

OCR Report to Centres

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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 specification 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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Overview

This is the third year of this specification.

It was clear that teachers had reviewed their 2012 candidate outcomes and adjusted entries accordingly.

Most centres managed well with the controlled assessment requirements. However, a small number of centres could improve their administration. In particular, treasury tags are the preferred method of keeping each candidate's A714 (Writing) paperwork together. It would also be appreciated if written pieces had a 2.5cm margin on both left and right – although there is no need to re-write work already completed by 2014 candidates.

The technical quality of digital recordings of the speaking tests was generally excellent.

For A711 (Listening) and A713 (Reading) it was noticeable that candidates did least well when they had to write something of their own in English. This is an area which might well benefit from additional teacher attention. For questions requiring answers in English, answers in German are not allowed in this specification. Very few candidates made this error, but it can be quite deleterious for those who do.

Absolute standards of Writing and Speaking have improved compared to the legacy specification, probably because candidates can focus on a recently-taught area. Centres should, however, be wary of concentrating on straightforward topics for Speaking and Writing only. The Reading and Listening papers will continue to test all the topic areas in the specification. There was clear evidence that some topics would benefit from increased teacher attention; please see the A711 and A713 reports for further details.

A711/01/02 Listening

General comments

The papers at both Foundation and Higher Tier appeared to be more or less equivalent to last year's papers in terms of difficulty. There were few very high marks at Foundation Tier, indicating that the majority of candidates at this Tier were correctly entered. However, this did not appear to be the case at Higher Tier, where there were some low marks. Candidates may achieve a better final grade if they do well at Foundation Tier rather than attempt to score many marks on a Higher Tier paper which is beyond their capabilities.

Overall, there was evidence of good preparation; candidates were very successful at answering objective questions based on a visual stimulus. However, questions which required candidates to answer in English, whether this involved selecting words from a list or producing short answers for themselves, caused problems for some candidates.

Candidates' handwriting caused problems this year. They should be reminded that they must write their answers clearly, and if they need to change an answer and have to write it somewhere other than on the line provided, they should put an arrow to the new answer or indicate in some other way that it is there.

Candidates appeared to have taken notice of the comments made in previous reports regarding the need to read the questions carefully. This year, there were few instances of candidates writing answers in the wrong language, though this did still happen on occasion. Candidates had clearly made good use of the five minutes' reading time – several had made quite extensive notes on their scripts.

Foundation Tier

Exercise 1: Questions 1-8

The majority of candidates got full or nearly full marks in this exercise. However, there were some wrong answers in question 5, where candidates did not appear to know '*Geschichte*' and put that it meant 'geography'. Question 2 was generally better done than time questions in previous years. In question 8 '*Hallenbad*' was not always known.

Exercise 2: Questions 9-16

In this exercise, problems appeared to come with questions 12, 13, 15 and 16. '*Arzt*' and '*einschlafen*' were not known. '*Studieren*' also caused problems for many. It was difficult also to tell which answer was a candidate's final attempt at the question. If they change a circled answer, they must make sure that they do so clearly. It is good practice to wait until the second hearing of the recorded material before selecting an answer, in order to reduce the number of changes needing to be made.

Exercise 3: Questions 17-24

This exercise was generally well done. It was rare that candidates answered using words which were not in the box. Questions 21, 22 and 23 seemed to cause problems.

Exercises common to both tiers

Exercise 4: Questions 25-32/Exercise 1: Questions 1-8

This exercise was done well by the majority of Higher Tier candidates, but some Foundation Tier candidates had difficulty.

