

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCSE German (5GN04) Paper 01

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Writing

Administration

The examining teams reported that almost all centres managed the administration of this unit well. The main features to note are:

- Candidates must submit two units of work.
- The candidate front sheet must be signed by the teacher and the candidate to authenticate the work.
- The units of work should be presented in the same order as they are listed on the Candidate Mark Sheet.
- The work from each centre should be submitted in candidate rather than teaching group order.
- Each candidate's folder must include the Form CA4 Writing prompt sheet for each task even if this has not been used.
- Examiners prefer work stapled together rather than submitted in plastic slip cases.
- Only one set of stimulus material need be submitted with the whole batch of work. It is not necessary to send one copy with each candidate's work.

Choice of tasks

Certain tasks were popular. These included:

- Holidays
- School
- Work experience
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Media and Technology
- An Interview with a Celebrity

It should be noted that certain tasks are less suitable for weaker candidates. For example, a film or book review demands quite a wide range of original language and the ability to manipulate structures for it to be wholly successful.

Letters or application of letters of complaint to a hotel should be chosen with care. They often follow formulaic patterns which can limit the work of the more able candidates.

Stimulus tasks

Centre should note that, whilst it is acceptable for only a title to be set as the stimulus, this must be refreshed with in the centre after two years. In other words, the title *Meine Freizeit* may only be used for two years and must be changed completely unless it is followed by a set of bullet points.

The best stimulus tasks were set in English, although German tasks were also acceptable. Many centres used or adapted the Edexcel tasks. In addition, most centres were aware that it was better to use the rubric "You could mention ..." rather than "You must mention ..." since the latter rubric could potentially penalise candidates who had not covered all the points listed.

Care should be taken to ensure that the task is suitable for the level of candidates taking it. The following task on Holidays would be suitable for weaker candidates.

Write an account of your last holiday.

You could mention the following:

- where you went and how long you stayed
- details of the journey
- what the accommodation was like
- the weather
- what you did
- what you will do next year

You should aim to write 200 words.

However, for more able candidates a freer rein might be given with a stimulus along the following lines:

Write an account of your last holiday.

You could mention the following:

- why you needed a holiday
- what went well and what you did not enjoy
- why you would recommend this destination to others
- why holidays are important

You should aim to write 200 words.

The latter stimulus is more likely to allow better candidates to produce more original work.

Length of work

Each unit should be around 200 words in length. Longer essays tend to be self-penalising. For candidates who are able to produce more than 200 words in the one hour allowed for writing up the final essay, it would be

better to spend time checking for accuracy rather than for producing more inaccurate language. A carefully crafted essay of 200 words is much better than a long rambling account, in some cases this year over 600 words.

Weaker candidates aiming for a lower grade may produce essays of around 100 words or may submit two shorter pieces to make up a unit. Tasks of 100 words and fewer are capped at a mark of 6 for Communication and Content. Examiners reported that most candidates were able to produce at least 170 words per unit.

Form CA4 and use of dictionary

This sheet was well used by the majority of candidates. It is an important part of the controlled assessment process, allowing candidates access to difficult vocabulary without having to use the dictionary. The best use is to list 30 individual words which can be used in the essay. Five small pictures are also allowed and many candidates took the opportunity to include these, sometimes giving them the plan of their essay.

Whilst short phrases such as *meiner Meinung nach* are acceptable on Form CA4, whole sentences are not and codes, for example of the first letter of all the words in a sentence, are against the rules.

Dictionaries can be a blessing or a curse, depending on how they are used. At best, candidates can check spelling or find an interesting adjective. At worst they can lead to nonsense passages within an essay.

Examples this year included:

Es gibt viele Regeln Gasthof der Schule.

Ich links Schule.

Meine Lieblingslehrerin ist Vermissen Smith.

Clearly, dictionary use has to be taught and applied sparingly.

Communication and Content

The best essays communicate clearly throughout with a wide range of ideas linked well with adverbs and adverbial phrases. A range of verbs predominate in the best essays.

Barriers to successful communication are:

- Limited verb use, with an over-emphasis on *es ist, es war, es hat, es gibt*.
- Repetitive paragraphs, for example descriptions of all family members.
- Lists, for example of school subjects or favourite foods.

- Over-ambitious writing which loses the sense mid-sentences.

Many examiners noted that candidates who had tried to memorise work were often unable to write their final version clearly and split up words wrongly. It was not unusual to read something along the lines of *Ich bin letzt esjahr nach Spanienge fahren* or to find a sentence with a section clearly missing from the middle which thus rendered it incomprehensible. The controlled assessment writing tasks should not be merely an exercise in memory. Most candidates are aware of the need to include opinion in their essays.

Knowledge and Application of Language

When marking in this category, examiners look for consistent use of the following:

- Attempts at varied word order including inversion, coordination and subordination
- Varied verb forms which may include past, present, future and conditional tenses and modal verbs
- Use of subordinating conjunctions which might include *weil, obwohl, als, wenn* and *dass* and occasionally *damit, nachdem, bevor*. Some examiners reported that *weil* is over-used and could be replaced by *da* or *denn* for added variety.
- Attempted infinitive clauses usually with *um ... zu* but also occasionally following a verb such as *beschließen* or *vorhaben*
- Good linking words and phrases, usually adverbs which help the essay flow

Accuracy

It is not necessary to be 100% accurate to achieve a mark of 5. However, a mark of 4 or 5 may only be awarded if the essay contains enough examples of complex structures.

Grade Boundaries

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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