

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE German (5GN04)
Paper 01 Writing in German

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GCSE GERMAN 5GN04
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Writing controlled assessment

The examining process ran smoothly this year. The examining team reported that most centres' administration was efficient and that scripts were received by or before the deadline. The following points are made to help teachers in centres to improve their students' performance.

What is required

Each student is required to submit two writing tasks on two different topics. Each task should ideally contain about 200 words of written German. These should be accompanied by the CA4 sheet when it has been used, or by an indication on the CM4 mark sheet that it has not been used. Centres should also enclose the task sheet. One copy of a task for the whole centre is all that is required: it is not necessary to enclose the task sheet with each student's submission.

The majority of centres complied with the administrative requirements of the submission. However, the following points should be noted:

- It is not possible to submit only one task for marking; both tasks have to be sent at the same time.
- Students' work should be presented in the same order as they appear on the attendance register rather than in teaching group order.
- The two tasks for each student should be presented in the same order as they appear on the mark sheet.
- Examiners prefer each student's work not to be sent in a plastic slip case. If the work for each student is stapled together, it is much easier to access.
- The most recent version of the mark sheet (CM4) should be used. This is available on the Edexcel website.
- Both the teacher and the student must sign the mark sheet to authenticate the work.

Tasks

The most common tasks set by centres follow the Edexcel model of a scenario in English with a set of bullet points. Popular topic areas are:

- Health and fitness
- A holiday blog
- Work experience
- School
- Local area
- Use of technology
- A film review

All too often tasks are prescriptive and do not give students enough freedom to demonstrate true originality in their writing. Where a whole centre's submission is nothing more than a writing up of the work covered

in a chapter in a text book, students are unlikely to score more than 12 marks for Communication and Content, no matter how varied and accurate their writing may appear to be.

It would be much more suitable to set tasks for top level students which allow them to manipulate the learned language in an imaginative and original way. For example, following a unit of work on healthy lifestyle, the task could be as follows:

Write the script for a television advertisement for a new health snack. You could include the following:

- A voice-over describing the product
- An explanation of its benefits
- An interview with a famous personality about why they will use the product in the future

One centre devised a task about a party in which students wrote about:

- the reasons for the party
- guests invited
- problems occurring
- degree of success of the party

The resulting submissions were original and varied, and students clearly expressed their own thoughts.

Essays on the environment were less common this year, but one examiner reported on a successful task in which an English MP was writing to Angela Merkel comparing the environment here to the state of affairs in Germany. This suited more able students well.

CA4 sheet

Used wisely, the CA4 sheet is a tool which helps students ensure that they maximise their performance in the controlled assessment task. Many use it well, adhering to the spirit of the specification. The following examples show how it should and should not be used:

Example 1 - acceptable			
<i>Urlaub</i>	<i>Bedienung</i>	<i>Gepäck</i>	30 words serving as an aide-memoire and including good items of vocabulary and words which might be difficult to spell
<i>Spanien</i>	<i>höflich</i>	<i>verloren</i>	
<i>gefahren</i>	<i>tanzen</i>		
<i>Vertreter</i>			
<i>Sonnenschein</i>	<i>abends</i>		
<i>Reisefirma</i>			
<i>luxuriös</i>	<i>Ausflüge</i>		
<i>insgesamt</i>			
<i>Freibad</i>	<i>tagsüber</i>	<i>Erfolg</i>	
<i>Strand</i>	<i>Esel</i>		
<i>genießen</i>			
<i>täglich</i>	<i>Lage</i>	<i>Pläne</i>	
<i>außerdem</i>	<i>ruhig</i>		
<i>Winterurlaub</i>			
<i>Sonnenschein</i>	<i>erholsam</i>	<i>Skiort</i>	
Example 2 - acceptable			
<i>letzten Sommer</i> <i>meiner Meinung nach</i> <i>im Großen und Ganzen</i> <i>nächstes Jahr</i> <i>habe beschäftigt</i> <i>wir haben vor</i> <i>ich will besuchen</i> <i>am ersten Tag</i> <i>gleich neben dem Hotel</i> <i>am Ende des Urlaubs</i>			30 words in short phrases including conjugated verbs are acceptable
Example 3 - unacceptable			
<i>Kellner (masc)</i> <i>Dusche (fem)</i> <i>Restaurant (neut)</i> <i>fahren schwimmen - *</i> <i>weil obwohl dass - verb to end</i> <i>meines Erachtens (verb next)</i> <i>I.b.I.J.m.m.F.n.S.g</i>			About 20 words using codes. This is not allowed under the rules of the specification and the work would be referred to the Compliance Department. Colour coding should also be avoided.

