



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

German

46654

(Specification 4665)

Unit 4: Writing

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

It is perhaps an understatement to say that there has been considerable apprehension about this hybrid (teacher set, externally assessed) examination. It is hoped that this report will help to resolve generally some of the remaining uncertainties and will do that in the interest of students and teachers.

Despite the aforementioned apprehension, the majority of students were well prepared for their Controlled Assessment and performed very well with more than half of students scoring marks in the top third of the mark range (40-60) and this is very much to the credit of students working hard at Stage 1, 2 and Stage 3 and of the positive support and guidance of their teachers throughout the controlled assessment process. A significant number of students scored full or close to full marks. The second of the assignments presented was usually the better of the two.

Tasks given to students focussed predominantly on Holidays, School/College and future plans, Work and work experience, Free time and the media, Home and local area. Environmental issues were sometimes profitably explored in the context of 'local area' with some very good work presented.

Many examiners reported that the work from some centres was very similar between students. In some ways this is to be expected since they will all have been taught the same material. Nevertheless, students should try to produce a clearly individual response. It should be noted that students' work should not be corrected in pencil in order to provide feedback. This also applies to photocopies of students' work, because a student could gain unfair advantage if tackling another similar task at a future date. Any feedback should be of a general and not specific nature.

Task design

Task design is obviously important and should take as its starting point the fact that it is the response to the title which is assessed (not individual bullet points.) This is different from the Speaking assessment. For the Writing, bullet points have the status of guidance. This was clearly flagged up in the 2010 report on the examination (and elsewhere.) Nevertheless, there is undoubtedly a degree of confusion here. Judgements about 'relevance' when assessing 'Content' relate to the response's relevance to the title. For example, if the title is "My dream job," and there is no reference at all to 'my dream job' there is clearly a problem in terms of relevance.

It should be noted that examiners took a very broad and sympathetic view as to what constituted a relevant response. However, 'a fully relevant response' should include a response to **all** aspects of the title. Many students responded to the title "Holidays – your chance to win two weeks in the sun." Most did in fact include some response to the competition element, but those who did not do so, could not access the top band for Content because the response was not **fully** relevant. Such responses could still gain marks in the top bands for Range of Language and Accuracy and it was rare for this issue to make significant difference to assessment outcomes.

It is better to keep a broad and simple title for the Writing Task. Thus a title such as "Holidays" offers an opportunity to write about anything to do with holidays and avoids the relevance problem.

Taken to the extreme, the logic of this leads to concocting a title such as "Everything about me." Essentially, the student can then write just about anything in response to the title. Attractive as it may first appear to set up titles of this kind, students did not perform well with

this kind of prompt, because of the poor and limited challenge. The best assignments responded to a title with a clearer focus. Thus “An account of a holiday” generated better work than simply “Holidays.” And an interesting title such as “Raising money for Charity” generated some excellent work from well prepared students. Having noted that, of course the ability of the students affects the choice and suitability of the title.

In the context of ‘relevance’ it should be noted that bullet points should help students focus on the title. There were very many cases where bullet points actually steered students **away** from the title to write material which was of dubious relevance. At the same time, they were instructed to adhere to the bullet points one by one which is not necessary. This was not helpful to students. The closing task rubric should mention answering **the** task fully not **each** task.

Given the disparate degree of understanding of the above issues, it should be emphasised that examiners were instructed to take a broad and generous view of what constituted ‘relevance’ and students were not penalised for responding to problematic tasks.

Nevertheless, centres should note the above comments when designing future tasks.

One further point needs to be made here: centres should also ensure that titles are clear in themselves and not blurred alongside scene setting and a context statement. Examiners need to know exactly what title they are marking.

