear, not what you wanted/expected to hear. Also, errors in pronunciation were often ignored and an utterance which was incomprehensible even to a sympathetic native speaker of German, was given credit. (see below).

Occasionally moderators came across performances without any points of view/opinions. If this is the case, the mark for Communication cannot exceed 2.

### 9.2 Range and Accuracy

There was a similar tendency to leniency with this criterion, in part for the same reasons as above. Centres are advised to note:

- Using two different tenses does not automatically place a student in the top two bands; it merely gives access to the higher marking bands provided that this is backed by evidence of satisfying other descriptors in these two bands.
- In order to be awarded a mark of 7 or higher, there must be evidence of **attempts** at a range of vocabulary, structures and verb tenses. There may be errors, but the message is **clear**. To achieve this wider range there must be evidence of at least some out of the following:
  - tenses
  - inversion
  - modal + infinitive
  - infinitive constructions
  - linking words (adverbs, co- and subordinating conjunctions)

Using the same linking word/conjunction several times does not constitute a variety of structures.

### **9.3 Pronunciation and Intonation**

Quite often, less able students attempted vocabulary with which they were not comfortable. Not only will this have put a burden on their memory when practising, but more often than not they failed to pronounce these words comprehensibly and this clearly also affected their mark for Communication.

The pronunciation of a lot of students, however, sounded German, although there was also evidence of some persistent errors even with more able students; at times this affected the meaning and therefore had a bearing on the Communication mark, eg *ich feinde, viel, der ist, veile*.

Lack of clarity in the pronunciation of some vowels can at times render a different meaning: *mochte/möchte, wurde/würde/werde, ware/wäre, hatte/hätte*.

### **9.4 Interaction and Fluency**

Generally, this criterion caused fewer problems. Some centres were rather lenient, awarding a slow/sluggish performance a mark of 4, whilst others were perhaps too strict and awarded a mark of 3 for a fairly fluent delivery just because there were a few hesitations.

## Guidance Notes

The guidance notes provided to Moderators have been reproduced here.

### 1. Timings

Timing begins as soon as the teacher asks the first question relating to the first bullet point. From that point, the task should last between 4 and 6 minutes.

If the task lasts for less than 4 minutes (even 3' 59"), a student cannot get full marks for Communication. It would still be possible for this type of performance to achieve a mark of 9 for Communication. There is no impact on the other assessment criteria.

If the task lasts for over 6 minutes, marking stops at 6 minutes. If, at that point, the student is speaking, allow him/her to complete that sentence and then stop marking.

### 2. Coverage of main bullet points

In order to be able to score full marks for Communication, students must be able to give information on all main bullet points on the task sheet. If there are any sub-divisions within the main bullet points, these are **not** compulsory.

If one or more main bullet points are not covered by the student, for any reason\*, this will affect the **maximum** mark available for Communication, as follows:

Total number of main bullet points in task	Number of main bullet points <u>not</u> covered	Maximum mark for Communication
2-3 + ! task	1	7
2-3 + ! task	2	5
4 + ! task	1	8
4 + ! task	2	7
4 + ! task	3	5
5 or more + ! task	1	9
5 or more + ! task	2	8
5 or more + ! task	3	7
5 or more + ! task	4+	5

\*The reasons for a main bullet point not being covered are:

- i) The teacher fails to ask anything about that main bullet point within the allotted 6 minutes.
- ii) The main bullet point is mentioned by the teacher, but the student cannot answer.
- iii) The student gives an answer, but it is unintelligible or not relevant to the main bullet point.

### 3. The unpredictable question/bullet point

In order to accomplish the unpredictable bullet point, the student must answer by using a verb. If that is not the case, then the bullet point is not covered and the table above must be used in order to arrive at a mark for Communication.

It is unlikely that the answer given in response to the unpredictable bullet point will be as well developed as the main bullet points. If a student has developed fully answers to the main bullet points and gives a short answer, including any part of a verb (eg present participle, infinitive) to the unpredictable bullet point, he/she will still have access to full marks for Communication provided the response is complete.



If a teacher asks more than one unpredictable question, the first one that is asked is the one that should be considered when deciding whether it has been answered appropriately, using a verb. Two-part questions for the same unpredictable bullet point are acceptable practice, for example, 'Do you like...? Why (not)?' or 'Do you prefer x or y? Why?' Credit should be given for the language produced in both parts. If a teacher goes on to ask other unpredictable questions, probably to make the task last at least 4 minutes, these should be taken into account when awarding an overall mark.

Once the student gives an incorrect answer (either in German, in English or in any other language) then no further rephrases are possible.

If the student gives a partially correct answer in German, then the teacher can ask more questions to elicit further information so that the bullet point is fully covered.

