

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
in German (5GN04/01)
Paper 4: Writing in German

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GCSE German

Unit 4: Writing in German

Examiners' Report

General Comments

Once again, the majority of centres fulfilled the administrative requirements of this unit and presented work in correct candidate order, with each candidate's submission secured with a staple or a paper clip rather than in poly pockets which are not popular with examiners. This makes the marking process run smoothly. Where signatures are missing, work is not secured correctly, work has been left out of the total submission, or the work is presented in the wrong order, then the whole process is held up. Centres are requested to read carefully the **ICE (Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination)** document, made available on the Pearson Edexcel website each year, before sending work off to the examiner.

Most importantly, centres must not mark their own work in any way. A small number of centres had marked errors and awarded marks to candidates' work. This is not allowed under the conditions of this examination.

Tasks

The most common topic areas continue to be Holidays, School, Free Time, Healthy Lifestyle and Work Experience. In most cases, centres have set tasks which suit the ability level of their cohort. However, sometimes it would be helpful to candidates to have more differentiated work, with more structure given to weaker candidates and more scope given to the more able. Some good candidates are held back by a sense that they have to stick rigidly to the bullet points in the task. Task sheets which were not prescriptive and those which enabled a degree of creativity enabled candidates to achieve better results.

Tasks which can be problematic include diaries and brochures for a town. These can be repetitive and often do not lend themselves to longer, more detailed sentences or sufficient variety of structure to achieve the top mark bands.

Essays about the media were noted as being less successful this year. Often candidates seem unable to produce a well-linked and fluent piece on this topic, relying too heavily on a limited range of structures and in many cases only the present tense. On the other hand, some very impressive pieces were seen on the topic of the Environment.

There was less evidence of work on Self and Family and Local Area than in previous years – the latter, when covered, tended to include details of the house and also environmental issues, but was often stilted and formulaic in character.

Original topics this year which allowed the best candidates to excel included:

- IN or OUT of the EU?
- Love letters between Angela Merkel and David Cameron about the Environment
- Young people in society

CA4 notes sheet

Most candidates make some use of this sheet, although not all use it to its best effect. When it is used correctly, candidates impress by showing evidence in their essays of outstanding vocabulary with good spelling and excellent linguistic structures. Too often words on the CA4 sheet are not copied correctly. Whilst conjugated verbs and short phrases are allowed, there are some restrictions in the use of this form. In a few instances, codes were used, such as sentences with gaps or the first letter of each word in a sentence. Such examples are dealt with as malpractice and may affect a candidate's grade.

Communication and Content

The best answers in this category present an essay in which the candidate uses language creatively to produce an original and fluent account. Variety is the key to success. Both simple and complex sentences should be in evidence, with good linking used throughout. Analysis, opinions, justification, advantages, disadvantages, more advanced ideas and notions tended to individualise pieces, as students wrote about something they were particularly interested in. This often demanded the use of more unusual and varied language, which in turn resulted in much more lively, original and interesting pieces of work.

In addition, candidates should express and justify opinions regularly. This year, examiners reported a greater than average variety of opinion phrases including:

- *was mich betrifft, ...*
- *ich bin der Ansicht, dass ...*
- *jedoch bin ich der festen Überzeugung, dass ...*
- *ich muss zugeben, dass ...*
- *nach eingehender Überlegung, bin ich zum Schluss gekommen, dass ...*

Such phrases when used appropriately can lend a degree of sophistication to the work.

The mark for Communication and Content can be greatly influenced by the degree of ambiguity in the writing. Ambiguity was frequently caused by poor spelling, missing words, poor punctuation or by being over ambitious.

Careless spelling errors can also throw the meaning of the whole sentence e.g. *Wenn ich viel trinke, weil (weiss) ich nicht mehr was ich tue.* Other common errors which caused confusion include:

- *viel / sehr*
- *ich / ist / es*
- *bekommen / werden*
- *also / auch* (also much use of *so* as a connective)
- use of *Spaß*
- how to say 'to' a place
- *nett / schön*
- *komisch / lustig*
- meaning of *als, wenn* and *wann*
- failure to use *es gibt* when required
- lack of umlauts in the conditional, making a verb past tense instead
- translation of 'helpful'

Such repeated errors can often explain the placing of an otherwise reasonable piece of work in a lower mark band than might be expected. Examiners report widespread use of template answers, rendering many scripts within a centre very similar and occasionally virtually identical. Whilst each unit of work is marked on its merits, work which is too "text-bookish" or lacks flow can rarely access the 13-15 band. Some all inclusive essays, often far in excess of the required 200 words, become pedestrian by being repetitive. For example, a candidate who produces an essay on media might produce paragraphs on films, TV, music, technology, books and mobile phones. However, the danger is that the paragraphs become too similar. The account becomes a list of likes and dislikes, advantages and disadvantages. It would be better to write about only one or two media in more depth.

Further barriers to communication include:

- misuse of translation engines
- introductory paragraphs with name, age and family details that are irrelevant to the piece
- poor use of subordinate clauses
- confusion and omission of *ist/es*
- contradictions in descriptions – *interessant und langweilig*
- strange reasons – *nicht gut, weil es schlecht war*
- over-use of *schön* and *nett*
- use of *gern* or *lieber* as verbs.

Knowledge and Application of Language

This category credits attempted use of language structures irrespective of accuracy. Candidates should be made aware of the need to demonstrate the following:

- Variety of syntax (verb second, inversion, TMP, subordinate clauses first in the sentence)
- Variety of tense, although only two tenses or time frames are required to access the top band
- Variety of other verb forms including modal verbs and infinitive clauses
- Variety of subordination

- Variety of vocabulary
- Variety of adverbial phrases
- A good sound of case and gender

However, in demonstrating their use of the various required structures it has to be kept in mind that this mark category also awards the application of the structures. Examiners report good use of *weil*, *obwohl* and *dass* with occasional more sophisticated use of *da*, *falls* or *damit*.

Again this year many pieces of work contained a sentence of the type: *Wenn ich ... hätte / wäre, würde ich ...* This does not necessarily always make the work flow well if the pattern is over-used or used out of context. Similarly, subordination can become tedious if it is used relentlessly. Most candidates successfully used *weil*. For some candidates this is the only subordinate used in their work. Some candidates who used *weil* (often the only example of subordination in an essay) then forget to add a verb at the end of the clause.

Notwithstanding recurrent problems, there were many examples of good use of language. This year, examiners reported consistently good use of modal verbs in the present and past tenses, *um...zu* clauses and of an overall sound appreciation of gender and adjectival agreement in different cases.

Accuracy

The mark for Accuracy is closely linked to the previous mark for Knowledge and Application of Language. A completely accurate piece of work will only be awarded 5 marks if it has shown a good enough range of complex structures. Otherwise the mark is capped at 3.

Examiners reported that there was some impressively accurate work at the top end of the scale this year. Often candidates were able to show consistent correct use of verb endings and tenses whilst producing varied syntax with correct word order throughout the essay.

Candidates should be encouraged as part of the preparation for the controlled assessment task to check their work carefully so that errors can be avoided.

Bloopers

As usual, misuse of dictionary or online translators raised a smile:

- Kindkapuze = childhood
- der Schiffe Turm von Pizza
- ich Testament versuchen
- Wir fahren nach Afrika, um die Würste zu besuchen.

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>