The Plan

On the whole, plans were a disappointing feature and, in general, there was no discernable disadvantage when a plan was *not* used. The following should be noted:-

- The plan is optional. Students do not have to produce a plan.
- For next year’s examination onwards, plans must consist of no more than 40 full words – **no conjugated verbs, no full sentences, no codes and no pictures of any kind.**
- Many plans were a random combination of words and pictures which seemed to have little impact on the quality of final piece of work.
- In a minority of cases, pictorial prompts became an identifiable word by word code. Codes are not allowed. If codes were identified, zero marks were awarded. (This extreme interpretation of the use of pictorial prompts partly explains why pictures will no longer be allowed.)
- Conjugated verbs on the plan were a much bigger and frequent problem. If conjugated verbs appeared on the plan, the clause or clauses where they appeared were disregarded for assessment purposes. In the worst cases, this could mean that a significant proportion of the assignment had to be disregarded. In most cases, the error made very little or no difference to the assessment outcome.
- If conjugated verbs appear on the plan, the student should be instructed to obliterate the offending items. It is not acceptable for the teacher to correct the items in red ink or pencil – a frequent occurrence – because the student was still able to read the unacceptable item.
- The above points may seem to be something unduly fussy, especially bearing in mind daily teaching pressures. That is truly well understood, but these basic rules about what is acceptable on the plan have been a **consistent** part of the exposition of the new specification in the last four years.
- This does not constitute advice not to do a plan. On the contrary, 40 well chosen words (excluding conjugated verbs) represent a very good opportunity to provide critically useful markers for the production of the work at Stage 3.

Drafts

A number of things have to be emphasised.

- Students 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, students 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, with the exception of the draft, at home. If students wish to 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 students, teachers will, of course, decide upon the best approach. Of course, students must not have access to a draft at Stage 3.

There was indeed evidence that some students had tried to learn a draft word for word. That evidence took the form of work which deteriorated significantly towards the end of the piece and frequent omissions, such that sentences ceased to communicate effectively. Omissions typically included whole words, for example, missing verbs and letters from words, for example 'is' instead of 'ist.' This often occurred with good students who rushed to write as much as possible in the time available. In this context, it should be noted that aiming to write twice the number of words in the recommended guidelines is not necessarily in the student's interest.

Dictionaries

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

Assessment

Content

The majority of work attracted marks in the Good or Very Good categories. Students were generally very well prepared for Stage 3 and many produced full, detailed accounts which were clearly relevant to the title. A significant number of students secured full marks for Content. Some good students offered a restricted performance because they failed to provide evidence of ideas and points of view which were explained. Examiners often had to search hard for such evidence and it can become a tricky area. For example: "Ich bin gesund, weil ich Obst esse" is a point of view explained, but what about "Ich esse Obst, um fit zu bleiben?" As a whole this is a point of view but it is not really a point of view *explained*. Something else needs to be added in: for example, "weil ich früher ungesund war." Students should be encouraged at least to include simple opinions which are explained in order to avoid this problem. For example: "Ich mag Deutsch, weil es interessant ist." The absence of justification of ideas or reasons for opinions was a particular problem for students who wrote about their school, home or local area and concentrated on factual lists of information, failing to develop ideas in response to the title.

Only a small percentage of students scored marks in the Limited or Poor category. Often this was because the material written did not convey much intelligible information, although almost all students could express simple opinions of some description.

The issue of relevance has been largely dealt with in relation to task design, but two final points need to be made. Firstly, if the language fails to communicate information, even when read sympathetically, that part of the response cannot count towards 'relevance.' Secondly, bullet points need to guide students towards a relevant and **coherent** response to the title.

Range of Language

A quarter of students wrote responses which merited marks in the 9-10 band and more than a half scored between 7 and 10 for Range of Language. This clearly represents a very good performance overall. Students had been clearly encouraged to use a good variety of vocabulary and to develop complex sentences with a good variety of structure. The best students were able to use a wide variety of tenses. Many included the conditional and imperfect and pluperfect subjunctive, as well as correct use of the passive voice. A significant number demonstrated the ability to use different connectives, including subordinating conjunctions and adverbial conjunctions. Good infinitive constructions were often in evidence: with modal verbs, with *um...zu*, with *vorhaben + zu + infinitive*, for example. Correct word order in main and in subordinate clauses was always a feature of the best work and such work showed an ability to use a significant array of subordinating conjunctions often developed in the same sentence. Many students had been very well prepared for the range of language demands of controlled assessment writing. There was widespread evidence of the ability to use correctly *weil, dass, denn, wenn, während, da, trotzdem, deswegen*. On the other hand, for whatever reason, very many students tried to use *obwohl* without a connecting main clause; others tried to use *sondern* to enhance complexity – almost invariably incorrectly.

Correct idiomatic use of prepositions is one of the most difficult things in learning a foreign language and this was always a good discriminating factor.

Typically, marks in the 5-6 band were awarded to work which rather depended for complexity on repeated use of simple connectives – *und, aber*, for example, but also repeated use of *weil* with no attempt to go beyond that.

Only a very small percentage of work scored in the 1-2 band – inappropriate vocabulary with little understanding of language structure. It was rare to conclude that there was no appropriate vocabulary and there wasn't some understanding of language structure even with weak work; so marks tended to creep into the 3-4 band.

Accuracy

Approximately half of all students scored 4 or 5 for Accuracy – again a very impressive performance since work in this category was either largely or generally accurate. A further third of students scored 3; so despite inaccuracies such work was judged to convey intended meaning, although there could be some variability within the piece. In general, the accuracy of a piece of work became worse towards the end of the piece often in a quite striking way with evidence of a very good opening paragraph, but a very poor closing paragraph. On the positive side many students were able to use different tenses correctly with reflexive verbs, separable and inseparable verbs and get the correct word order. On the negative side, big problems tended to occur through poor use of the dictionary, through incorrect use of prepositions and in particular the complete omission of prepositions. Such instances often prevented the communication of the required or intended message.

Administration

Centres are encouraged:

- to collate each student's work – ie the two tasks - together with the Candidate Record Form and the Task Planning Form. The use of treasury tags to keep portfolios together is preferred as paper clips and plastic wallets cause significant handling problems
- to make sure the examiner receives the full Controlled Assessment Task sheet relevant to the student or group. Marking cannot begin until the examiner knows what the students are writing about
- to remind students to write neatly as poor handwriting can affect marks
- to send the work in the same student order as on the Attendance List, as would be done for a terminal examination paper
- to check that the students have correctly filled in and signed the Candidate Record Form and the Task Planning Form (if used). There were errors with candidate numbers this year
- to ensure students have written the following information on each piece of work
 - centre number
 - student number
 - student name
 - component code (eg 46554)
 - task title
- to remind teachers that they should not write on the students' work (ie marks they may have awarded)
- to adhere to the deadline of 7 May by which all materials should be sent to the AQA examiner. The following items must be sent to the AQA examiner:
 - students' work (2 tasks per student) clearly labelled as Task 1 and Task 2
 - the task sheets
 - Task Planning Forms (if used)
 - Candidate Record Forms (signed)

Further support

Three further points to provide help to centres:

- the guidance provided to examiners is published at the end of this report for your information
- at the time of publication of results, centres will receive the total mark out of 60 for Unit 4 as well as the UMS score for the unit. In order to access the breakdown of the mark out of 60 (ie the mark out of 30 per task and the mark awarded for each assessment criterion), centres must register with e-AQA and use the Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA). It is only through ERA that a breakdown of marks will be made available

- further examples of completed writing tasks with marks and commentaries from the 2011 examination will be available in the Teacher Resource Bank on the AQA MFL website in the autumn term.

GUIDANCE NOTES

It should be noted that the following guidance contains examples from French, German and Spanish.

1. Task Planning Forms (TPF)

If more than 40 words have been used, examiners will ignore when awarding a mark, the parts of the student's response (ie the phrases or clauses) which use words noted on the TPF beyond the first 40.

If a conjugated verb appears on the TPF, examiners will ignore the clause(s) where that verb is used when awarding a mark for Range of Language and Accuracy. If the sentence (with the conjugated verb discounted) still communicates, then it may be counted towards the mark for Content. The same applies to the use of codes (eg a picture of an eye to represent the Spanish word *hay*).

