

Report on the Units

June 2008

1926/MS/R/08

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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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GCSE German 1926

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2361 Listening

General Comments

This year's Foundation Tier Paper was more or less equivalent to last year's in terms of difficulty. The majority of candidates, however, found the Higher Tier Paper more accessible than that of 2007 and more in line with those of 2006 and before. It was pleasing to see that the difficulty of last year's Higher Tier Paper did not result in too many candidates 'playing it safe' this year – the majority of candidates at both Tiers were correctly entered, although a small number of Foundation Tier candidates could probably have made a good attempt at the Higher paper, while an equally small number of low-scoring Higher Tier candidates might have coped better with the Foundation paper.

Overall, there was again evidence of good preparation by teachers – candidates were very successful at answering objective questions based on a visual stimulus. However, it was again obvious that questions which require candidates to answer in either English (Section 2, Exercise 1; Section 3, Exercise 5) or German (Section 3, Aufgabe 4) cause considerable problems for many.

Although candidates' handwriting did not cause many problems this year, there was a small number of instances where it was very difficult (if not impossible) 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 that one letter is clearly legible.

It was good to note that candidates appeared to have taken notice of the comments made in last year's Report regarding the need for careful reading of question words – this led to fewer marks being lost in Section 2, Exercise 1 and Section 3, Exercise 5. Candidates also appear to be making better use of their five minutes' reading time – a pleasing number had made quite extensive notes on their scripts.

To remain on a 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 3 – candidates wrote *Fußball Stadion* or *Fußball stadium* instead of 'football stadium'.

However, a significant minority of candidates left a lot of blanks – not only when written answers in English or German were required, but also when they were asked to put ticks or letters in boxes. Since no marks are deducted in this paper for incorrect guesses, teachers should encourage their candidates to make an attempt at every question.

Section 1 (Foundation Tier)

General Comments

The paper achieved discrimination in the range of ability of candidates. All candidates achieved some success in Section 1, while some of the better Foundation Tier scripts showed in the last two exercises (Section 2, Aufgabe 3 and Aufgabe 4) that they were correctly entered at Foundation Tier.

Exercise 1: Questions 1–5

The majority of candidates scored full marks in this exercise. Wrong answers occurred mostly in Q5, where some candidates did not know *mit dem Rad*.

Aufgabe 2: Fragen 6–10

For many candidates, this proved to be the most challenging exercise of Section 1. This was quite surprising, as weather vocabulary is commonly taught right from the start of any German course – Centres may benefit from revising material covered in Key Stage 3. Particular difficulties were presented by Q8 and Q10 – many candidates failed to understand *es donnert und blitzt*, and few appeared to know that *wolkig* meant ‘cloudy’.

Aufgabe 3: Fragen 11–15

This exercise was generally very well done, indicating that many candidates are confident when dealing with vocabulary relating to holiday destinations and activities. Many managed to score the maximum 10 marks here, thus giving their overall scores a boost.

Aufgabe 4: Fragen 16–20

This exercise was well done by the majority. Where a mark was lost, it tended to be for Q18, where almost half of the candidates failed to realise that both Susanne and Max had to tidy their rooms.

Aufgabe 5: Fragen 21–25

This exercise also proved accessible to the majority of candidates. Many did, however, lose the mark for Q25, because they heard the word *Krankenhaus* and assumed that Paul’s sister already worked in one.

Section 2 (Foundation and Higher Tiers)

As would be expected, candidates at Foundation Tier found that the exercises in this Section became progressively more difficult. Higher Tier candidates, on the other hand, appeared to encounter most difficulty in Exercise 1 and Aufgabe 3.

Exercise 1: Questions 1–5

Good Higher Tier candidates often scored well here, but many Foundation candidates struggled with all but Q3. In Q1, most candidates correctly understood the word *Viertel*, but then lost the mark because they thought that the concert started at ‘quarter past’ rather than ‘quarter to 8’. The most common incorrect answer for Q2 was ‘two half hours’, though some candidates made implausible guesses such as ‘two days’. Q4 proved difficult for many, and produced many guesses along the lines of ‘his seat was uncomfortable’ and ‘his seat wasn’t very good’. The weather caused more difficulties in Q5, with few candidates appearing to understand the word *trocken*. Many guessed incorrectly that it was ‘fine and / or sunny’, despite the fact that either ‘dry’ or the very straightforward ‘warm’ would have gained them the mark.

Although English spellings were rarely penalised, some candidates lost marks because they had written *Stadion* in German rather than the English ‘stadium’.

Aufgabe 2: Fragen 6–10

This exercise was generally fairly well done at Foundation Tier, although some candidates did struggle from Q8 onwards – where vocabulary relating to directions seemed to cause some significant difficulties. Higher Tier candidates, however, often scored full marks in this exercise.

Aufgabe 3: Fragen 11–15

This exercise proved to be challenging for many candidates at Foundation Tier, with few scoring more than 2 marks. There was no clear pattern of errors among candidates here, indicating that many had simply guessed where to put their ticks. Although many Higher Tier candidates fared better, Q14 also caused problems for quite a number of them. The distractor statement about Andreas having wanted to go to the disco confused all but a few candidates – all need to be reminded (again) of the need to listen very carefully to all of the spoken material before deciding on the answer to a question.

Aufgabe 4: Fragen 16–20

Candidates at both levels coped well with both Q17 and Q19, and the majority of Higher Tier candidates also found Q16 and Q20 very accessible. All but a few candidates, however, struggled with Q18, with the majority opting for C as the answer, presumably because of the mention of *neue Schuhe*. Again, candidates need to be reminded to listen very carefully to the whole recording for a question before choosing their answer.

Section 3 (Higher Tier)

General Comments

Although some Higher Tier candidates found some of the questions in this Section very challenging, others performed very well in almost all of the exercises. Aufgabe 4 and Exercise 5 both provided very good discrimination for the highest grades, A and A*.