Word Count

The majority of students manage to produce two units of approximately 200 words each. The following marking principles are implemented for shorter work:

- between 100 and 180 words - the mark for Communication and Content is capped at 12; other criteria are marked as normal.
- fewer than 100 words - the mark for Communication and Content is capped at 6; other criteria are marked as normal.

There is no upper word limit and some students produce work in excess of 350 words. There is little to be gained from this effort. The best work is of the recommended length and carefully crafted, with due thought given to how best to display a knowledge of varied German structures. It is not surprising that excessively long work often fails to reach the top mark band (13-15) for Communication and Content simply because it becomes repetitive and unfocused or because it strings sentences together without any linking of ideas in a logical manner. Quality rather than quantity is the key to success.

Communication and Content

The best essays are well linked, read fluently and display a range of tenses naturally and include opinion and justification.

Rote learning is a problem. Often centres present virtually identical essays which have been written according to a template or a writing frame. These can lead to disjointed, mundane detail. Sometimes, students pick clauses from a list, and occasionally write ideas which do not follow such as:

- *Ich lerne am liebsten Deutsch, weil ich die Naturwissenschaften liebe.*

When students are given too much direction, the best are limited by a pedestrian style and the weaker ones seem not to understand what they are writing at all. Lack of punctuation or wrong punctuation can also make scripts difficult to read.

Dictionary misuse continues to occur. The following examples were noted this year:

- *Ich Mangel gehen zu Amerika*
- *Ich werde Urlaub meine Schule*
- *eine Brille von Wasser*
- *Es behaltet mich passen*
- *der Wechsel von dem Zugbegleiter* (a famous London tourist attraction)

The mark for Communication and Content reflects the ambiguity resulting from dictionary misuse.

Scripts which are comprehensible throughout but lack originality or variety are likely to score a mark of 10. The descriptors for Communication and Content clearly state that repeated ambiguity, even in an otherwise good piece of writing will limit the mark. This may help to explain why some work which appears outstanding does not reach the top band (13-15). In the case of repeated ambiguity, the mark will be likely to be in the 7-9 category.

Knowledge and Application of Language

At the top end of the ability range, students demonstrate a good ability to manipulate a wide range of structures with ease. These include:

- Varied syntax
- Coordination with *und, aber, oder*
- Subordination with a range of conjunctions (not just *weil* - see below)
- Varied tenses and time frames - a minimum of two are required to be present in each essay
- Modal verbs in the present and imperfect
- Infinitive clauses with, for example, *um/zu, ich hoffe, ...* or *wir haben beschlossen, ...*
- Linking adverbs and adverbial phrases
- A sound sense of case and gender

When subordinate clauses are used, it is important that they are used with care. Repetitive *weil* clauses do not necessarily make for pleasant reading. For example in an essay about school, a student may write:

Ich lerne gern Deutsch, weil es nützlich ist.

There is little to be gained by adding a similar sentence such as:

Ich lerne nicht gern Physik, weil es schwierig ist.

However, the *weil* clause can be enhanced by using a different verb pattern:

Ich lerne nicht gern Physik, weil wir zu viele Hausaufgaben bekommen.

Alternatively, variety of structure may be achieved by starting with the subordinate clause:

Weil ich gern im Ferien bin, lerne ich am liebsten Sport.

In general, vocabulary used is always improving, especially when the CA4 form is used properly. Examiners listed examples of good phrases and adverbs which included:

- *Ich bin der Ansicht, dass ...*
- *Es kann sein, dass ...*
- *Es steht fest, dass, ...*
- *deswegen*

- *ansonsten*
- *wesentlich*
- *äußerst*
- *nicht nur ... sondern auch ...*
- *entweder ... oder ...*
- *weder ... noch ...*
- *je mehr ... desto ...*

Accuracy

Many students write completely accurate essays. However, marks of 4 or 5 can only be awarded when there is good evidence of a range of complex structures.

Notable errors this year included:

- confusion of *hatte* and *hätte*
- lack of inversion
- omission of final verb in the subordinate clause
- past participle used as a main verb without an auxiliary

Planning for the future

A new set of Edexcel set tasks will be published on the website in the autumn. These can be used as they are or can be altered to suit the level and experience of students in a centre.

Centres are reminded that the suitability of centre-devised tasks can be checked using the *Ask The Expert Service* provided by Edexcel.

Grade Boundaries

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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