If a student says, in German, 'I don't understand' or 'Please repeat' (or equivalents) then this counts as a request for clarification and the teacher is allowed to repeat or rephrase. This does not count as an answer. (If this were said by the student in English or in any language other than the one being tested, then it would be an incorrect answer and no more rephrasing would be allowed).

If the student says, either in German, in English or in any other language, 'I don't know' (or equivalents) then this counts as an incorrect answer and no more rephrasing would be allowed.

If the student says nothing in response to a question then the teacher can repeat or rephrase until the student does respond (or until the 6 minutes are up).

If the teacher asks as the unpredictable question a question which has already been asked as one of the student's main bullet points, then the student has not been asked an unpredictable bullet point and the table in Section 2 (coverage of bullet points) applies.

If, however, the unpredictable question is different from a main bullet point, but elicits some repeat of information that has already been given in answer to one of the main bullet points, then any additional information can be credited. For example, the main bullet is 'Tell me about your family'. In a long answer, the student says that he/she doesn't get on well with his/her brother. The unpredictable question is 'Do you normally get on well with your family?' and the student says 'I get on well with my parents (new info) but not my brother (repeat)'. Although the unpredictable is connected to one of the main bullets, it is not the same question.

A student is not necessarily required to manipulate language in order to accomplish the unpredictable bullet point.

#### **4. The criteria for assessment**

All of the criteria should be considered when deciding on a mark, but the following guidelines may prove particularly useful.

##### **(a) Communication**

###### **Must the teacher ask extra questions for the student to gain the highest marks for Communication?**

No. If the student develops fully his/her answers to each main bullet point there will be no need for extra questions to allow the student access to the highest marks for Communication.

**Can students get a high mark even if there is little interaction with the teacher?**

Yes. Interaction and fluency are a global concept. Students can have access to full marks with minimal teacher input as long as they have provided full and developed responses. This is still true even if there is little interaction with the teacher.

**If a student answers a main bullet point eliciting reference to future events by using a present tense verb, will he/she be penalised under Communication?**

No, not if the response successfully communicates what the main bullet point required. However if aiming for a high mark for Range and Accuracy, the student must make sure he/she uses at least two different tenses over the task as a whole.

**Must a student give some information relevant to the actual question the teacher asks in order for the bullet point to be accomplished?**

Yes. If a student gives an answer that provides information in relation to another bullet in his/her task but does not contain information relevant to the question the teacher has actually asked (eg because the teacher and student get out of sequence), the bullet cannot count as being accomplished. The teacher may ask the bullet again to give the student the chance to offer relevant information.

**Can the answer still be considered to give some relevant information even if the tense is wrong?**

Yes.

*Examples:*

What did you do last weekend?

The following answers would be regarded as having some relevant information and would be acceptable:

'Football'

'I play football'.

The following answer would be regarded as unacceptable on the basis that it was clearly not answering the question being asked: it is not only the tense formation that is wrong. There are other indications that the student is not answering the question being asked:

'Next week I will play football' (using a future tense verb).

**If the student gives exactly the same response to more than one bullet point and that answer gives relevant information in each case, will the response count as having accomplished the bullet in each case?**

Yes.

*Example:*

Bullet 3 – What did you do last weekend?

'I play football'

Bullet 5 – What do you normally do at weekends?

'I play football'

Both bullets will be judged to have been accomplished.

9-10 marks

- Students can speak with confidence and narrate events where appropriate. In order to do this, they will have to develop their answers well.
- They will have to offer ideas / opinions / points of view (minimum 2) and be able to explain them.

7-8 marks

- The answers will be regularly developed, even though some of them may not be. However, for the award of a mark in this band, most answers will show some development.
- There is a requirement to give opinions (minimum 2).

5-6 marks

- There will still be evidence of an ability to develop some answers.
- There is a requirement to give opinions (minimum 2).

3-4 marks

- Few responses are developed, but for some questions you can expect replies to go beyond the minimal, even if this is in the form of lists or very simple sentences.
- There is a requirement to give opinions (minimum 2).

1-2 marks

- Very few appropriate responses are developed, but therefore there has to be evidence of development, however basic, in at least one reply.

0 marks

- No relevant information is communicated, but a student could still give some very minimal replies and still score zero if there was no development at all.

**(b) Range and Accuracy of Language**

- For performances with a large amount of complex language but lots of errors the following should be noted: the Accuracy strand in Range and Accuracy has a bearing on communication of intended messages. If communication is not taking place the marks awarded have to reflect this and a mark of 8 could not be awarded. If for, example, the Range strand warrants 10 marks and the Accuracy strand warrants 4 marks, then a maximum mark of 7 would be appropriate.
- To cover the future tense only *werden* + infinitive can be accepted. A present tense verb with a future time marker (eg *Nächste Woche fahre ich...*) does not.
- The present subjunctive does not count as a separate tense from the present indicative. However, *ich möchte* is imperfect subjunctive and therefore a different tense.
- A construction using the present tense to refer to the past (eg *Ich spiele seit drei Jahren Klavier.*) counts as the present tense.