Aufgabe 1: Fragen 1–7

This exercise was well done by the vast majority of candidates, with most finding Q1, Q3 and Q4 quite straightforward. In Q2 the word *Seilbahn* was unfamiliar to many, as was *Naturschutz* in Q5. The verb *zelten* presented problems in Q6, with only a few candidates associating it with the picture of a campsite, while in Q7 *Heim für alte Leute* proved difficult, despite the fact that *alte Leute* should have been familiar to all.

Aufgabe 2: Fragen 8–12

This exercise was done very well, with all but a small minority of candidates achieving the full five marks. Where marks were lost, it tended to be in Q9 and Q11, often because candidates got these two answers the wrong way round.

Aufgabe 3: 13–19

While the majority of candidates found Q13 and Q18 relatively straightforward, the other questions in this exercise posed problems for many. There was no clear pattern of incorrect answers – candidates simply seemed to be falling victim to the distractors included in the German they heard for each question. Few appeared to appreciate the significance of *Jahreskarte* in Q14, or of *ich hole dich ... vom Zug ab* in Q16. Only a minority of candidates managed to get the mark for Q17, probably because the majority latched onto the word *Tore* and thus opted for the incorrect answer C. Option C was also incorrectly chosen by many in Q19, presumably because of the early mention Steffi made of wanting to *selber Fußball spielen*.

Aufgabe 4: Fragen 20–25

It was pleasing that this exercise was done much better than the equivalent exercise last year, with far fewer candidates failing to attempt an answer to any individual question. However, candidates do need to be reminded to read carefully the German word or phrase which introduces the word(s) which they need to add. The major difficulty this year appeared to be that, although candidates had understood most of the German they had heard, they could not then produce an answer which made grammatical sense.

Q20 was completed correctly by the majority, even though there were some very odd spellings of *interessant*.

Q23 presented two main problems once candidates had worked out that *im Klassenzimmer sein* was not the answer. Many put *Kaffee gekocht*, while those who did write the infinitive correctly often lost the mark because they could not spell *Kaffee* in German – there was an incredible range of misspellings of this seemingly straightforward word, including the perhaps inevitable French *café*. Q24 proved to be an excellent discriminator. Many candidates wrote only '11–18', without any reference to age and *Gymnasium* was another very common answer. Where candidates had understood what was required, the most common response was *alt*, for which they were given credit. Q25 was another question which was answered well by only a small number of candidates – the majority had clearly guessed, and wrote only *Kunst* or *Englisch und Deutsch*.

Exercise 5: Questions 26–29

This was, on the whole, better answered than the previous exercise, indicating that the main problem for many candidates was not so much in understanding the recorded material, but rather an inability to read carefully and then write accurately. The most straightforward question in this Exercise was Q28, with many candidates managing to score at least one of the marks. Many found Q27 very difficult, however, and Q26 and Q29 were very good discriminators.

The most common wrong answer to Q26 was probably '3 and a quarter hours', with *eine Dreiviertelstunde* causing difficulties for many. Some appeared to combine this with *eine halbe Stunde* and therefore come up with '3 and a half hours'. Although many candidates appeared to have understood the main message conveyed by the German in Q27, they failed to write their answers precisely enough, and thus failed to score the mark – common wrong answers were 'parents use their bikes' without any mention of 'to get to work', and various responses which implied that his parents made him ride his bike to school.

As has already been mentioned above, the majority of candidates managed to score at least one of the marks for Q28. They often achieved this by correctly referring to the bus tickets being expensive. Although many also understood the idea of 'ten minutes', they failed to get a mark for this by either saying that it was the length of the bus journey to school, or by failing to say that it was the length of the walk 'to the bus (stop)'. Quite a number of candidates unfortunately lost this mark because they added in the incorrect detail of there being a ten-minute walk 'to the station'.

Q29 caused difficulties for many, and a large number of those who understood the idea of Heiko looking for a new school nearer to his house failed to render either *sollte* or *vielleicht*, with the most common incorrect answer being 'he wants to look for ...' For those who mentioned his bike, *Bremsen* was not well known, and some wrote that his bike was broken, without mention of the brakes, or that he could not afford a new bike.

2362 & 2365 Speaking

Introduction

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 entry for German continues to improve: there are certainly fewer very weak Foundation Tier candidates and more good to very good ones. The majority of candidates are entered appropriately 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; there are however others, entered at Higher Tier, whose Role Play 3 performance is very poor and who might have benefited from a Foundation Tier entry instead.

The administration and recordings of most tests were generally carried out satisfactorily. This year saw many centres using CDs for the first time, most of which were recorded very well. CDs do however need careful packaging to ensure that they arrive securely. As in previous years there were some quite poor recordings, which made the Examiner's task extremely difficult. Some tests were over-extended, particularly in the Discussion and General Conversation sections: as has been stressed in this report in past years, weaker candidates do not profit from a lengthy test which consists of questions totally 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 repeatedly. It does however 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 (e.g. *Ferien / Freizeit / Schule / Berufspraktikum / Familie*) and with the Discussion and General Conversation section of the test containing a well-rehearsed question and answer session – sometimes the same questions in the same order for all candidates. The banks of questions containing ideas for topic-based conversations (listed on pp36-40 of the two *Teacher/Examiner's Booklets*) are provided as a guide to ideas for topic-based conversations suitable for both Foundation and Higher Tier that might be explored in the course of a natural conversation between teacher/examiner and candidate. Many centres however did not demand the more adventurous type of response from their better performing Higher Tier candidates, which was rather disappointing. The mark scheme does reward candidates whose conversations show elements of spontaneity and initiative and who respond at length to the teacher/examiner's questions; these candidates are best served by the more 'open' question types 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 to reflect the lack of dictionary availability, candidates were again offered the opportunity to select for themselves the item of vocabulary appropriate to the task where possible, although suggestions for completion 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]" and particularly "how much does it cost?" are frequently very poorly

expressed. These 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 *Swimmbad [sic]*, *Orangesaft [sic]*). Some simple items of vocabulary are also not well known at this level (e.g. table, menu, bed) and candidates are often only able to offer distorted versions of these items.

Asking simple questions remains a problem for many candidates: e.g. Is there [a swimming pool]? Is it [open]? Teacher/examiners do have the opportunity to query a candidate's utterance (without penalty to the candidate); 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 possibly earn the two 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 allows candidates to receive credit for partially communicative expressions of German, where previously no marks might have been received. In general however, the majority of Foundation Tier candidates performed well on this section.

Card 1: *Wir sind in der Jugendherberge*

Most candidates found little difficulty in attempting this section, but occasionally *Bett* was replaced by *Zimmer*. "Ask the cost" was not always expressed well.

Card 2: *Wir sind im Verkehrsamt*

Most candidates were successful in the requirements of this role play, but as stated previously there are many poor efforts for "ask the cost". A minority did find difficulty with asking a simple question and the vocabulary item *offen*.

Card 3: *Wir sprechen zusammen*

This role play caused little difficulty, other than the poor versions of *ich möchte* when used. As previously noted, too many candidates did not produce a clear and correct version of "ask the cost".

Card 4: *Wir sind im Restaurant*

Some candidates used the French *Table* instead of *Tisch*, and many do not distinguish between *Menü* (often pronounced the English way) and *Speisekarte*. Ordering items to eat and drink was rarely a problem, but occasionally *Schicken [sic]* was requested.

Card 5: *Wir sind im Postamt*

"Stamps" was quite well-known, although *Stempel* did appear occasionally. The pronunciation of the three suggested countries was often poor (even *Dutschland [sic]*). Most candidates were able to offer the money successfully.

Card 6: *Wir sind in der Metzgerei*

The phrase *ich möchte...* was often poorly pronounced and *Schicken [sic]* was a popular request. *Nein, danke* was easily accessible after the query *Sonst noch etwas?*, but again, asking the cost was often inappropriately expressed.

Section 2 Role play [Foundation & Higher Tier]

The six role play cards in this section were 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 credit for the 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. Many candidates gave short answers without a verb, which could gain full marks for clear and complete accomplishment of the task set, where a verb was not required. 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, for instance using the correct register in conversation, if necessary. 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', often proved more demanding than the other set tasks, requiring a repetition from the teacher/examiner; there is no penalty for this first 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 beim Arzt*

Most candidates were able to respond appropriately to task 1 and respond appropriately to *seit wann?* The perfect tense required in task 3 was often mangled and the detail required in the final task was often beyond the scope of many candidates.

Card 2: *Wir sind am Campingplatz*

Very few candidates responded to task 1 with a completely satisfactory pronunciation of *aus England / Engländer*; the most common response was *English*. Tasks 2 and 3 were relatively easily dealt with, but again the apparent complexities of the final task proved beyond the scope of many candidates.

Card 3: *Wir sind in der Bank*

Most candidates coped well with task 1, but a surprising number offered *vierzehn*, which was often not queried. Task 2 was often not well-expressed, while task 3 often included *verlossen / verlosen / gelassen [sic]*. The unexpected question caused little difficulty, but often needed a repetition.

Card 4: *Wir sind im Kaufhaus*

The detail of task 1 should not have been beyond the range of candidates and indeed most candidates scored at least one mark here – a mangled verb was usually the difficulty. The remaining three tasks were relatively straightforward, and the use of suggested responses to task 3 (in brackets) showed that candidates were well aware of continental sizing.

Card 5: *Wir sind im Hotel*

Task 1 was not always appropriately accomplished, although *ich habe eine Reservierung* was acceptable. Very few candidates were able to express the letter "w" correctly in German. As stated previously, asking a question (ask about facilities at the hotel) proved surprisingly difficult for some candidates; often the question was simply *ist der ein ...? [sic]*.

Card 6: *Wir sprechen am Telefon*

Many suitable items were acceptable for "wallet", but as on card 3 there were many mangled attempts to express the concept of "lost". The contents of the wallet were generally acceptable, but poor prepositional usage was a feature of task 3. Task 4 usually needed a repetition by the examiner, but was not found difficult thereafter.

Section 3 Role play [Higher Tier only]

The content of the six cards 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 these by adding ideas and personal opinions where necessary. Too many candidates however provided a rather pedestrian exposition of events with little enthusiasm and little extra detail, and slipped 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. However, it may well be more appropriate for weaker potential Higher

Tier candidates to be entered at Foundation Tier, where marks on Section 1 Role Play are perhaps easier to come by and the remainder of the examination is in any case common.

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

Competent candidates who have clearly mastered and memorised a range of appropriate past participles of strong verbs and 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]*.

Some teacher/examiners intervened too often, correcting candidates or going back unnecessarily, whereas others said too little or nothing at all, turning the role play into a virtual monologue. It should be emphasised that the criteria for Communication include references to interchanges with the teacher/examiner and response to the examiner's queries. Most however struck a happy medium and encouraged candidates to tell a good story to the best of their ability. Despite the advice offered in past years, very few candidates 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 (*Last year I went to Germany on a school trip; last year my Swiss penfriend came to visit me*). There is still a tendency in some centres to encourage candidates to embroider the set situation with totally irrelevant material, which might enliven a single candidate's account, but, when the same event is inserted into several candidates' work, the effect is very rapidly lost. It is felt that there is sufficient opportunity for enhancement within the basic storylines suggested and that the obviously pre-learnt material of a fits-all nature should be discouraged. Regarding the cards set this year, apart from the usual problems of variable verb usage by candidates who did not consistently keep to the expression of material in a past tense and the very limited variety of opinions offered, in many cases candidates lacked knowledge of fairly basic vocabulary: daily routine matters and household tasks, basic travel situations and travel problems, arranging to meet friends, simple everyday problems. In all situations opinions offered were rarely above the *gut* or *langweilig* level. The phrase *das hat mir [nicht] gut gefallen*, relatively straightforward and useful, was rarely offered. However some candidates did cope well and produced substantial accounts, adding opinions and imaginative details and scored high Communication marks on this section and banked 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, from candidates whose preparation was perfunctory 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, which was formulaic, pre-learnt and often poorly delivered. Few candidates offer the 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 depends on the skill of the teacher/examiner. For many candidates however – at both tiers – this section was no more than a basic set of question and answers allowing 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. Although most teacher/examiners actively seek a range of tenses

(not always appropriately as mentioned in the *Introduction*), it is noticeable that they often do so only at the end of each topic.

Most candidates were given the opportunity to use a full range of tenses and time frames in this part of the examination, and 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 these candidates to the stress of this more complex questioning is generally unproductive.

On the other hand, too many candidates – even those at Higher Tier – are still asked only very simple closed questions, leading to repetition, one-word answers or *ja / nein*. Too many candidates are also themselves 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. Many Examiners still comment that in many cases this section of the Speaking Test continues to appear thoroughly rehearsed, lacking spontaneity and originality, particularly with lower and middle scoring candidates. As remarked in the *Introduction*, the mark scheme rewards candidates whose conversations show elements of spontaneity and initiative and who respond at length to the teacher/examiner's questions. It must be said however, that the best performances are fluent and pleasing conversations on topics with which candidates are familiar, offering spontaneous responses, justification of ideas, good pronunciation and with more complex language in a full range of tenses. These candidates, as ever, are a pleasure to listen to and score significantly high marks for this section of the Speaking Test. At all levels, there were some overlong discussions and conversations. This part of the Speaking Test is intended to last approximately 6 to 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. These bands are intended to give Centres a comprehensive guide to what is required in the examination. In the Internally Assessed Centres marks awarded were on the whole generally appropriate to the individual candidate's performance.

2363 Reading

General Comments

The Reading papers for this year were well done by candidates at each Tier.

It appears more evident than ever that candidates are well prepared by teachers for the Reading component. Virtually all candidates followed rubrics without difficulty, answered in the correct spaces and in the correct language, although a few candidates did not pay attention to the number of marks awarded for each question and part question. Only a very few appeared to have difficulty finishing the paper within the time allowed.

The vast majority of candidates appeared to be entered at the appropriate level, showing that teachers are generally accurate in choosing the tier of entry.

In Foundation Tier, over 60 candidates were ungraded, suggesting that there are still some candidates who find this skill difficult.

In Higher Tier over 50 candidates failed to gain a Grade E mark, suggesting in these cases that teachers could profitably review their internal Higher Tier entry criteria where they have any numbers of such candidates. It is likely that such candidates might be more successful at Foundation Tier.

Section 1 offered a straightforward lead into the paper.

Exercise 1

Scarcely any candidates lost a mark on Exercise 1.

Aufgabe 2

This exercise was well done. Only a few candidates had difficulty with recognising where to buy *Briefmarken* in Aufgabe 2, choosing J instead of C.

Aufgabe 3

In Aufgabe 3 candidates often answered four questions correctly, while Q16 was usually incorrect. Perhaps candidates were misled by traditional gender roles, but the German was clear.

Aufgabe 4

In Aufgabe 4 most candidates scored well, but *mag Sport* was often not ticked for Charlotte.

Aufgabe 5

No clear pattern of errors emerged in Aufgabe 5 and most candidates scored well.

Section 2

This section proved to be a more challenging section for those correctly entered at Foundation Tier, while offering a reasonable start for those starting Higher Tier.

Exercise 1

This exercise saw some candidates resorting to guesswork in their English answers.

Q1 It was surprising that so few candidates could offer an adequate rendering of *Ferienwohnung*, many offering only 'house' or 'home'.

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Q2 A number of candidates muddled *kein* and *klein* and answered 'small garden' instead of 'no garden'.

Q3 This was fairly well done.

Q4a Some less careful candidates rendered *Juni* as 'July' in this part of the question. Some even offered 'May', perhaps from a misreading of *Mal*.

Q4b This was well done.

Aufgabe 2

This exercise started to show the difference between the Foundation and Higher candidates. Foundation candidates did not generally score very well here. Higher candidates fared better although they also made mistakes.

Q5 Only about 20% answered this correctly, with candidates jumping at *langweilig*.

Q6 Again, very few candidates were on top of the adverbs here, with a success rate similar to Q5.

Q7 Around 90% of candidates got this right.

Q8 Adverbs again defeated most candidates here, with the majority of candidates choosing *manchmal*.

Q9 This was usually answered correctly.

Q10 Again, this was usually answered correctly.

Aufgabe 3

This exercise produced even better discrimination. Higher candidates completed the exercise much better than Foundation, many scoring five marks or above, while most Foundation candidates scored only one or two correct here.

The most frequent correct answers were Q11 *Wohnwagen*, Q13 *parken*, Q14 *Bus*, Q16 *jeden Samstag* and Q18 *schwimmen*, while *einfach* was rarely chosen correctly for Q15.

Section 3

This was about the same standard as in previous years.

Aufgabe 1

Exercise 1 produced a full range of marks with no noticeable pattern of mistakes.

Aufgabe 2

In this exercise Q2 and Q4 were usually answered correctly although there was some confusion between *Hausarbeit* and *Hausaufgaben*.

In Q5 only the very best scripts managed *ungern*; many candidates offered *nicht so gut*.

Q6 was just as difficult. Very few recognised the need for an infinitive after *zu* in Q6 and many offered *Hausaufgaben*.

Q9 showed that *Recht haben* was not well known.

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Q10 showed the rarity of an understanding of *ebenso gut*. This sort of expression can usefully be taught with a lesson on comparisons.

Q11 was frequently answered incorrectly, *sparen* often being offered instead of the more challenging *bekommen*.

Aufgabe 3

This exercise produced little evidence of ticking either too many or too few boxes.

Full marks were very rare, and most scored 5 marks or more. However, there were a number of very low scores, where candidates managed to select nearly all the wrong options.

No particular pattern of errors emerged.

Exercise 4

This was, as intended, a difficult exercise, and less successful candidates scored 0 or 1. However, the best scripts scored 4 or 5, so it was still accessible to the highest-scoring candidates.

Many marks were lost by imprecise use of English. Candidates might perhaps have understood the German, but then lost marks because their answer was unclear, failing to distinguish, for example, between recycling/recycled/recyclable paper. 'Old paper' was a very frequent mistranslation of *Altpapier*.

