

GCSE

German

General Certificate of Secondary Education **GCSE 1926**

Report on the Units

June 2007

1926/MS/R/07

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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German (1926)

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Introduction

The June 2007 GCSE German was the fifth examination of the current specification. Most candidates could answer fully, and most should have found sitting the examination a worthwhile experience.

Because of curricular changes in many Centres there was a drop in the number of candidates taking the examination, around 10% fewer than in 2006. The majority of the drop in candidates was from the Foundation Tier. Over time, the entries for the tiered elements of the exam (ie excluding written coursework) have moved from being close to 50/50 Foundation/Higher in 2003 to being around 38% Foundation and 62% Higher Tier in 2007. Relatively few candidates score below grade D, and virtually none are ungraded.

Although there were many very good scripts, the number of really excellent ones (close to full marks) seems again to have dropped slightly. This may be because fewer native or near-native speakers have entered GCSE in 2007.

Of the candidates entered for Higher Tier papers, most scored at least an E grade mark, and of the weakest Higher Tier candidates, those who entered for Reading were least successful. Only a handful of candidates who entered for Higher Tier Writing failed to reach at least an E mark. Centres may wish to review their entry policy if they had numbers of candidates who had very low UMS marks (below 30) in Higher Tier Reading, Speaking, or Listening.

Although Centres could, if they wished, have all their work externally marked by choosing the Writing Paper and Externally Assessed Speaking, the proportion of candidates who chose to demonstrate their achievements in Writing via the Coursework option remained at just under two thirds. Teachers clearly find the option reasonable to operate, and many are becoming skilled in preparing candidates for it. However, all teachers should ensure they meet the requirements for Coursework – see the Principal Moderator's report below. Numbers for Internally Assessed Speaking at Foundation Tier and at Higher Tier remained broadly stable around 9% of the entry.

Centres will be aware that a lot of information is available on the OCR Website: www.ocr.org.uk. This includes the specification, sample assessment material and sample mark schemes which do not appear in the specification document. There are also recent marked Writing exemplar scripts with a commentary.

In November 2007 there will be a “*Get Started*” training session to help teachers preparing candidates for Writing Coursework, the Writing Paper and Speaking. This is aimed at teachers preparing candidates for the specification for the first time. It is therefore most suitable for less experienced teachers or those who have not prepared candidates for GCSE since 2002. Information about training can be found on the OCR Website: www.ocr.org.uk.

Finally, there was evidence this year that teachers had read the report on the 2006 examination carefully and had taken up some suggestions so please make sure colleagues know where to find this information.

**Principal Examiner's Report to Centres
2361: GCSE GERMAN LISTENING 2007**

Administration of the Listening examination

It was good to note that, following comments made in last year's report, there were considerably fewer instances of illegible candidate names and numbers this session. However, it would be helpful to Examiners if all Centres could remember to fill in the details for which they are asked on the front of the script packet.

General Comments

This year's Foundation Tier Paper was more or less equivalent to last year's in terms of difficulty. Many candidates, however, found the Higher Tier Paper more challenging than those set in the recent past, mainly as a result of the pace at which items were delivered. It seems that many also had difficulty when faced with familiar words in new contexts – both *Messer* and *Dach* are relatively common words, which should have been encountered by most Higher Tier candidates during their GCSE course, but which confused many when used in the setting of a murder in a theatre. Candidates should be advised to expect familiar words to be used in new ways during such examinations, as this is one of the stated national criteria.

After last year's report that some candidates were being entered for the Higher Tier Paper when they would be better able to cope at Foundation Tier, this year saw the opposite to be true: some Centres entering candidates for Foundation Tier when their marks suggested that they would have been able to make a good attempt at the Higher. It is hoped that the perceived difficulty of this year's Higher Tier Paper will not result in too many Centres 'playing it safe' next year – if they are scoring marks of 40+ in practice papers at Foundation Tier, candidates should be able to make a confident and successful attempt at the Higher Tier Paper.

Overall, there was evidence of good preparation by teachers – candidates were again very successful at answering objective questions based on a visual stimulus. However, it was also obvious that questions which require candidates to answer in either English (Section 2, Exercise 1; Section 3, Exercise 4, Part 2) or German (Section 3, Exercise 4, Part 1) continue to pose considerable problems for many.

Although handwriting did not seem to cause as many lost marks this year as last, there were instances where it was very difficult to make out what letter a candidate had intended to insert into the box as the answer to a question. Candidates should be reminded that, when all they have to write for an answer is one letter, it is particularly crucial that for each question one letter is clearly legible.

A particular problem this year seemed to be that candidates failed to take sufficient notice of question words – this was especially evident in Section 2, Exercise 1, where the word 'who' was frequently ignored, resulting in the loss of two marks for many candidates. Perhaps candidates could make better use of their five minutes' reading time – highlighting question words and thinking carefully about them would be very useful.

On a more positive note, there were again few instances of candidates writing answers in the wrong language. Where this did happen, it was mostly in response to Section 2, Exercise 1, Question 5 – candidates wrote 'Konzert' instead of 'concert'. Similarly, a small number of candidates ticked too many boxes in Section 2, Aufgabe 2.

Section 1 (Foundation Tier)

General Comments

The paper achieved good discrimination. Even the weakest scripts had some success in Section 1, while many of the candidates who produced better answers showed in the last two exercises (Section 2, Aufgabe 3 and Aufgabe 4) that this was as far as they ought to go.

Exercise 1: Questions 1-5

The majority of candidates scored full marks in this exercise. Wrong answers occurred mostly in Q.5, where some candidates did not know *eine Brille*.

Aufgabe 2: Fragen 6-10

The majority of candidates also scored well here, though some did not know *Chemie* in Q.7. Others heard the word *zehn* in Q.8, and therefore ticked B. In Q.10, some candidates ticked B, presumably because they thought that *Bibliothek* was connected to technology.

Aufgabe 3: Fragen 11-15

This exercise was generally well done, although many candidates struggled with Q.15. *Fenster* should have been clear, but perhaps some candidates thought *putze* had something to do with putting something into the oven.

Aufgabe 4: Fragen 16-20

This exercise was very well done by the majority of candidates. Where a mark was lost, it tended to be for Q.19, where a number opted for D. However, a considerable number of candidates put B as their answer here – teachers should remind their candidates that, where the picture relating to the example has been crossed out, it will not then be used again.

Aufgabe 5: Fragen 21-25

Many candidates found this exercise considerably more difficult than the previous one (and, indeed, than the one which followed it). In fact, 2 out of 5 was a common score here, with only Q.21 and Q.23 being correct in many cases. Key items of vocabulary which were frequently not known were *Kasse* (Q.23), *Kellner* (Q.24), *Verkäuferin* (Q.25) and *Modegeschäft* (also Q.25).

Aufgabe 6: Fragen 26-30

Candidates generally performed better here than in the previous exercise. Where mistakes were made, these tended to result from a failure to understand *Nachmittag* (Q.27) and then use it to select the correct answer: B. Q.29 also caused problems, as candidates seemed to stop listening as soon as they heard *Park* and tick B as the answer, rather than paying attention to the rest of the word *Parkplatz*. Candidates should therefore be encouraged to listen to all of the German for an answer before they respond, rather than jumping in as soon as they hear something they recognise.

Section 2 (Foundation and Higher Tiers)

Candidates at both levels encountered most difficulty in Exercise 1 and Aufgabe 3.

Exercise 1: Questions 1-5

Although many Higher Tier candidates scored well here, too many candidates at both levels failed to read the questions carefully enough, and thus lost at least two marks (often for Q.2 and Q.4). Some candidates failed to attempt some of the questions at all.

In Q.1, *Wettervorhersage* resulted in some very unusual answers. *Wetter* became 'vets' or 'animals', while *Vorhersage* sometimes caused candidates to write about makeovers and hairdressing. Common answers to Q.2 and Q.4 were 'dogs/cats' and 'football match' respectively.

Although English spellings were rarely penalised, candidates were required to spell the word 'concert' in English in order to be awarded the mark for Q.5 – *Konzert* was not accepted.

Aufgabe 2: Fragen 6-10

This exercise was generally fairly well done, with most candidates ticking the correct number of boxes (one for each question). Where the wrong number of boxes was ticked, this tended to be for *Frage* 8 (Michael). Michael was heard to talk about more than one activity, but only one of them (*Kunst*) was what *he* did – many candidates, however, ticked bowling as well, as he had said that his parents went bowling the previous Saturday.

Aufgabe 3: Fragen 11-15

This exercise proved to be challenging for many candidates at both levels. Foundation Tier candidates rarely scored more than 2 marks, while many Higher Tier candidates did not manage more than 3. Typically, Q.13 and Q.15 were done well, while the seasons were not known by the majority of candidates (Q.14). The distractors of the picture of the briefcase in Q.11 and *Klavier* in Q.12 confused very many candidates – all need to be reminded (again) of the need to listen to all of the spoken material before deciding on the answer to a question. They should also re-read the questions carefully – *ihr Sohn* was the key to getting the correct answer for Q.12.

Aufgabe 4: Fragen 16-20

Candidates at both levels seemed to find Q.16 hardest here, followed by Q.20 – many, however, coped very well with this exercise. In fact, several Examiners commented that, for many Foundation Tier candidates, this was their most productive exercise in Section 2.

Section 3 (Higher Tier)

General Comments

Although some Centres reported that their candidates found the Higher Tier Paper, and particularly Section 3, challenging, good candidates were able to perform very well in almost all of the exercises. Exercise 4, Part 2 provided good discrimination for the highest grades, A and A*.

Aufgabe 1: Fragen 1-2

This exercise was very well done by the vast majority of candidates. Where a mistake was made, this tended to be due to not understanding the word *Umleitung* in Q.2d.

Aufgabe 2: Fragen 3-7

This exercise was also well answered by many, although many mistakenly ticked B for Q.7.

Aufgabe 3, Teil 1: Fragen 8-12

In this exercise, candidates found Q.9 and Q.12 the hardest, although the majority coped well with the other questions. The problems with Q.8 seem to indicate that comparative and superlative adjectives are not well known by candidates. In Q.12 the problem was caused by candidates having to convert something which they had heard spoken about in the past tense (the move to Berlin) into a present tense answer – struggling candidates latched onto either the *um-* of *umziehen* and *umgezogen* or the idea of ‘two months’, and thus opted for one of the two wrong answers.

Aufgabe 3, Teil 2: Fragen 13-17

Most candidates seemed to cope well with the last two questions in this exercise, even when they had struggled with Q.13-15. There was some confusion of the expressions relating to ‘tomorrow’ and ‘morning’ in Q.13 and many candidates did not seem to know *Gesamtschule* in Q.14, while in Q.15 a lot missed the final statement *privat bei uns*.

Aufgabe 4, Teil 1: Fragen 18-22

Here, far too many candidates seemed to seize on any word or phrase that they recognised, without stopping to think about the context. In addition, very few applied common sense to compensate for their lack of understanding – for example, *zehn Minuten Stadt* was a common, though nonsensical, answer to Q.18. However, it was better for candidates to have a go at answering the questions than to leave one or more blanks, as a large number did. It was disappointing that so few realised that *Amerika* was a suitable (and much simpler) alternative to *die Vereinigten Staaten* in Q.18, and also that only a minority of candidates could accurately write down the year, in figures, in which the theatre was built (Q.20). Q.19 produced a wide variety of spellings of *Schnurrbart* – very few of which, regrettably, could be rewarded with a mark. In Q.22, only the very best candidates knew *Notausgang*, while it was a shame that, in Q.21 a large number of those who correctly identified *Aufnahmen machen* as the answer preceded this with *keine*, not appreciating that *nicht* before *keine* would result in a double negative and therefore cost them the mark. Candidates need to be reminded to read carefully the German word or phrase which introduces the word(s) which they need to add. Thus, marks of 0 or 1 were common for this exercise, even among candidates who then went on to perform well in the last exercise on the paper.

Exercise 4, Part 2: Questions 23-27

This was, on the whole, considerably better answered than the previous exercise, indicating that the main problem for many candidates lies not so much in understanding what is said on the tape, but rather in an inability to read carefully and then write accurately in German.

For Q.23, many incorrect responses were simply too vague, referring to the guide 'showing them round the theatre'. This is not what the guide says he will do. Q.24 was very poorly answered, revealing that very few candidates are familiar with the word *Dach*. There were many incorrect guesses here (indicating, unsurprisingly, that candidates are much happier to hazard a guess in their native language), but most opted for 'the stage' – a logical response, given the context of the extract. Q.25 produced a much wider range of responses than expected – weather vocabulary should be well known by most candidates. There were many references to 'lighting', and it was impossible to tell whether candidates thought the stage lights had caused the fire, or whether they had mis-spelled 'lightning'. There were also a number of references to war/bombing raids.

Q.26 was perhaps the best answered of all those in this exercise – many candidates managed 'stabbed' or 'with a knife', although shooting and poisoning also featured. Q.27 produced the widest range of responses. Although there were a good number of correct answers, there were also responses such as 'it's been turned into a castle' (perhaps confusion between *verschlossen* and *Schloss*) and 'it has disappeared'.

Principal Examiner's Report to Centres / Principal Moderator's Report to Centres 2362 & 2365: GCSE GERMAN SPEAKING 2007

General Comments

It is pleasing to note that most teachers continue to prepare themselves and their candidates well for the Speaking Tests and are totally familiar with the scheme of assessment, particularly those who are entering their candidates for 2365, Internal Assessment, although comparatively few Centres avail themselves of this option now. It does appear that the quality of the entry continues to improve: there were certainly fewer Foundation Tier candidates who scored very low marks and more who scored good to very good marks.

The majority of candidates are appropriately entered for either Foundation or Higher Tier, although there are candidates whose Foundation Tier performance suggests that they might score well at Higher Tier, as their General Conversation ability is relatively good; and there are others, entered at Higher Tier, whose Role Play 3 performance is very poor who might have benefited from a Foundation Tier entry instead.

The administration and recordings of most tests were generally carried out satisfactorily. As in previous years however there remain some poor recordings, which makes the Examiner's task extremely difficult. Some tests remain over-extended, particularly in the Discussion and General Conversation sections. All candidates suffer from over-long testing, particularly those who are struggling – they do not profit from a lengthy test which consists of questions beyond their capabilities; in fact they usually only demonstrate their lack of knowledge.

Many Foundation Tier candidates are unable to communicate successfully in tenses other than the present and they may well have a more rewarding experience if the more complex questions requiring past and future time references were not put to them at such length. However, it does remain a QCA requirement that those candidates aiming for a Grade C are able to 'undertake transactions and develop conversations which include past, present and future events.'

There continues to be a feeling that many teachers and candidates are playing safe: offering little spontaneity and no great range of vocabulary and structure, with the same Presentation topic being offered by most (or all) candidates in the Centre (eg *Ferien / Freizeit / Schule / Berufspraktikum*) and with the Discussion and General Conversation section of the test containing a well-rehearsed question and answer session – quite often the same questions in the same order for all candidates. Centres are reminded that this practice is against the spirit of the specification and that OCR is aware of the Centres which employ it.

The banks of questions containing ideas for topic-based conversations (listed on pp 36-40 of the two *Teacher/Examiner's Booklets*) suggest areas that might be explored in the course of a natural conversation between Teacher/Examiner and candidate. They were useful in the course of this year's examination in some Centres and it is hoped that they will continue to be so in future years; many other Centres however did **not** demand the more rigorous type of response from their better Higher Tier candidates, which was rather disappointing, as it inevitably loses the candidates marks. The mark scheme does reward candidates whose conversations show elements of spontaneity and initiative and who respond at length to the Examiner's questions; these candidates are best served by the more 'open' question-type offered in the booklet.

Section 1 Role play [Foundation Tier only]

Six different role play situations were set for this section of the test testing tasks listed in Appendix A of the Approved Specifications for Modern Languages. The tasks were cued in English and, since there are no dictionaries, candidates were again offered the opportunity to

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select for themselves the item of vocabulary appropriate to the task where possible, although suggestions were given.

In general the elements of the various tasks were expected to be readily accessible to the vast majority of Foundation Tier candidates. It is still very disappointing that everyday expressions such as “I’d like [something]”, “How are you?”, “Excuse me” and particularly “How much does it cost?” are frequently not well expressed; these are standard fare and ought to be known by all candidates.

Careless pronunciation continues to be a feature at this Section 1 level, with a mangled English version often used (eg *Supermarket* [sic], *Orangesaft* [sic] or *Marketplatz* [sic]). Some simple items of vocabulary are also very poorly pronounced at this level (eg book, milk, bread, *Auto*, *Bus*) of which candidates offer only distorted versions.

Asking simple questions remains a problem for many candidates, with the usual confusion of *Wo?* and *Wer?* This year many candidates were unable to offer a suitable version of *teuer* or *Wie bitte?*

Teacher/Examiners are encouraged to query a candidate’s utterance (without penalty) where it does not communicate; many however continue not to do so, accepting what is first said, thereby not allowing the candidate the possibility of rescuing an initially ambiguous or non-communicative message and so gaining the marks allowed for each set task.

The change in the mark scheme to allow for one mark out of two per task continues to be welcomed, as it does allow candidates to receive one mark for partially communicative expressions of German, where previously no marks might have been awarded. In general however, the majority of Foundation Tier candidates were able to perform well on this section.

Card 1: *Wir sprechen zusammen*

Most candidates found little difficulty in attempting this section, but poor pronunciation was a feature (*Supermarket* / *Geschäft* / *Caff* [sic]).

Card 2: *Wir sind im Souvenirladen*

Most candidates were successful in the requirements of this role play, but as stated previously there are many poor efforts for “I’d like...” and “ask the cost”. *Teuer* was not well known; few candidates were able to offer a suitable alternative.

Card 3: *Wir sind am Campingplatz*

This role play caused little difficulty other than some poor versions of ‘*ich möchte*’ and the confusion of ‘*wer / wo?*’ in task 3. As previously noted, too many candidates are unable to produce a clear and correct version of “ask for the cost”.

Card 4: *Wir sprechen am Telefon*

The major problem here was in asking “how your friend is”, despite many Teacher/Examiners (perhaps inadvertently) greeting their candidates and settling them down with a cheery *Hallo! Wie geht’s?* The remaining three tasks were usually appropriately covered.

Card 5: *Wir sind im Café*

Asking the Examiner to “repeat that” caused problems for many candidates, and “asking for the cost” was not universally well done. Sometimes the snack asked for was *Chips*, which did raise the question of whether the candidate was aware of what he/she was asking for.

Card 6: *Wir sind auf der Straße*

A suitable version of *Entschuldigung* was not always present – *Hallo!* was a weak alternative. The phrase *ich möchte zu[m]* ... was often poorly pronounced. Virtually all candidates could however respond to “say thank you and goodbye”.

Section 2 Role play [Foundation & Higher Tier]

The six role plays in this section are intended to give candidates an opportunity to express themselves in a potential range of time references, including past and future time and, if successful, gain a higher global Linguistic Quality mark. As stated in the general notes on p10 of the *Teacher/Examiner Booklets*, where a task requires the use of a verb (of whatever tense) or where a candidate offers a verb, that verb must be totally correct to qualify for the full two marks. Where a verb was NOT required however, many candidates, either skilfully or through lack of knowledge, were able to give short answers without a verb, which can gain full marks for clear and complete accomplishment of the task set.

Candidates must however expect to have to initiate some tasks, instead of merely replying to a teacher query, and to respond appropriately to the context of the situation: eg using the correct register in conversation, if necessary. One task also requires the correct use of a past or future tense.

The rubric will always contain information helpful for the candidate’s role and is expected to be taken into account when playing the role.

The continued use of one task cued as ‘Answer the question’, did often prove more demanding than the other set tasks, requiring a repetition from the Teacher/Examiner, but there was no penalty for this repetition.

Poor use of appropriate prepositions was a feature of this section.

Not infrequently, Foundation Tier candidates did as well or better on this section than on Section 1.

Card 1: *Wir sind im Restaurant*

Most candidates were able to respond appropriately to task 3, but a range of inappropriate prepositions were used in task 2. *Tisch* was often rendered in French and the perfect tense required in task 1 was often mangled. *Menü* is not *die Speisekarte*, although the majority of candidates used this.

Card 2: *Wir sind im Restaurant*

Problem was often rendered with an English pronunciation and initiating the phrase “I’ve ordered ...” was difficult for many. Responding to *wann?* did not cause too much difficulty (especially after a repetition). Asking for “a bottle of water” was straightforward.

Card 3: *Wir sind in einem Arbeitsamt in Deutschland*

Most candidates coped well with task 1, but an appropriate past participle (*gearbeitet*) in task 2 was often awry. Asking “what you can earn” was beyond many candidates’ range of language.

Card 4: Wir sprechen am Telefon

“I’ve lost my ...” was well known by most candidates, and tasks 2 & 4 proved easy; being able to form the question *wann kommst du [an]?* was however beyond very many candidates’ capabilities.

Card 5: Wir sprechen am Telefon

The formation of task 1 (say you phoned last week) proved somewhat difficult for many candidates, although the remaining three tasks were straightforward, with the unexpected question, task 3, often needing a prompt.

Card 6: Wir sprechen zusammen

Task 1, initiating a response in the past tense, was done well by most candidates, as were the remaining tasks. In task 4 the preposition use was often poor however, as was the pronunciation (when offered) of *Marktplatz*, with an English/German hybrid being common.

Section 3 Role play [Higher Tier only]

The content of the six role plays set was as usual expected to be accessible to all correctly entered Higher Tier candidates, allowing them to take the main points of the story, relate these in an appropriate past time frame and expand on them by adding ideas and personal opinions where necessary. Too many candidates continue to provide a rather pedestrian exposition of events with little enthusiasm and little extra detail, and slip regularly back into a present tense or a mangled past tense (*ich habe ... gehen; ich habe ... kaufen; ich bin ... aufstehen* [sic] etc).

Although Higher Tier candidates in the C/D range do have to tackle this more demanding role play and may not perform particularly well here, the communication mark scheme does allow for some credit to be given.

This section remains the best discriminator of the role play situations: candidates continue to broadly divide into three groups:

Those who have clearly mastered the perfect tense and memorised a range of appropriate past participles of strong verbs plus the correct auxiliary; confident in the past tenses, these candidates generally score well in both Communication and Linguistic Quality, irrespective of the card attempted.

Those who frequently mangle the perfect tense, confuse the past with the present and generally fail to communicate the basic storyline, leading to ambiguity and significantly lower scores in Communication and Linguistic Quality.

Those whose knowledge of the perfect tense is virtually non-existent and as a consequence the story is told in a mangled present tense with an occasional *war / was* [sic] thrown in for good measure.

Some Teacher/Examiners make too many inappropriate interventions: correcting candidates or going back unnecessarily, whereas others say too little or nothing at all, turning the role play into a virtual monologue. Most however struck a happy medium and encouraged candidates to tell a good story to the best of their ability. It should be emphasised that the criteria for Communication do include references to interchanges with the Examiner and response to the Examiner’s queries.

Despite the advice offered in past years, very few candidates do set the scene appropriately; a brief introductory sentence ought to be within the linguistic capabilities of most Higher Tier candidates and would allow them to feel secure in the situation (eg *Last year I was on work experience / holiday in Germany / Austria and one day*).

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There was a tendency noted this year for some candidates to embroider their experience with totally irrelevant material – accidents on the way to town, car crashes, thefts from shops etc. While this material might enliven a single candidate's account, when the same event is inserted into several candidates' work, the material loses its effect very rapidly. It is felt that there is sufficient opportunity for enhancement within the basic storyline suggested and that the obviously pre-learnt material of a fits-all nature should be discouraged.

This year again produced problems of variable verb usage by candidates who could not consistently keep to the expression of material in a past tense. However, a further disappointing aspect was many candidates' lack of knowledge of fairly basic vocabulary: daily routine matters, basic travel situations and travel problems, arranging to meet friends, shopping opportunities and simple everyday problems. The other elements on the cards should not have caused too much difficulty and offered opportunity for candidates to demonstrate the quality of their German.

In all the situations, opinions were rarely above the *gut* or *langweilig* level; the phrase *das hat mir (nicht) gut gefallen*, relatively straightforward and useful, was rarely offered. However, there were candidates who coped well and produced substantial accounts, adding opinions and imaginative details and were able to score high Communication marks on this section and bank up credit for the Linguistic Quality mark, particularly when the Teacher/Examiner encouraged the candidate to take the initiative.

Presentation

There was a full range of performance on this part of the test, ranging from candidates whose preparation was perfunctory at most, to those who had obviously prepared a topic of their own choice and were able to present this with a degree of enthusiasm and accuracy. Many Centres however continued to prepare candidates for this section of the test with a virtually identical presentation (Work Experience being a favourite), which was formulaic, pre-learnt and often poorly delivered. Relatively few candidates offer a range of opinions and justifications, which are required by the mark scheme for a mark of 4. Timing of the Presentation does need to be carefully considered: talks varied again this year from a few faltering seconds to well over two minutes.

Discussion of Presentation and Conversation

The success of this section of the test really does depend on the skill of the Teacher/Examiner. For many candidates however – at both tiers – their teachers asked no more than a basic set of question and answers with no development or initiative and few opinions and justifications. The Discussion element of the test often seemed over-rehearsed and often limited to a cursory one or two simple questions only.

Most candidates were given the opportunity to use a full range of tenses and time frames in this part of the examination. Some were therefore able to qualify for the full range of available marks; however, this practice was often applied to the very weakest candidates too, who were already having difficulty communicating the most basic of material in the present tense and were then often questioned at a more complex level in an attempt to elicit past and future time references. To subject the weakest candidates to the stress of this more complex questioning is generally futile and unproductive.

On the other hand, too many candidates – even those at Higher Tier – are still asked only very simple closed questions, leading to repetitive or one-word or *ja / nein* answers; too many candidates are also content to utter only monosyllabic or minimal responses and seem not to wish to stretch themselves beyond the most basic of material in the discussion of their chosen topic and in general conversation. This makes the Discussion and Conversation section often a rather disappointing part of the Speaking Test.

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Many Examiners still comment that this section of the Speaking Test continues to appear thoroughly rehearsed, lacking spontaneity and originality, particularly with the weaker and middle range candidates. As was remarked in the *Introduction*, the mark scheme does reward candidates whose conversations show elements of spontaneity and initiative and who respond at length to the Examiner's questions.

It must be said, however, that the best performances continue to produce fluent and pleasing conversations on topics with which they are familiar, offering spontaneous responses, justification of ideas, good pronunciation and using more complex language in a full range of tenses. These candidates, as ever, are a pleasure to listen to and do score significantly high marks for this section of the Speaking Test.

At all levels, overlong discussions and conversations continue to be produced; this part of the Speaking Test is intended to last approximately 6–7 minutes only (including 2 minutes on discussion of the prepared topic).

Linguistic quality

Teacher/Examiners seemed to bear in mind the criteria in the various bands and to encourage the candidates to reach the band which suited their ability. In the Internally Assessed Centres, marks awarded were not excessive and were generally appropriate to the individual candidate's performance.

**Principal Examiner's Report to Centres
2363: GCSE GERMAN READING 2007**

General Comments

Both papers seemed to produce a good spread of marks this year, indicating entries across the ability range at an appropriate level. The vast majority of candidates appeared to be entered at the appropriate level. There were a few low scores at Higher, but very few at Foundation.

At Foundation Tier there were many good performances from the candidates, and plenty scored 40+.

At Higher Tier, performances were frequently sound and there was a wide spread of marks, with very few candidates scoring below 21. However, of those, 56 failed to achieve a grade E (35 UMS marks). Teachers might like to check if any of their candidates were amongst these, as this will help to inform future entry decisions.

Higher candidates generally did very well in Section 2. Scores of 17, 18 or 19 were not uncommon, although full marks were relatively rare.

Examiners generally did not believe that candidates were under undue pressure of time. A few candidates did not tackle the final exercise of Section 3 in Higher Tier – candidates should be reminded to check the back page of the paper.

Section 1

Candidates found this section very straightforward apart from Exercise 3.

Exercise 1

There were very good scores, as expected, with only a very few candidates scoring below 4. The most frequent error was in Q.5, with *Briefträger* not known.

Aufgabe 2

This exercise was well done. The most common error was in Q.10, where G (milk carton) appeared for *Apotheke*, despite the graphic of a cow on the carton.

Aufgabe 3

More problems were apparent in this exercise – typical marks were 2, 3, 4. Ticking too many boxes was a frequent problem. Ignorance of *kein* was responsible for many ticks for the towel, the coat and the magazine. While it was unfortunate that three marks were lost in this way, there is simply no excuse for *kein* not being known, even at this level. The pullover and the long trousers were the two most frequently selected correct answers.

Aufgabe 4

This exercise on television programmes was often done well. However, D: *Heute Journal*, sometimes appeared for Q.12, Q.14 or Q.18.

Aufgabe 5

Generally, candidates were successful at this exercise. The most frequent errors were found in *Samstag Morgen* and *Sonntag Nachmittag*. Sometimes “church” for Sunday morning was followed by “homework” in the afternoon.

Section 2

This section, which is done by all candidates, started as usual with questions in English. Candidates found it more accessible than last year.

Exercise 1

This exercise was much easier than the equivalent exercise in previous years. Quite a number of Foundation candidates scored 4/5 or 5/5.

Q.1: The language tested was *den Straßenplan von der Innenstadt*. *Town centre* on its own was not allowed as an answer.

Q.2: In this question, *Kaufhäuser*, *Fußgängerzone* and *keine Probleme mit Autos* were targeted. Any one of them would have scored a mark. *Market* and *shops* were not allowed and there were problems for many candidates with how to express *Fußgängerzone*. “Pavements” and “footpaths” were not allowed. Teachers would be well advised to make sure that *Kaufhäuser* is known.

Q.3: Many candidates did this well. Either one of “toys” and “clothes” was correct.

Q.4: Candidates needed to give two of “theatre / cinema / places to eat”. Most did.

Aufgabe 2

This exercise tested knowledge of school subjects, times and days of the week. It was generally done well, with frequent scores of 7/7, even at Foundation Tier. The reversal of *Kunst* and *Kochen* was a fairly frequent error. The weakest answers plumped for *Spanisch*, which was not in the text. There were seven spaces in the timetable and candidates who wrote more than one subject in the spaces for the double lessons were wrong to do so.

A few candidates scored 1 or 0 for this exercise, perhaps surprisingly.

Aufgabe 3

Many candidates were quite successful in this exercise. Over-ticking (ticking more than 8 boxes) occurred only occasionally.

As expected, some Foundation candidates ticked vocabulary picked up from the text without understanding the context.

Candidates generally seemed to grasp that the answers were grouped by paragraph.

In the first group of six sentences, *Bernd hat Gemüse mitgebracht* was frequently missed.

In the second group of three sentences, *Alle essen gern Pasta* was usually successful.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

In the third group of four sentences, *Man kann Milch auf dem Campingplatz kaufen* was usually successfully chosen. However, *Am Samstag kocht die Familie selber* was frequently missed and *Bernd vergisst den Aufschnitt* often erroneously attracted a tick.

In the fourth group of three sentences, *Am Sonntag kann man immer eine Zeitung kaufen* and *Bernd plant am Sonntag, in einer Gaststätte zu essen* were usually successful. On the other hand, *Bernd findet es teuer, im Restaurant zu essen* was often wrongly ticked, even by good candidates.

Section 3

This was about the same standard as in previous years. *Aufgabe 3, Teil A* offered the majority of candidates something. *Aufgabe 2* was probably the one the best sorted the stronger scripts from the weaker.

Aufgabe 1

This exercise produced fairly good performances from the majority of candidates.

Q.1: The minority of candidates who got this wrong chose the option with *Fußball spielen*.

Q.2: Most candidates correctly chose B here, because this option was very close to the text.

Q.3: Most candidates found this tricky and were unable to select the correct response, A, because they were unable to unravel the various uses of *Besuch* and *besuchen*.

Q.4: Many candidates offered answers to do with driving where *keine Stelle* was being tested.

Q.5: This question defeated many candidates because *gleich* was not known.

Q.6: This question tested familiar territory and was therefore well done.

Q.7: Once again, the theme of family presented few difficulties for candidates.

Q.8: This question was generally quite well done, though some candidates chose the less obvious A (*Karin hat viele Sorgen*) whereas C (*Karin hat selbst eine Tochter*) was the correct answer.

Aufgabe 2

Very many candidates displayed a lack of syntactical knowledge here, at times not knowing whether the answer ought to be a noun, a verb, an adjective or an adverb. There was a wide mark range and good discrimination here. Candidates should be reminded to choose words from the box in exercises like this. Other words are not credited.

The following comments may prove illuminating:

Question 9 was the most successful, as many candidates knew *Einkaufszentrum*.

In Q.11, many candidates offered *besuchte*, where *mochte* was required.

Questions 13 and 14 caused widespread problems. *Innenstadt* was not known for Q.13 and *verkehrsfrei* was not chosen to render *Die Stadtmitte ist während des Tages Fußgängerzone*.

For many, Q.15 was the hardest, *Parkhaus* being chosen instead of *Tiefgarage*.

Very many candidates correctly selected *teuer* for Q.16.

Aufgabe 3, Teil A

Many candidates were quite successful in this exercise. Over-ticking (ticking more than 8 boxes) was rare.

There was no prevalent pattern of error, but the most frequent problem was that candidates did not choose the correct responses *Die Tante lebte nicht mehr* and *Onkel Hans reparierte nur die Sachen, die absolut notwendig waren*.

The most common incorrect answer was that *Michael macht viel Hausarbeit* was erroneously ticked.

Exercise 3, Part B

This was, as intended, a difficult exercise, and candidates who struggled here scored 0 or 1. The best scripts scored 4 or 5, so the exercise was still accessible to the highest-scoring candidates. A few candidates failed to turn over and thus scored 0.

In Q.19 the acceptance of “no children” for either person ensured that many candidates gained a mark. The phrase ...*allerdings nur zu fünfzig Prozent* was not handled at all well; many who attempted to render Ingrid’s part-time teaching got the correct notion, but many thought she had given up her job completely. The detail that Michael **hardly** (*kaum*) worked for others (or had **almost** given up working for others) eluded even many of those who were attempting to convey the right idea.

Credit was given for many different responses to Q.20 and, as a result, many candidates were able to obtain one or both marks.

Only the best scripts produced the correct response (starting a family) to Q.21. A frequent incorrect answer was *restoring/buying more houses*.

**Principal Examiner's Report to Centres
2364: GCSE GERMAN WRITING 2007**

General Comments

The June 2007 GCSE German Writing Paper was again chosen by just over a third of candidates, the remainder choosing Writing Coursework. There has again been a shift in the entry pattern for the Writing Paper, doubtless due to curricular changes. About 23% of the entry took the Foundation Paper, in total about a third of the number who sat the Foundation paper in 2003. There were few very weak scripts.

This year, while there were many good answers, there was again a fall in the number of excellent scripts. That is not to say that full marks obtained by non-native speakers were unknown, indeed as ever there were some outstanding scripts.

In this specification questions in Sections 1 and 2 are set in English, and in Section 3, although the questions are in the target language, there is a scene-setting sentence in English which protects candidates from having absolutely no idea of what is demanded of them.

The generic mark scheme (found in the Sample Assessment Material) and question types followed the pattern of recent papers. This was supplemented by "Examples of Acceptable Answers". However, this document is meant to be indicative only, not exhaustive. Centres are additionally referred to the OCR Website at ocr.org.uk for some exemplar marked scripts from 2005 and a commentary which they can download and study.

The papers were set using the conventions of the 1998–2005 *Rechtschreibreform*. In practice, few candidates at this level write precisely enough for this to be much of an issue. The two most frequently occurring changes affecting this examination are that *ß* is written *ss* after a short vowel, eg *dass*, *muss*, *musste* and that the *du*, *dir*, *dein*, *ihr*, *euch* and *euer* are written with lower case even in personal letters. Those wishing to study the matter more intensively will find ample information in *Duden: Die deutsche Rechtschreibung*, 21. Ausgabe or a later Ausgabe and in many other related publications.

Teachers are encouraged to share the contents of this report with their candidates, say, after mock examinations.

Section 1

Exercise 1

This list question was not as well done as in previous years. Furniture and electrical items were difficult for many, and some candidates left several blanks. Candidates are not confined to the items drawn – the rubric says "The pictures are only suggestions. You may include any other relevant words."

The following comments may prove helpful:

- (a) The examples, *Bücherregal* and *Stereoaanlage*, were not credited if copied as an answer.
- (b) The marking of apparently uncommunicative words was done on the "if in doubt, sound it out" principle.
- (c) English words such as "lamp, stool, bed" were not accepted.
- (d) Cognates such as *Sofa* were accepted.
- (e) *fern* was not accepted for television.
- (f) *Nachttisch* needs double *t* to distinguish it from *Nachtisch*.

There were 8 items, each scoring 1 or 0, totalling 8 marks.

Exercise 2

This exercise was often well done. However, *schlafen* was not well known, but *faulenze* did appear quite often as an alternative. Less pleasingly, a surprising number of candidates offered *Bettzimmer*. Some candidates also offered *ich wache das Auto*.

There were 6 marks for communication, one per item.

There were also 3 marks for Accuracy. At this level (target grade F), Examiners were instructed to decide the *Hauptwort* for each picture, and decide whether that was correctly written. There was a grid which amounted to ½ mark per item, with odd halves rounded up. Many candidates did this well, and Examiners commented on this good performance.

As a tip for improvement, this is definitely an area which would repay additional practice, even with quite good candidates, as there are candidates who would benefit from some extra marks in the easy part of the paper to enable them to cross the D/C borderline. Performance suggests that some teachers already work on this.

Exercise 3

There was a requirement to write in sentences in response to this question. Candidates and their teachers are to be congratulated on ensuring that nearly all answers were in sentence form. This year again registered an improvement in this question. The items were set in English, and very many candidates did this question quite well or very well.

There was a mark out of 6 for Communication, with best-fit descriptors, and a mark out of 7 for Quality of Language. Marks of 11, 12 and 13 were the most frequent.

To improve further, the following might well repay attention: *Strand*, *Spanien* and the alarming *Flugzug* and *Zugflug*. Equally, attempts to eradicate *ich bin gehen* have not yet been fully successful.

The pictures in this task are only suggestions. One Examiner commented that “some wise candidates ignored the pictures and wrote something they knew how to spell.”

Section 2

There was a choice of two questions, both requiring an informal letter. The specification also allows faxes and e-mails to be set.

Both question 1 and question 2 were popular with candidates. These were carefully matched to the QCA grade C performance descriptors, namely past, present and future events and the expression of opinions.

There were some really impressive efforts produced by Foundation Tier candidates, to such an extent that they might have performed well on Higher Tier exercises. Teachers could review their mock results against actual results to help them identify such students in future.

Relevant communication was marked out of 10 using a best fit grid of descriptors.

The candidate's best effort at each point was credited. There would therefore seem to be some value in suggesting that candidates produce more than one sentence in response to each point. This is particularly true of the expression of future intent. Many candidates only wrote one

sentence in response to this point, thus putting all their eggs in one basket. Many teachers have trained candidates to have more than one attempt at this. Indeed a counsel of perfection would be to use a paragraph of about 20–25 words in response to each of the bullet points, thus ensuring even coverage.

This year, many candidates could cope with a past tense. Further improvement could be effected by ensuring that *letztes Wochenende* has two *ts* and *–enen–* in *Wochenende* is written correctly, and by encouraging the correct siting of the past participle. One Examiner commented: “I would have thought that, given that *nächstes* and *letztes* come up every year, they would have been covered repeatedly by all teachers. Lots of quite competent Higher Tier candidates lost marks on Section 2 because of this.”

However, many candidates still found expressing future time tricky. This would repay additional teacher attention.

The following ways of expressing the future were accepted:

- (a) future time expression + present tense
- (b) ich werde + infinitive
- (c) ich möchte + infinitive
- (d) ich will + infinitive
- (e) ich habe vor, ... zu machen, etc

These presented various problems. Chief among them was the inability to spell *nächstes Jahr* or *nächstes Wochenende*. This is another area which would repay extra teacher and candidate attention. Some students seemed mixed up between future and past, with offerings such as *ich werde ins Kino gefahren*. Past participles were also quite common with modals, and there were many sightings of *ich mochte*.

Question 1(a) was the less popular option. This might be because the evidence suggested that many students are not too sure about the spelling of *Geburtstag*, and are not at ease with *Geschenke*. The reason might also have been, as one candidate wrote, *meine Familie gibt mir viele Gifte*.

It was noticeable how popular going to the cinema was in answer to point 2.

Many candidates had no trouble giving their opinion about the day in response to point 3, and many had big plans for celebrating their next birthday.

In **Question 1(b)**, which about three quarters of candidates did, there were many good communicative answers. Most could describe the town or city, and were well able to say what they did last weekend. Once again, cinema visits were popular. Opinions were offered by nearly all candidates. However, not all answers were trouble-free. One candidate’s town had an “apple taker”.

The third point was trickier, but many satisfactory answers were seen.

The fourth point was largely dependent on being able to express “next weekend” adequately.

Quality of Language

This was marked out of 6 using a best fit grid of descriptors. The top band was not usually available to those who had not managed the use of three time frames.

Accuracy

This was marked out of 4 using a best fit grid of descriptors, and was applied independently of tense criteria.

Section 3

There was a choice of two questions. These explored “A part-time job you have done” or “A missing bag”. The first of the two was the more popular, but there was a good number of answers to the lost property question. The popularity of the part-time job might be linked to the theme’s popularity as a Speaking Presentation topic, although in Speaking, Work Experience is more common than part-time work.

There were very few seriously underlength answers. However, Examiners complained consistently of over-long answers. For most candidates, more can mean worse. Examiners are instructed to estimate where the first 150 words end and to mark only those for quality of language and accuracy. The whole answer is read for communication.

Centres are reminded that the sub-tasks are mandatory. Teachers are asked to encourage candidates to address the detail of the question in future, preferably in separate paragraphs.

The question includes cues to elicit specific performance criteria reflected in the mark scheme. Opinions are cued by *Meinungen?* and justifications by *Warum?* Some candidates ignored these, which often accounted for modest marks.

Relevant communication

Relevant Communication was marked out of 10 using the grid published with the Sample Assessment Materials. The grid is written so that points of view/opinions, justifications and ease of communication are rewarded – the more variety the better.

This seemed an area where some additional candidate effort at learning a **range** of opinions and justifications is needed. *Weil es gut war* does not justify more than a modest mark in Higher Tier, and even quite reasonable candidates did not justify their opinions. Yet both questions cued *Meinungen? Warum?*

The following comments about the questions may be of use:

Question 1(a) A part-time job you have done

The largest difficulty was in separating those candidates who still performed the part-time job from those who had done so in the past (which was the Examiner’s intention expressed in English in the heading). A further complication was candidates who wrote about a work experience placement, which is not quite the same thing.

Examiners were instructed to be reasonably tolerant of variations from the intended answer, although those who wrote what was intended were probably the best rewarded.

A further complication was the description of the *Arbeitsstag* which often produced a morning-routine type answer. Good responses were strong on photocopying and making coffee, answering the phone and even filing, all of which was sometimes really well done. Opinions were freely given, but some candidates need to extend their range beyond *langweilig*. Some candidates knew *Kunden*, *Kollegen*, *Kolleginnen* and could spell them; others were not sure enough of the difference between the groups and the orthography, though these are admittedly not straightforward nouns.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

The question *Ist etwas Besonderes passiert?* was not well understood. This is a pity, as this bullet point, or something like it, has been set many times before. Teachers could usefully address this point.

Many candidates answered the final point well, and justified their response.

Question 1(b) A missing bag

This question was not done as well as question 1(a). The candidates may in part have been misled by the picture of the airport baggage reclaim track. The rubric clearly states the pictures are only suggestions.

The first bullet point is one found in many holiday essays, and was reasonably well done.

Many candidates were able to visualise the problem, and were well able to describe the bag and its contents. Again this point has appeared in many lost property role plays and essays in the past.

The third point asked for actions and also opinions and for candidates to justify them. Many candidates failed to add any justification.

The final point, aimed at mirroring the 'best aspect' tested in question 1(a), asked for the worst part of the experience. Many candidates ignored this task.

Quality of language

14 marks were available, using the published grid.

This part of the assessment is a vital discriminator at all levels, even between A and A*. Consequently, to achieve better marks candidates are required to show increasing command of subordinate clauses and a range of tenses, as well as idiom.

Canny candidates include a range of subordinate clauses introduced by some of: *als, bevor, bis, da, damit, dass, nachdem, obwohl, seitdem, sobald* and *wie* as well as (sparingly) using the ubiquitous *weil*. Very good candidates have even learnt (and written on their paper) a list of conjunctions and constructions to use.

Candidates could usefully include the pluperfect tense (*Nachdem ich das gemacht hatte*), a range of constructions (*um ... zu, ich hatte die Absicht, etwas zu machen, modals in the imperfect*), sequence words (*dann, danach, etwas später, schließlich, am Ende des Tages*, etc) a range of imperfect tenses beyond *war* and a wider selection of verbs in the perfect. Examiners often check how often *war* is used. There are many modest candidates who only have one past tense correct – *war*.

Those who are accurate, but can only manage *gut, schlecht* and *langweilig* as opinions, and who only use brief main-clause sentences containing *war* do not fare well in this grid. *Weil* used as the only subordinating conjunction in a piece does not lead to high scores. As a starting point, teachers could encourage the use of *da* as an alternative. Among the advantages of this approach is that *da* is hard to mis-spell.

Teachers will want to use this element of the assessment to drive standards higher, and to make a sound preparation for further study.

One Examiner this year commented that one Centre had obviously taught a specific sequence of language designed to be useful in many situations. However, the Examiner reported that the Centre had been "let down by a lot of candidates who hadn't learnt it well enough".

Accuracy

6 marks were available, using the published grid.

Complete accuracy was not required for full marks, and many students scored at least half marks.

Centres might like to target the correct spelling of *interessant* for 2008 as this is commonly mis-spelled.

Length

140–150 words were set in the question. For Communication, everything the candidate had written was read. For Quality of Language and Accuracy, the first 150 words were read.

There is no advantage in writing over length; indeed, many verbose candidates seem to get worse the longer they continue.

Candidates seemed to have enough time, and enough to do. One Examiner reported that one candidate had had time to do all four questions in Section 2 and Section 3, all quite well.

Conclusion

The 2007 writing paper was often well done. However, there were often candidate weaknesses in Sections 2 and 3, related to understanding well-used question sentences.

On the other hand, there were relatively few inappropriately entered candidates, and virtually none who could not progress beyond the early stages of Section 1. Indeed, even the weakest answers often scored something on Section 2, even if they did not write to the full length. Many Foundation Tier candidates exceeded the standard required for that Tier. However, there are clear areas which many candidates could develop in Section 3. The best scripts seen this year proved it can be done by non-native speakers.

Overall, teachers have done a sound job with this cohort.

The questions were accessible to all, and were often well-answered. Very many candidates were methodical in answering each point in Section 2. One Examiner suggested that students should try to write at equal length about each bullet point. It would certainly make marking easier if each bullet point was answered in a separate paragraph, as the best candidates already do.

However, in Section 3, there were some candidates whose writing is mainly in 5-6 word main-clause sentences, and contains few opinions and fewer justifications. This simple language, even if accurate, does not meet the standard required for the highest grades.

That said, this examination provides a worthwhile experience for most candidates, with opportunities for all to show “what they know and can do”.

Teachers might like to spare a thought for the candidate who followed the maxim “if in doubt, write lots of verbs” to give: *der wurde gesehen worden sein*.

Writing more accurately, the best candidates can display humour as well as good German. This (corrected) quotation from a part-time job essay concerning someone working at a gym caused a welcome smile: *Normalerweise gehe ich um vier Uhr sofort nach Hause, aber eines Tages, als ich in der Turnhalle angekommen bin, habe ich einen Mann ohne Kleidung in der Turnhalle gesehen. Er ist sofort zur Tür gelaufen, bevor ich etwas machen konnte! Das war im Großen und Ganzen sehr gut, weil er nichts mitgenommen hat!*

**Principal Moderator's Report to Centres
2366: GCSE GERMAN WRITING COURSEWORK 2007**

General Comments & Assessment

Candidate performance in Writing Coursework continues to show improvement at all levels, and most teachers appear to feel confident and comfortable with the mark schemes. This familiarity is no doubt an important and valuable factor in getting the best out of candidates. As in previous years, the highest number of candidates is to be found in the range from clear C to mid-B, and the number of low scoring candidates still continues to decline. Indeed, candidates who score low marks have very often limited their own potential by offering an incomplete submission of, say, only two pieces.

It is pleasing that more Centres have taken heed of the advantages mentioned here in previous years by starting to prepare candidates in good time, rather than leaving all tasks to the last minute. Fewer Centres, certainly, have set candidates only the minimum of three tasks, meaning that they have had a greater range from which to select each pupil's best work in accordance with the *Context* requirements. Not only does this help to obviate any shortfall in submissible items, but it can also be a useful strategy for motivating pupils and focussing attention on what is required for each individual's best level of achievement in this Unit.

A reminder is perhaps in place here that a candidate's *raw* marks out of 90 for this Unit are not the same as the candidate's final UMS marks, the raw marks being 'mapped across' to the UMS mark scale. Each of the subject's four Units for this Specification is in fact marked out of 90, giving a UMS maximum of 360.

The implications of the higher *Communication* marks now seem to be more widely appreciated, and there is less of a tendency to award marks of 9 or 10 for standard 'pro forma' and un-individual and uncreative work. It should be noted in this connection that the mark scheme itself makes no reference to length as a descriptor, nor does it continue to refer to task fulfilment or clarity of message beyond the band of 8, as these should be automatically assumed by this level. The range of descriptors for consideration is proportionally greater and more varied as the mark bands rise, and should be carefully compared.

Excessive length does continue to be a problem, however, and good candidates worthy of the 9/10 bands should be firmly discouraged from thinking that quantity is the automatic key to success. Whilst it is accepted that the notional 150 words expected may be rather limiting in keeping some pupils properly motivated, it is essential that candidates aiming for the higher grades in this Unit recognise the requirement to prove themselves qualitatively. The quality of work in long pieces rarely improves as they expand, tending to become repetitive in use of structures and opinions, as well as often introducing gratuitous and redundant material. A practical and sensible word target might be around 180, with a firmly recommended cap of 200 words. This same principle regarding unnecessary length also applies to candidates targeting lower marks and grades: they should be similarly discouraged from writing significantly beyond the recommended word counts for these levels, as the effectiveness and quality of the writing invariably tend to deteriorate with surplus effort.

The awarding of *Quality of Language* marks in the higher bands, (17 and above) should also be carefully evaluated. Even quite weak candidates are becoming more adept at subordinate clauses, as teachers understandably place increasing emphasis on meeting assessment descriptors, such as *opinions*, *justifications* and *longer sequences*. However, it must be remembered that at this level complexity has to be underpinned by accuracy. Unfortunately, there is an increasing disregard for gender and case requirements (particularly with prepositions), and for adjectival agreements. More candidates are even ignoring prepositions altogether, with the likes of *wir sind Schwimmbad gegangen*, or *ich bin Spanien gefahren*; this is very disappointing and should not be overlooked in the general Quality assessment. Some well-drilled subordinate clause competence is unlikely to compensate for such basic errors.

In deciding on the most appropriate bands of assessment, teachers should be looking ultimately for a 'best-fit' mark, taking note of the general emphasis of each mark band's descriptors taken as a whole. The increasing number of descriptors that quantify each ascending mark band for both *Communication* and *Quality of Language* have been highlighted above, and it follows that a higher standard of achievement is expected for the award of the higher marks. The interpretation of the mark schemes should not focus simply on the clearing of one or two 'hurdles' in a particular mark band for assessment, any more than it should expect full clearance of them all for a similar entitlement.

The quality of word-processed (*Independent*) items has been referred to before as often disappointing. This was the case again this year, and pupils should be warned of the consequences of poorly typed work. Candidates can be clearly reminded at the drafting stage that keyboard errors amount unequivocally to spelling errors, and that work must be assessed "as seen". Words joined together, lack of meaningful punctuation, the absence/random use of capital letters and half sentences not only affect *Quality of Language*, but very likely also interfere with successful *Communication*. The lack of *Umlaut* remains one of the principal defects in word-processed items, and pupils should be taught how to access the accented letters. Keyboard skills are very obviously to be encouraged, and it is a great pity if their application in foreign language work is not properly supported. Hence it must be emphasized that *mochte* does not communicate *möchte*, (likewise, *wurde* is quite different in meaning from *würde*), and a conditional future tense or future time-frame is confused, if not destroyed, by the failure to recognise and make such distinction.

As a final point here, teachers are again reminded that a single, reliable order of merit is required in the marks submitted across the Centre's candidates. This means thorough and effective internal moderation, in Centres where more than one teacher is responsible for the entries. It is unfair to candidates if the marks awarded by their different teachers are not judiciously compared and standardised. It may also result in a delay in the Centre's moderation, or in a wholesale adjustment of marks that unfortunately, and almost undoubtedly, disadvantages some candidates. As Centres do not know in advance which candidates' work will be requested as sample, it is clearly sensible where possible to have standardised at regular intervals in advance. OCR Moderators may not themselves alter the merit order, and, as with arithmetical or transcription errors, the submitting teacher / head of department will need to complete yet another form for the amendment of mark(s), where individual errors need to be rectified.