9-10 marks

- A variety of **tenses** must be used. This means two or more. The tenses could come from the same time frame (for example the preterite and the imperfect) but a greater range of tenses will add to the complexity of the language used and most students getting marks in this band will probably use three or more tenses, unless the nature of the task does not allow it.
- There will be complex structures, but remember that this is GCSE level and not higher. Complexity can be achieved by using any structure listed on the 'Score Sheet'; the wider the range of structures the higher the mark will be. Complexity can also be achieved by variety of expression, for instance *auskommen mit* instead of *sich verstehen mit*, or *es gefällt mir* instead of *ich mag*.

- There needs to be a wide range of vocabulary. This means that students will not be too repetitive in the words they use.
- Errors usually appear in complex structures, or they may be minor errors, for instance of gender, which do not appear too often.

7-8 marks

- Two or more tenses must be used.
- Some complex structures will be used, but the note about what constitutes complexity for the 9-10 band will apply here.
- There must be a range of vocabulary, so students in this band will again be trying to avoid repetition of the more common words.
- Errors occur, but the message is clear, so that the type of mistake made will not prevent communication.

5-6 marks

- There is no need for students to use more than one tense to be awarded a mark in this band.
- Sentences are generally simple but occasionally more complex. There will be more repetition of simple constructions here, but sometimes a more unusual structure will be used.
- Errors are quite frequent, but the language used is **more accurate than inaccurate**. This should be apparent from the annotation used for marking.

3-4 marks

- The sentences are short and simple and probably there will be quite a lot of repetition of the more common verbs, such as *haben, sein*.
- The vocabulary is very limited, so there will probably be quite a lot of repetition of the same words.
- Errors are very frequent and it will be more inaccurate than inaccurate, or there will be relatively little said, so the lack of evidence means we cannot go into a higher band.

1-2 marks

- There are only isolated words of vocabulary with the occasional short phrase. It may well be that there is quite a lot of silence.
- Errors often impede communication, or there is very little evidence to enable us to form an opinion.

**(c) Pronunciation and Intonation**

5 marks

- Consistently good accent and intonation are required. 'Accent' means 'pronunciation'.

4 marks

- Generally good. It may be that problems arise mainly with the sounds that students traditionally find more difficult, such as 'ch' or 'ei-ie' in German.

3 marks

- Generally accurate, but there is some inconsistency. As well as the more common mispronunciations, there may be problems with vowel sounds and anglicised words, such as aspirated w (*whas*), letter 'r' (*dry/drei*), o/ö and u/ü.

2 marks

- What is said is understandable, although comprehension is sometimes delayed. In other words there will be occasions where we have to listen very carefully to what is being said in order to get the intended meaning.

1 mark

- What is said is barely understandable and comprehension is difficult. There may well be very little to go on, because not much is said by the student.

**(d) Interaction and Fluency**

5 marks

- The student responds readily, without significant pause before answering the questions.
- There is initiative, as the student is able to fully develop answers to the questions.
- The conversation is sustained at a reasonable speed, but clearly not at native speaker pace.

4 marks

- The student will again have to answer without hesitation.
- The replies will go beyond the minimum, although there will not be as much development as in the top band.
- There is some flow of language, even if from time to time there is some pausing for thought.

3 marks

- There are ready responses, where the student can answer reasonably promptly most of the time.
- There is little if any initiative, so the student may not develop answers to any great extent.
- There is an ability to sustain a conversation, so that any hesitation does not break up the interchange of information too much.

2 marks

- There is some reaction to the teacher's questions, but the student is sometimes hesitant. In practice, there will be more sections of the test where the student is thinking what to say or cannot answer.
- There is little natural flow.

1 mark

- There is little reaction to what the teacher asks and the student is so hesitant that the conversation becomes disjointed. There will in all probability be lots of silence during the task.

**(e) Limiting marks**

- It is not possible to go more than one **band** higher than the band in which the Communication mark was given when awarding marks in the other categories. For instance, if 5 is awarded for Communication, the highest mark that can be awarded Range and Accuracy is 8, and for Pronunciation and Intonation and Interaction and Fluency the maximum mark would be 4.
- It is possible to give marks in lower bands for Range and Accuracy, Pronunciation and Intonation and Interaction and Fluency than the band in which the mark for Communication was given.
- If one mark or more is awarded for Communication, at least one mark must be given in all other categories.
- If 0 is awarded for Communication, 0 must be given for all other categories.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below.

**UMS conversion calculator** [www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion)