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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In German (1GN0 4H)
Paper 4: Writing In German

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Paper 4H: Writing in German

Principal Examiner's report

This paper is worth 60 marks. Candidates were required to answer three questions in 1 hour 20 minutes. Question 1 and Question 2 had a choice of topics and the translation at Question 3 was mandatory. Throughout the paper, titles, rubrics and bullet points were given in German.

Question 1(a) – Feste

Candidates were required to write a short informal e-mail of between 80 and 90 words in German about celebrations. The four bullet points asked for a description of a favourite celebration, a reason for liking this celebration, how the candidate celebrated a previous birthday and what celebration there would be in the future.

Almost all candidates were able to address all four bullet points successfully. The majority of candidates chose to describe a birthday or a religious festival. Common reasons for liking this celebration were the receipt of presents, a chance for the family to get together or that it was part of the family's cultural heritage. Descriptions of a birthday in the past often included mention of presents and parties; future celebrations often included the concept of looking forward to this using *sich freuen auf*. Where candidates did not score highly for Communication and Content, this was normally due to confusion with time frames or with too much reliance on the mother tongue. The language used was mostly predictable, and most candidates were able to manipulate the verb *feiern* well. All candidates were aware of the need to include more complex structures to secure marks in the higher bands for Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy. There was often evidence of a *weil* clause with a complex verb form such as a modal verb + infinitive or the perfect tense. In less successful responses, spelling was occasionally a hindrance to communication and verb agreements were faulty. However, many answers scored full marks.

Question 1(b) – Ein Austausch

Candidates were required to write a short informal e-mail of between 80 and 90 words in German about a forthcoming exchange. The four bullet points asked for detail of when the exchange would begin, details of what the exchange partner should bring, whether or not the candidate had taken part in an exchange before and reasons why the exchange would be good.

Although fewer candidates chose this option over Question 1(a), there were some very pleasing answers. The best responses managed to develop each bullet point in some way. For example, the timing of the exchange could be expressed simply as *Der Austausch beginnt in drei Wochen*, but could be expanded to add interest with *Das heißt, dass du im Mai kommst* or *Ich freue mich sehr darauf*. The second and fourth bullet points allowed for some imaginative responses drawing on wider topic areas. For example, a

candidate gave advice to bring an umbrella because it was sure to rain, or another suggested that the highlight of the exchange would be a visit to the zoo. Candidates who chose this option were generally at ease with the language and provided evidence of linguistic structures, including clauses with *falls* and *damit* as well as a secure range of verb forms and tenses.

Question 2(a) – Ein Konzert

Candidates were required to write a formal letter of between 130 and 150 words in German to the Headteacher of an Austrian school. The four bullet points asked for details about why the candidate wanted to organise a concert, previous experience of organising concerts, why music is important and how the Headteacher could help with the organisation of the concert.

This topic allowed candidates to be creative in their use of language and there was no shortage of ideas to develop each of the four bullet points. Reasons given for staging a concert included to reward students and their teachers for their hard work, to raise money for charity and to show off the talent within the school. Most candidates were at least able to express clearly that they had already played in a concert even if they had not organised one. Music was praised for its ability to relax and one candidate even used the sophisticated expression *Stress abbauen*. Although all candidates had ideas about how the Headteacher could help such as providing money of encouraging attendance, these were not always expressed clearly. However, there were many interesting and original essays; those who missed scoring marks in the top two bands for Communication and Content often did so because of lack of clarity due to the interference of their mother tongue or by being over-adventurous rather than sticking to what they were able to write. The vast majority of candidates showed a secure command of linguistic structures, including a range of tenses and varied syntax including infinitive clauses with *vorhaben* or *um/zu*. Only the most successful were able to manipulate the formal register with *Sie* correctly throughout their essay. Vocabulary used was generally sound, although less successful candidates often confused *bekommen* and *werden*.

Question 2(b) – Vorbilder

Candidates were required to write an article of between 130 and 150 words in German about rôle-models. The four bullet points asked for details about why young people need rôle-models, the candidate's rôle-model, this person's positive deeds and how the candidate will be a rôle-model in the future.

This popular option enabled candidates to write freely about their own rôle-models and resulted in interesting accounts of the achievements of, for example, sports stars, ballet dancers or political activists. Family members also provided good rôle-models and were praised for their kindness and honesty. Candidates were successful in their description of how they would

be a rôle-model in the future with details of their proposed work for charity, how they would run a soup kitchen for the homeless or simply how they would treat their own children with respect. All but a handful of candidates managed to write coherent essays showing a wide range of complex structures, and therefore achieving high marks for Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy. There was evidence, for example of good adverbial constructions (*meiner Meinung nach, normalerweise, ohne mein Vorbild*), good use of modal verbs (*ich wollte schon immer wie Schuhmacher sein*) and a wide range of verbs in various tenses used correctly (*schaffen, gewinnen, erreichen*). Those candidates who did not score highly had often omitted reference to one or more of the prescribed bullet points. Thus, a fluent and sophisticated essay about role-models in general scored highly for Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy but failed to reach the top band for Communication and Content.

Question 3 – Wetter

In the translation about weather, candidates had to translate four sentences into German in increasing order of complexity.

The majority of candidates coped well with this passage and managed to convey the gist of each sentence even if some structures were problematic. Most conveyed the sense of the first sentence correctly with accurate word order and verb agreement, using either *anziehen* or *tragen* in the main clause. Thereafter, there were varying degrees of success, although some candidates produced a perfect or nearly perfect translation, thus securing full marks. Words which caused difficulty were *climate* (occasionally given as *Umwelt*) and *spend* (with regular confusion between *verbringen* and *spenden*). The rendition of *prefer* was often circumvented successfully by using *mag lieber* or *gefällt mir besser*. The final sentence proved to be the most challenging, with only the most successful candidates producing correct conditional forms. When *ziehen* or *umziehen* were not known, there was some skilful manipulation of language which, though awkward, still transferred to meaning from English. For example, *meine Familie würde zu einem anderen Land gehen* partially conveyed the sense of the final clause, albeit without the key idea of *warmer*.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance in this examination, candidates are offered the following advice:

- To achieve marks in the top bands for Communication and Content, it is necessary to address all four bullet points in Questions 1 and 2.
- The word count is only a guide. It is not necessary to write beyond the word limit. However, the whole of a response is considered when examiners award marks.

- Candidates should aim to write the best German of which they are capable. They should avoid over-complexity or writing beyond their capabilities.
- English words written within German sentences when a German word is unknown is often a barrier to communication. It is better to think carefully before writing each sentence.
- In their essays, candidates should avoid lists of nouns and repetition of structures whenever possible.
- It is best to attempt all four sentences in the translation, finding alternative ways of expressing an idea in German if a literal translation proves difficult.

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