Visuals on Task Planning Forms are permitted for the last time in June 2011 and must not appear on Task Planning Forms in June 2012 and beyond.

2. Exactly what do examiners mark?

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

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

No. The title can be anything.

4. How do examiners identify the title?

- The title is the task.
- The task and the scene-setting may seem blurred or merged together. The focus is the task.
- See examples in *Additional Exemplar Tasks: Controlled Assessment Writing and Speaking* on the AQA website within the Teacher Resource Bank for your language at <http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/newgcse/languages.php?id=11&prev=10>,
- where the task and scene setting are clearly separated

5. What is a relevant response?

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

6. And what if there is a significant amount of irrelevant material?

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

7. What if a student has omitted an entire aspect of the title?

A student with the task ‘Home, local area and special occasions’ who writes nothing about home area, for example, could be considered to have completed two thirds of the task. The piece could therefore be eligible for the 10-12 band for Content, assuming the piece fulfils the criteria for that band in other ways. This would still allow the student access to all mark bands for language.

8. 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.

9. What if it is clear the student’s entire response is identical (ie exactly the same, word for word) to model answers in a textbook or to the wording of tasks from other students at the same centre?

The work would be referred to AQA’s Irregularities/Malpractice Department.

10. 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 will be read and marked by the examiner.

11. 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

12. The criteria for assessment

(a) CONTENT

The criteria for CONTENT refer to ideas, points of view and, in the 4-6 band, opinions. In terms of assessment, how are they viewed?

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 this feature.

How do examiners decide between the 3 marks available for CONTENT in each mark band?

If the descriptor fits the piece exactly, then the examiner will award the middle mark in the band. If there is strong evidence of the descriptors and the examiner had been considering the band above, the highest of the three marks would be awarded. If there is just enough evidence and the examiner had been considering the band below, then the lowest mark in the band would be awarded.

13-15 marks

- Students provide a **fully relevant** and **detailed** response with **almost all** information conveyed **clearly** and **developed**.
- They must offer ideas / opinions / points of view (minimum 2) and at least two of them must be explained or justified.
- The piece should have a well organised structure, ie a sound ordering of ideas but **not** necessarily a formal essay structure or an introduction, conclusion, etc.

10-12 marks

- The response will be **mostly** relevant and **a lot** of information will still be provided and conveyed **clearly** and will **generally** be developed.
- There is a requirement to give **and explain** ideas / opinions / points of view (minimum 2)

7-9 marks

- The response will be **generally** relevant with **quite a lot** of information conveyed **clearly**.
- There will still be evidence of an ability to **develop** ideas.
- There is a requirement to give opinions / points of view (minimum 2).

4-6 marks

- The response is **limited** but **some** relevant information will be conveyed.
- There will be **some development** of basic ideas.
- There is a requirement to give opinions (minimum 2). These could be very simple, eg: 'I like French. I like Spanish. France is good.' = 3 simple opinions.

1-3 marks

- The response is **very limited** with **little** relevant information conveyed.
- There will be **no real structure**.

0 marks

- No relevant information is communicated in a coherent fashion. If zero is awarded for Content, zero must also be awarded for Range of Language and Accuracy.

(b) RANGE OF LANGUAGE

- The immediate future (ie *je vais* + infinitive, *voy a* + infinitive, etc) counts as a future tense. A present tense verb with a future time marker (eg *Nächste Woche fahre ich...*) does not.
The immediate future (eg *je vais aller*) is seen as a different tense from the future (eg *j'irai*).
- The present subjunctive does not count as a separate tense from the present indicative. A construction using the present tense to refer to the past (eg *Je joue du piano depuis 2 ans / Llevo 5 años estudiando español / Ich spiele Klavier seit 2 Jahren*) counts as the present tense. Similarly a construction using the present tense to refer to the future (eg *J'espère aller à l'université / ich hoffe, auf die Universität zu gehen / Espero ir al cine*) counts as the present.