Most candidates got at least one correct answer to Q13, but there were many incorrect links, for example 'plastic bottles and cans' or 'too many drinks in bottles'.

For Q14, *Kunststoff* was very rarely correctly rendered and many wanted to add something about 'art'. The most common answer was 'too much packaging', an obvious guess. Candidates need to demonstrate exact knowledge of the German at this level.

In Q15 many candidates had the right general idea for the first part but rarely included enough accurate detail to gain the mark. The second part was quite well done, but a surprising number did not recognise *Büros*. Very few candidates indeed seemed to understand the force of *sollen*, or the meaning of *herunterdrehen*.

2364 Writing

General Comments

The June 2008 GCSE German Writing Paper was again chosen by just over a third of candidates, the remainder choosing Writing Coursework. These figures are remarkably consistent with 2007. About 23% of the Writing Paper entry took the Foundation Paper, a very similar proportion to 2007. There were few very weak scripts.

This year, while there were many good scripts, 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 every year 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. Material from Examples of Acceptable Answers was this year incorporated into the working mark scheme. 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. Little about the assessment has changed since 2005.

Although candidates will generally be taught German spellings as per the *Rechtschreibereform*, examiners are tolerant of pre-reform spellings, as are many Germans. 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. More recent Ausgaben indicate recommended spellings.

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

Comments on individual questions

Section 1

Exercise 1

This list question was better done than last year. School subjects and opinions were well known to most. Candidates were not confined to the items drawn – the rubric says “These are only suggestions. You may include any other relevant words.”

The following comments may prove helpful:

The examples, *Englisch* and *gut*, were not credited if copied as an answer.

gut + a modifier was allowed, e.g. *nicht gut*, *sehr gut*.

Where a word was not immediately comprehensible, the marking was done on the: “if in doubt, sound it out” principle.

English words such as “Biology” were not accepted.

French such as *musique* was not accepted either.

Cognates such as “Sport” were accepted.

Candidates bent on using *Naturwissenschaften* should note that *Physik* is easier to spell, and gains the same number of marks.

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

Exercise 2

This exercise was well done by many candidates. However, *jogge* or *laufe* were not well known.

There were 6 marks for communication, one per item.

There were also 3 marks for Accuracy. At this level (target grade F), markers were instructed to decide the Hauptwort for each picture, and decide whether that was correctly written. Many candidates did this well, and markers commented on this good performance.

Oddly, some candidates offered “-sh” for *ich schwimme*, but then wrote *Schwimmbad* correctly. Equally, quite a few candidates offered *parc* or *Parkplatz* for number 6, neither of which scored.

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. 2008 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.

The questions which proved most testing were numbers 5 and 6. Perhaps the health campaigns against smoking had removed *rauchen* and *Zigaretten* from much teaching, but more surprisingly *Bett* and *ich schlafe* were problematic for many.

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

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 elicit 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 profitably review this year’s mock results against candidates’ 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. Some candidates only wrote one sentence in response to this point, thus putting all their eggs in one basket. Teachers have again produced more candidates who have followed the advice to have more than one go at this, perhaps by suggesting candidates read this report on the internet. Many youngsters are very open to believe information from the internet.

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One examiner suggested using roughly an equal number of words (about 20 – 25) in response to each of the bullet points, to ensure even coverage.

The majority of candidates coped with a past tense. Teachers could profitably encourage the correct siting of the past participle. Further improvement could be effected by ensuring that *letztes Wochenende* has two “t”s and *–enen–* in *Wochenende*. Also worth working on would be *in den Ferien*. The notion of *in den Obstferien* (for *Osterferien*) caused a chuckle for one marker.

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

The following ways of expressing the future were accepted:

future time expression + present tense

ich werde + infinitive

ich möchte + infinitive

ich will + infinitive

ich habe vor, ... zu machen, etc

Amongst various problems, was the inability to spell *nächstes Wochenende* or *nächsten Monat*. This is another area which would repay extra teacher and candidate attention. Some students fused future and past, with offerings such as *ich werde ins Restaurant gefahren*. Past participles were also quite common using modals, and there were many incidences of *ich mochte* for *ich möchte* and *ich wurde* for *ich würde*.

Question 1 was the less popular option, though a reasonable proportion of candidates attempted it.

A few candidates had obviously learned their morning routine in the past tense, which did not directly answer the first point.

Opinions were not a problem for the second bullet point.

For point 3, some described a different routine, while others described different activities. Either view of the question was fine.

Nearly all candidates had spotted the word “different” again in point 4, and reacted accordingly.

In Question 2, which the majority of candidates did, there were many good communicative answers.

Most could easily describe the things they do in their free time.

Opinions were offered by nearly all candidates.

Nearly all were well able to say what they did last weekend, again spotting the word *different*.

The fourth point was trickier, because *Monat* was poorly spelt, as was *nächsten*. A few candidates successfully side-stepped the issue by using *im Juli*.

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, based on what the candidate had written.

Section 3

There was a choice of two questions. These explored “A party in a hotel” or “A dreadful day out”. The first of the two was the more popular, but there were a good number of answers to the “dreadful day out” question.

There were very few seriously underlength answers. This year, there seemed to be fewer over-long answers. This is just as well, as long answers can be self-penalising.

Centres are again reminded that the sub-tasks are mandatory. This year, nearly all candidates for both the questions failed to understand the word *Vorbereitungen* and simply wrote about the other parts of the bullet point. Teachers are again 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.

A few candidates, typically native or near-native speakers (often identifiable from their handwriting), did not seem well-prepared for the question, and wrote on the general theme without addressing the bullet points. Such candidates would benefit from a trial run at the paper to reduce the incidence of medium range marks from candidates who have good German, but do not answer the question fully.

Relevant communication

Relevant Communication was marked out of 10 using the grid published with the Sample Assessment Materials and the mark scheme. 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 otherwise quite good scripts did not always justify opinions. Yet both questions cued *Meinungen? Warum?* more than once.

The following comments about the questions may be of use:

Question 1 – A party in a hotel

The first bullet point required some imagination. Many opted for the end of school prom, or a birthday. The spelling of *Geburtstag* remains problematic for some. Most understood *wer* correctly, but there is considerable room for improvement in precision in the use of *Freund*, *Freundin*, *Freunde*, as many candidates make little distinction between the three.

As already mentioned, remarkably few candidates knew what *Vorbereitungen* implied. For most of these candidates, this meant ignoring the word, and describing in some detail the music, activities, food and drink obtained at the party. This was not what they had been asked to do.

There is room for teachers to insist on a better grasp of the word *Getränke*.

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It was surprising that the appearance of *Was haben Sie auf der Party gemacht?* did not prompt some to review what they had already written. However a few erroneously interpreted *auf der Party* as after the party. For many candidates, the third task was credited against their attempt at the second task minus *Vorbereitungen*.

The fourth task also repaid careful reading. One examiner pointed out that some candidates interpreted the task as saying that this was the best party I've been to instead of saying what was best about the party. That said, many candidates did this task well.

Perhaps in keeping with better enforcement of no alcohol sales to under 18s, there were fewer examples of drunken behaviour reported in the essays. However, a graphic description of an ageing Dad dancing did earn good marks, even though the candidate was unimpressed by the actual dancing.

Question 2 – A dreadful day out

Where chosen, this was reasonably well done.

The first bullet point was generally well done. Candidates need to know that, if London is the place visited, they need to be careful not to list large numbers of tourist destinations in English. Equally, very few people will take a *Tagesausflug* to New York – clearly some candidates were confused by *Flug*.

As already mentioned, remarkably few candidates knew what *Vorbereitungen* implied. For most of these candidates, this meant ignoring the word, and describing in some detail the music, food and drink during the day. This was not what they had been asked to do.

The matter of problems was well done. There was clearly some preparation of this in classes, and candidates were doubtless pleased to see the prompt.

As far as what people had done *nach dem Ausflug*, most candidates did this well, apart from those who interpreted *Ausflug* as excursion goal.

Quality of language

14 marks were available, using the published grid.

This part of the assessment is a vital discriminator for the award of A and A*. Consequently, the better marks require candidates 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, was* and *wie* as well as using the ubiquitous *weil* (but sparingly). In some very good scripts, candidates had 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. Markers often check how often *war* is used. There are many less successful scripts with only 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

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approach is that *da* is hard to mis-spell. Sentences which contain *deshalb*, *daher* and *aus dem Grund*, *dass* are further alternatives to *weil*.

One marker commented in his overall report:

“Good scripts show accurate and inventive writing, and the very best demonstrate an impressive array of clause types, idiomatic opinions (*das Waschen ist eine Qual*) and the occasional complex verb construction (*weil wir unsere Handys nicht benutzen dürfen*, *Überrassungsaktivitäten wurden vom Hotel organisiert*) or tense (*nachdem wir gegessen hatten*, *wenn ich die Chance hätte*). It is, however, very rare to find instances where either the passive voice or the modal verb *sollen* are used.”

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

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 *Freundin* for 2009. This year’s target word, *interessant*, was noticeably better. Well done everybody.

Length

140–150 words were set in the question. That was plenty to allow a full answer to the question.

There is no advantage in writing over length, indeed, many verbose candidates seem to make more errors the longer they continue.

Candidates seemed to have enough time, and enough to do.

Conclusion

The 2008 writing paper was often well done. However, there were frequent candidate weaknesses in Section 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 candidates 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, not least by doing Section 1 Exercise 3 competently. On the other hand there are 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 again done a sound job with this year’s candidates.

The questions were accessible to all, and were often well-answered. Very many candidates were methodical in answering each point in Section 2. It is suggested that students try to write at equal length about each bullet point. It would certainly be clearer if each bullet point was answered in a separate paragraph, as most 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.

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That said, this examination provided an experience which allowed most candidates to show what they could do.

2366 Writing Coursework

General Introduction – GCSE Coursework Specifications 1925, 1926, 1928

The full details and conditions applying to Writing Coursework are set out in the Coursework Guidance section (*Appendix E*) of the current Specification, and all teachers should naturally expect to make themselves fully conversant with these regulations and with all aspects of the criteria. Furthermore, it is recommended that the requirements and marking criteria be also made clear to candidates, so that a good understanding of what is required of them and how to interpret their own progress may help towards increased motivation.

Assessment

The following points are a reminder of the mandatory requirements of the current Specification:

- A candidate's submission must be drawn from **3 different Contexts** (and therefore not *sub-Contexts*). The five *Contexts* offered in total, with their *sub-Contexts*, are listed in *Appendix A* of the Specification (p.27) and are subsequently glossed in considerable detail (pp.42–48). It will be realised that this differentiation of *Contexts* is designed to lead candidates to explore different fields of vocabulary and phrasing and to offer greater potential for different task related structures. Implicit here is therefore also the prompt to sample more widely from within the *Defined Content* for the language.
- Each candidate's submission must include a minimum of **one** item completed under *Controlled Conditions*. Teachers are urged to 'over-insure' where candidate attendance is known to be poor.
- A candidate may have recourse to **a dictionary only** when writing under *Controlled Conditions*. *Controlled* items may under no circumstances be word-processed.
- A candidate must cover successfully all 3 principal tenses or time frames – present, past and future – within the overall submission in order to merit consideration for a *Communication* mark of **7** and above in *any* of the three pieces submitted. This reflects the notional requirement stated as signal grade descriptor for Grade C and above.
- **Length:** the directives here are generous, but teachers are reminded that particularly short items within a short overall word count may not be entitled to the full range of communication marks. This reflects the standard length recommendations for the different grade levels. (*Ref: Appendix E, para. 5.2, and the Notes following the Communication mark scheme, para. 6.*). Thus: -
 - Where the overall word count is less than 400 words an item of ***less than 140 words*** may not score more than **7** marks for Communication.
 - ***fewer*** Where the overall word count is less than 250 words an item of ***fewer than 90 words*** may not score more than **5** for Communication.
 - Where the overall word count is less than 100 words an item of ***fewer than 40 words*** may not score more than **3** for Communication.

Quality of Language marks are not reduced in the same way, but the result of work being too short is likely to be self-penalising within both mark-schemes.

Administration

Centres are required to submit a 'Centre Authentication Statement' (form CCS160) **signed by all teachers** involved in the assessments. Separate *Candidate* Authentication Statements need not be submitted. However, candidates are required to verify for the Moderator the authenticity of their own work by signing the individual Coursework Cover Sheet as indicated.

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Centres need not wait for the 15th May Coursework deadline to submit marks to the Moderator. Early receipt should in fact help to speed up the return of the request for samples.

Centres with 11 or fewer candidates should send all their candidates' work, with the authorised list of marks as soon as possible, and without waiting for a sample request.

Addition of marks and their transcription should be very carefully checked, to reduce the time-consuming administrative procedures for errors.

Treasury-tagged work is greatly preferred by Moderators, this being much easier to work with. However, each candidate's work should be properly collated.

Task details, with clear assigning to different teachers where appropriate, should be included with the samples. Without these it is not possible for the Moderator to consider this element of the *Communication* mark, except to some extent eventually – but clearly rather unsatisfactorily – by comparison with other candidates' items.

Candidates' work should not be annotated in any way.

Candidates' work should show accurate word counts and all relevant sources should be listed.

Material copied directly from sources (including teacher sources) should be acknowledged in quotation marks and discounted from the assessment.

An explanation of any obvious discrepancy between *Independent* items and *Controlled* should always be given. If the submitting teacher is unsure of the authenticity of a candidate's *Independent* item(s), *Controlled* writing conditions should be imposed for alternative work.

General Comments & Assessment – unit 2366

Consistent with recent years, the highest number of candidates again appeared in the clear C to mid-B range, and it is clear that teachers are now extremely successful in guiding and schooling candidates in what it takes to meet the criteria for achievement at this level. In contrast, the number of candidates in the E grade range and below for this Unit is really quite small, but it seems a pity, nonetheless, that tasks are often less appropriately constructed for this level. These lower-scoring candidates often have to achieve their marks producing weak responses to tasks designed for C and above, such that they are presumably faced each time with a very dispiriting experience. Tasks properly constructed for the E/F/G level candidate might perhaps maintain candidate interest, in fostering some greater sense of success. (Suggestions – though not exhaustive – may be found in the Coursework Guidance, *Appendix E* of the current Specification, pp.89 – 91.) Indeed, task differentiation according to candidate abilities has become much less evident in recent years, and this is no doubt one of the reasons why highly structured and content-restricting tasks often deflect potentially higher-scoring candidates from their own research with the result that they lose the chance to demonstrate the originality and creativity that are significant factors in the higher mark band criteria. It is perhaps worth a reminder here that tasks with three, four or five clearly confining sub-tasks, especially when equally clearly tense-driven, are most unlikely to lead candidates to write freely and to pursue their own ideas independently. Candidates aspiring to a good B grade and above in this Unit, if properly informed of the requirement role of three tenses/time-frames, for example, should not need to be overtly prompted for them within each task setting. On the other hand, D – C range candidates and below undoubtedly do need more help and guidance with the planning and development of their responses.

Excessive length has also become more of a feature of task responses in recent years, but candidates should be firmly discouraged from thinking that quantity is the key to success. Whilst it is now accepted that the notional 150 words for the targeted B – A* grade range is rather

limiting, and that it is really quite difficult for many candidates to produce work worthy of the higher mark band criteria at this length, it is essential that those aiming for these higher grades recognise the requirement to prove themselves qualitatively. It is often the case that lengthy responses become repetitive in their style and structures, and that accuracy tends to decline; and, as assessments must take account of the entirety of the achievement, unnecessary length and gratuitous writing are more likely to undermine the overall effect, and therefore the value of the answer. It should also be clearly noted that the mark scheme itself makes no reference to length as a positive descriptor. A more realistic and sensible word target for the most able candidates 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 the different levels, as the effectiveness and quality of the writing almost invariably tend to deteriorate with surplus effort. (The restrictions on marks for work that is too short should be noted, however. Please refer to the *General Introduction* preface above.)

The differentiating mark scheme bands should always be carefully contrasted and evaluated before work is assessed, and note taken that the range of descriptors for consideration is proportionally greater and more varied as the mark bands rise. It will be observed that there is no longer specific reference to task fulfilment or clarity of message beyond *Communication* band 8, as these qualities are automatically assumed at higher levels. As less-structured tasks which offer greater freedom of approach are anyway more appropriate for consideration in the higher mark bands, task fulfilment should be less tied to a range of sub-task directives, and hence the assessment focus shifts more to expansion, "longer sequences", creativity and coherence.

Similarly, *Quality of Language* marks in the higher bands, (17 and above) should be rewarding such features as variety and extent of language, , security and control. Complexity has to be underpinned by accuracy, just as accuracy without complexity is equally insufficient for high marks. It is clear that even lower-scoring candidates can be trained to produce simple opinions with simple *weil/dass/obwohl* subordinate clauses, but these should not be considered as substitutes for basic syntax requirements, nor for relevance and consequentiality.

Prominent this year were strikingly strong 'opinions', (*erstaunlich, unglaublich*) as well as superlatives mismatched with *sehr* (*sehr super, sehr fantastisch*) regularly left unjustified, and hence much less convincing. *Spaß* was also all too frequently used with *ist/war*, and the limitations of *nett* were frequently not appreciated. In addition, there seems to be 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 Kino gegangen*, or *ich bin Florida gefahren*: this is very disappointing and should not be overlooked in the general *Quality* assessment. Some well-drilled subordinate clause competence cannot compensate for such fundamental 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. As has been highlighted above, the number of descriptors quantifying each mark band for both *Communication* and *Quality of Language* increases as these rise, and it follows that a higher standard of achievement is expected for the award of the higher marks. The application of the mark schemes is not therefore a question of simply clearing one or two 'hurdles' in a particular assessment band, any more than it is a question of full clearance of all of them for a similar entitlement.