Coursework Tasks

Most teachers have become used to the distribution of *Contexts* requirement and wisely build this into their teaching plans at an early stage. The 'different *Contexts*' restriction obliges candidates to explore different language areas more widely, offering greater challenge and stimulus. Best practice is therefore to sample across all five *Contexts*, providing maximum scope for variety and interest, and giving candidates plenty of practice in different topic tasks and styles. There were overall few instances of *Context* or *sub-context* overlap this year, and very few entries needed to submit replacement items, thus delaying that Centre's moderation process.

There remains a small number of unsuitable tasks, not yet updated or overwritten, which cover several *Contexts* in the sub-tasks, for example linking *Zuhause* 'Home Life' (*Context 1a*) with *Mein Wohnort* (*Context 3a*), or the inappropriate *Tagesablauf*, with sub-tasks that combine *Schule* (*Context 1b*) with *Freizeit* (*Context 2b*). 'School' combined with 'Careers & Future studies' (*Context 4b*) is occasionally another model that straddles the current *Context* blocks. It is clearly an easier assignment to write a separate paragraph on two or more *Context* topics than to structure a coherent, longer answer on a single *sub-context*. Teachers are reminded to check carefully where early work is submitted, as this may have been set and marked to a different end at an earlier stage of the course. The favoured "letter to a pen-friend" task is typically at issue in this regard, as most pupils undertake this – often in the earlier part of the course: however, it has no single or suitable *sub-context* reference. It is wise to check all items before entry for their validity in terms of Coursework requirements, and also for consistency of marking standard, and to remark as necessary.

Some tasks are more readily accessible for middle to lower ability pupils, and these include the predictable ones set in the *sub-context* areas of *Context 1* – 'Everyday Activities'. The tasks of both 'School' and 'Home' are invariably explored by all pupils at some stage of their course, and are both relatively straightforward in task terms, inviting principally descriptive language through well-rehearsed and conventional structures. Consequently they rarely differ in substance or approach. As a result, better candidates rarely do significantly well on the much-favoured 'Schule' task, particularly where so much predictable content is directed by standard sub-tasks – school size, routine, subjects, teachers, likes and dislikes, etc. To create scope or creativity (a descriptor of the 9/10 *Communication* bands) or for independent vocabulary and structures, teachers would have to explore areas of comparison, opinion, explanation, justification and evaluation.

Unfortunately, length alone is often wrongly perceived as a means to a high mark here, but a repetition of more of the same sort of description and opinion cannot produce extra quality. Similarly, *Contexts 1c* (Eating & Drinking) and *1d* (Health & Fitness) are usually very predictably structured, with tasks set on this latter area tending to focus mainly on factors of diet, leading to much repetition of *weil es gesund ist*. The overlap with *Context 1c* is inevitably also substantial. Candidates find it very difficult to avoid structural and material repetition, especially when they are further directed to work through the tenses, and the sub-tasks set very seldom open the way for individuality of approach. Where candidates are targeting the higher grades, tasks set on these topics in particular should overtly encourage freedom and originality in design and content, so that work produced is inherently different and authentic. An extended gloss on the *Contexts* is to be found in the current specification on pp. 42–48, where there are many ideas for exploitation.

As has been said here before, differentiation of tasks is highly advisable where there is a wide range of ability. Wherever possible, tasks should be designed to take account of candidates' abilities and potential, with the aim of encouraging each candidate to reach his/her individual ceiling. Consequently, prescriptive tasks with a closely directed sub-task structure – for example, the *Freizeit* task that invites candidates to write about their pastimes, perhaps with prompts to 'when', 'where' and 'why', followed by the further sub-tasks of *letztes Wochenende* and *nächstes Wochenende* – may be helpful to the middle-ability C candidate, who may need familiar prompts in order to produce certain information, structures and opinions, and possibly a necessary future tense. Such close direction, however, can do no favours to the candidate targeting higher grades, as s/he is left with little freedom to explore his or her own ideas and material. It offers no real challenge, and a higher level of accuracy in the conventional taught structures is only one element of Language Quality.

Report on the Units taken in June 2007

Again, length or 'more of the same' will similarly not justify higher marks on its own. Just as complexity *without* accuracy is unreliable, accuracy on its own is insufficient, as can be seen from the various descriptors in each mark band: in fact, as an individual descriptor, it does not appear at all. The potential A or A* grade candidate is often better served – and stretched – with a less structured task that can be developed independently of any limiting framework, and with individuality. However, it is essential that ideas and structures are not then specifically prepared in advance, as the relevant work ends up being strikingly similar, all incentive for individuality having been removed.

A further mention of templated work is perhaps in order. The simple adaptation of a model – for example, the *Hotelreservierung* or *Beschwerdebrief* – should only be assessed in the lower mark bands. It represents a lower order skill because the candidate is necessarily contributing only a limited amount of his/her own language. The substitution of words and phrases is a clearly designated F grade descriptor. However, the above-mentioned 'over-preparation in class' can also produce heavily templated work – a very clear example being the *Urlaub* tasks: the simple substitution of different destinations, means and duration of travel, comments about the journey, etc., ending with the hoped-for destination next year. Whilst the first candidate can be first moderated at face value, the extent of over-preparation quickly becomes clear when fellow candidates' items come to be assessed, and possible assessment in the higher mark bands is then no longer appropriate.

Finally, simple opinions are in abundance and the requirement for them is certainly well-drilled. Lists of simple uninflected adjectives that do very little to enhance the quality of the writing should be discouraged, however, as should unconvincing writing of the 'for-its-own-sake' type. *Nett* and *interessant* are widespread and also often inappropriate, and the not infrequent offering of *ich mag meine Schule, weil es [sic] gut, interessant und super ist* says extremely little. *Spaß* used with *sein* should be heavily emphasized as incorrect, and the true meaning of *wir haben Spaß gemacht* made properly clear. The spelling of *nächst* would also benefit from some extensive practice, not least as it is also usually the leader for some future reference.

This year's use of the dictionary as a creative resource was perhaps less original or diversifying than that seen before. However, several candidates *fuhren mit der Fläche* when writing about holidays, and there was one complaint about a town that was *nirgends neben die See*. Nonetheless, the idea behind one young person's early morning paper-round had a particular and undeniable charm ...

ich genießen dasein oben früh jedermann dann.

**GCSE German (1926)
June 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a*	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	u
2361/01	Raw	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	35	30	26	22	18	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2361/02	Raw	50	37	33	27	22	17	14	N/A	N/A	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	N/A	N/A	0
2362/01	Raw	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	27	21	15	9	3	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2362/02	Raw	50	40	34	29	25	18	14	N/A	N/A	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	N/A	N/A	0
2363/01	Raw	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	39	35	31	27	23	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2363/02	Raw	50	39	34	30	26	21	18	N/A	N/A	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	N/A	N/A	0
2364/01	Raw	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	33	26	20	14	8	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2364/02	Raw	50	43	34	24	14	6	2	N/A	N/A	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	N/A	N/A	0
2365/01	Raw	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	27	21	15	9	3	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2365/02	Raw	50	40	34	29	25	18	14	N/A	N/A	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	N/A	N/A	0
2366	Raw	90	82	76	67	59	48	37	26	15	0
	UMS	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
1926	360	320	280	240	200	160	120	80	40	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	Total Number of Candidates
1926	10.8	25.3	45.5	75.3	91.6	97.3	99.2	99.8	100.0	13 186

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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