9-10 marks

- A variety of **tenses** must be used **successfully**. This means two or more tenses and a minimum of one instance of a tense use which is other than the default tense used. 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. An overall judgement needs to be made as to whether “verb tenses are used successfully.” There needs to be evidence that the student can communicate messages successfully in more than one tense. There may be minor spelling errors (and in German occasional word order errors) but provided they do not prevent communication they can be credited.
- The use of different tenses is not a ‘passport’ to the 9-10 band.
- There must be evidence of **successful use of complex sentences**. This could be:
 - use of subordinating conjunctions (but this is not an absolute requirement)
 - use of adverbial phrases (*al llegar...*, *après avoir fait cela...*, etc).
 - use of infinitive constructions after a preposition (e.g. *sans hésiter / ohne zu essen / despues de ir*), after an adjective (eg *C'est facile à faire / einfach zu tun / fácil hacerlo*) or after a verb (eg modal verbs; *je préfère vivre en ville / Ich mag fernsehen / prefiero ir* etc)
 - a range of different structures leading to longer, more varied sentences (eg *suelo ir* rather than *voy*, *j'ai l'intention de...* rather than *je veux..ich habe vor* rather than *ich will...*)
 - use of pronoun objects
 - use of adverbial conjunctions (eg *heureusement, cependant, leider, sin embargo*) or prepositional phrases (eg *par contre / zum Beispiel / por ejemplo*)
 - regular use of connectives to form longer sentences.However, this is GCSE so even in the highest mark band examiners are not necessarily looking for use of the subjunctive or similar grammatical structures.
- There needs to be a **wide range of vocabulary**. This means that students will not be too repetitive in the words they use.

7-8 marks

- **Mainly successful** use of complex sentences. The note above about what constitutes complexity for the 9-10 band will also apply here.
- No specific requirement to use more than one tense but the use of different tenses may constitute evidence of ‘more complex sentences’.
- There must be a **good range** of vocabulary, so students in this band will again be trying to avoid repetition of the more common words.

5-6 marks

- There will be some attempts made at longer sentences using appropriate linking words. At this level this will often mean repeated dependence on simple connectives such as ‘and’ / ‘but’, though ‘because’ will also be found fairly frequently when

students attempt to explain ideas and points of view. Use of other forms of complex sentences will often not be wholly successful.

- There should be **some variety** of vocabulary, though students will generally be using a more basic range of vocabulary than in the higher bands and there may be more repetition.

3-4 marks

- Language will be basic, with **short, simple sentences**. Attempts at longer sentences and more difficult constructions will usually not be successful.
- Vocabulary will generally be appropriate to the basic needs of the task but will be **limited**, with a lot of repetition and overuse of a few common verbs such as *to be, to have, to like, to go*.

1-2 marks

- Little understanding of language structure shown with just the occasional short phrase which is correctly used.
- Vocabulary will be very **basic**, with only isolated words correctly used. Vocabulary will often be anglicised.

(c) ACCURACY

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

No. Range of tenses is assessed under RANGE OF LANGUAGE. The range of tenses is not considered when assessing Accuracy.

There are 5 marks available to cover the whole range of ability (i.e. 8 grades). This means the mark awarded could represent quite different performances. Moreover, a mark of 5 will not be used only to represent an A* performance.

5 marks

- **Largely accurate.**
- Major errors only usually appear in complex structures.
- There may be some minor errors (eg gender).
- Verbs and tenses are **secure**.

4 marks

- Errors occur but the piece is **generally accurate**. Mistakes made will not generally impede communication.
- Verbs and tenses are **usually correct**.

3 marks

- **More accurate than inaccurate**, though there will often be fairly frequent errors.
- The intended **meaning is clear**.
- Verbs and tenses are **sometimes unsuccessful**.

2 marks

- **Many errors.**
- Mistakes **often impede communication**.
- Verbs are **rarely accurate**.

1 mark

- **Frequent errors.**
- Mistakes **regularly impede communication.**
- **Limited understanding** of basic linguistic structures.

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