Whilst it is recognised that preparation for the different elements of the Higher Speaking test may cover similar material as practice assignments in writing, it is inappropriate to set Writing Coursework tasks inviting exactly the same classroom-prepared material. The types of stimuli, modes of preparation and modes of response in these separate Units can be quite different. *Independent* Coursework tasks may, of course, be pre-drafted once only, and hence tasks should not be designed and set to encourage the simple regurgitation of much otherwise

practised material. It is perhaps also worth reiterating at this point that for *Controlled* tasks, which may not be pre-drafted, only the task topic area may be notified to candidates in advance, and not the precise task or sub-tasks.

A single, reliable Order of Merit is required in a centre's submitted marks. This means thorough and effective internal moderation, where more than one teaching group is involved. It is unfair to candidates if the marks awarded in different teaching groups are not judiciously compared and standardised, and may result in a delay in the centre's moderation by OCR, or in a wholesale adjustment of marks. As centres do not know in advance which candidates' work will be requested as sample, it is clearly sensible for teachers to have standardised at regular intervals in advance. It must be emphasised that OCR moderators may not alter the merit order, and, as with arithmetical or transcription errors, a further form for the amendment of mark(s) must be completed and signed by the submitting teacher/head of department, where individual errors can, or need to be, rectified.

As a final point for teachers perhaps new to this Specification, it should be observed that the *raw* marks out of 90 for this Unit are not the same as the UMS marks. Raw marks are 'mapped across' to a UMS mark scale which is only coincidentally also out of 90. Each of the four Units for this Specification is so marked out of 90 UMS marks, providing for a maximum total of 360.

Coursework Tasks

Most teachers now seem well-informed about the distribution of Contexts requirement and there were very few overlaps within submissions this year. Occasionally, however, tasks were noted which invited candidates to write on more than one distinct sub-Context – for example a letter to a penfriend on home and school, which are alternative topics in Context 1 (Everyday Activities). 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. 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. Where such task responses could not be substituted, moderators were instructed to identify the stronger sub-Context answer portion, and to judge the assessment on that alone.

Some *sub-Context* areas are more readily accessible for middle to lower ability students, and these include the ones set in *Context 1* - 'Everyday Activities'. The tasks of both 'School' and 'Home' are invariably explored by all pupils at some – usually early – 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, and better students are thus rarely able to show the extent of their capabilities. The content is generally descriptive and readily predictable, particularly when directed by standard sub-tasks – eg: ('School') school size, routine, subjects, teachers, likes and dislikes, etc. There can be little scope left for higher-level creativity or for much independent vocabulary and structures. Greater length does not compensate for this narrowness of scope, but leads usually to 'more of the same'. Similarly, *Contexts 1c* ('Eating & Drinking') and *1d* ('Health & Fitness') are usually very predictably structured, with tasks set on both areas inviting much repetition of *ich esse*, *ich trinke* and *weil es (nicht) gesund ist*. Candidates find it very difficult to avoid structural and material repetition here, especially when sub-tasks are tense-based. Where candidates are targeting the higher grades, tasks set on these topics in particular should openly encourage freedom and originality of approach, as well as of both development and content. 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 emphasised above, strategic differentiation of tasks is highly advisable, and fairest to candidates, where there is a wide range of ability. Wherever possible, tasks should be designed to take account of differing abilities and potential, with the aim of encouraging each

candidate to reach his/her individual ceiling. However, it is essential that precise ideas and structures are not then centrally prepared for inclusion in advance, as the resultant work ends up strikingly similar, the result, in effect, of a copying-up exercise, all incentive for individuality having been removed. This over-preparation in class is easily identifiable.

Most importantly, it must be said that copying-up, including the simple adaptation within a template is a lower-order skill, and should be marked at the E/F/G level. Responses that are simple model adaptations are routinely seen with the *Hotelreservierung* or *Beschwerdebrief* tasks, both of which offer very little opportunity for variation beyond the 'substitution of words and phrases', and this is a clearly designated national 'F' grade descriptor. However, the above-mentioned 'over-preparation in class' can also produce heavily templated work – *Urlaub* tasks at times being a typical example: the simple substitution of different destinations, means and duration of travel, comments about the journey, etc., ending with the hoped-for destination next year, all being a very clear indicator. *Unfall* tasks, which notionally invite high-level, complex language and structures, similarly cannot be awarded high marks for answers, which all reproduce the same carefully prepared story. Whilst the first candidate may first be moderated at face value, the extent of over-preparation quickly becomes clear when fellow candidates' items are compared, and possible assessment in the higher mark bands is then clearly no longer appropriate.

Mention has already been made of unconvincing opinions, and it is a pity that simple, uninflected adjectives – *gut, interessant, super* with *ist/war* prevail at all levels. The addition of a well-drilled *weil/dass/obwohl*, as already discussed, unfortunately does very little to enhance the quality of this writing. Attention to language detail, however - capital letters for nouns, the significance of the *Umlaut* (*wurde/würde; mochte/möchte; schon/schön*), and, by way of example, the spelling of *Freund*, as well as its distinction from *Freundin*, along with the plurals of both nouns - would benefit from more classroom emphasis. The spelling of *nächst* notably continues to need some intensive focus, especially as it is usually the leader for a future time reference.

As seen in previous years, candidates' use of the dictionary can lead to some very inventive syntax. On the other hand, it may be non-use of the dictionary that is the explanation. The results in any event still bring about pauses for thought, and occasionally conjure up some quite delightful images, as with.....

Es war kalt und wir haben immer Regenbogen getragen.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
German (Specification Code 1926)

June 2008 Examination 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	40	35	30	26	22	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2361/02	Raw	50	42	38	33	29	23	20	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	34	29	25	21	17	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2363/02	Raw	50	39	32	27	23	19	17	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	36	30	24	18	12	0
	UMS	59	N/A	N/A	N/A	50	40	30	20	10	0
2364/02	Raw	50	44	36	27	18	12	9	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 (i.e. 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	11	25.6	44.4	75.3	92.4	97.1	98.8	99.7	100	12 234

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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