Most candidates got a mark for question 25/1. Some just put 'his room', and occasionally 'noise from bar' was given as the answer to this question. Again, nearly all candidates got a mark for question 26/2. A few thought he was too far from the bar, some thought it referred to the mini-bar in the room, and others confused 'Bar' with 'Bad', and thought the bath was missing or too small. Many got question 27/3 right. Most used the idea of changing rooms. There was confusion about question 28/4: 'no meat' was a regular alternative and 'fish' featured for 'Fleisch'. Question 29/5 produced a range of answers: 'he can cook it himself' and 'go to another restaurant' were common misconceptions. Question 30/6 was generally very well done. There were a good few correct answers to question 31/7. Question 32/8 was very well answered in most cases. 'She will speak to the manager' was the most common incorrect answer. Some guesses were 'sack the manager' and 'the manager is the best' (for 'besser').

Exercise 5: Questions 33-40/Exercise 2: Questions 9-16

This exercise proved accessible to most candidates, possibly because of the format of the questions. The most difficult concept for candidates to deal with appeared to come in question 35/11 with '*wie können wir Teenager solche Probleme lösen?*'.

Higher Tier

Exercise 3: Questions 17-24

This exercise discriminated well across candidates. Question 17 was challenging and incorrect answers were: 'pollution', 'people dropping litter', 'not enough rubbish bins', and 'young people' or 'students'. Similarly question 18. Incorrect responses were: 'will help' or 'reduce the amount of litter'. Question 19 produced more correct responses. Question 20 seemed to be challenging again; some put 'cities are so unhealthy', some said 'people on farms' or just 'people are unhealthy'.

Many got question 21 correct. Question 22 was very well answered. There were some good answers to question 23 and question 24, but some guesswork for the latter with answers such as 'people', 'children' and 'young people'.

Exercise 4: Questions 25-28

Many candidates did very well here, but some who did manage to match up correct pairs of answers then put them down as responses to the wrong questions.

Exercise 5: Questions 29-36

This was the most challenging exercise for candidates, a number of whom misunderstood the rubric and continued the sentence in the question. However, there was something in this exercise for everybody, and all candidates managed to gain at least two or three marks.

In question 29 '*Schlecht*' was sometimes given as 'bad' in English but got a mark. Some candidates mixed question 30 with question 29 and said 'ill'. Some knew the answer to question 31, and some guessed it accurately.

Question 32 was very well answered. Some said 'storm' from '*Strömen*'. Others went for 'Benji ran away'. Question 33 was another well answered question. Question 34 was very well answered, especially as the German was '*Kater*'. For question 35 the clue was in the question, and many deduced from this that the driver managed to stop and came up with lots of different phrases to convey that idea. Question 36 proved to be challenging, with 'keep him on a lead' (perhaps from '*allein*'), an incorrect answer.

A712 Speaking

General comments

This is the third year of this new specification which requires centres to conduct controlled assessment of speaking, which is marked by centres and moderated by OCR. On the whole, improvements continue in all areas.

Administration

The majority of centres did a good job, but there were clerical errors in both tasks, noticeably in Task 2. Centres should ensure that all arithmetic has been checked to avoid a delay in moderating. Centres should also ensure that the transfer of marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1 is correct for both tasks.

More centres submitted work via the OCR Repository this year. Recordings were generally of good quality, and the paperwork was usually completed as required but some teachers did not sign the working mark sheet. Candidates' notes forms, when used, were attached, and most centres correctly included the Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) in the material sent to the moderator. The centre mark sheets, MS1s (or a locally generated substitute), for both tasks are needed and should be included with the material sent to the moderator.

Centres are not required to send in task forms, but are asked to retain them until December of the year of the exam.

Centres should note that they can only enter one component (01 Repository or 02 postal). Centres using component 01 uploaded their samples to the OCR Repository and generally sent their paperwork by post to the moderator. Centres should note that it is possible to upload scans of working mark sheets, candidates' notes forms and the CCS160 to the Repository under the 'Administration' tab.

Centres using Component 02 sent their recordings to their Moderator on CDs. MP3 format is what OCR currently specifies. It is not necessary for there to be one CD per candidate.

Internal moderation

Centres are responsible for ensuring that their candidates have a reliable order of merit. If there is more than one teacher involved, this will mean internal moderation. Many centres did this. However, a few centres were asked to re-examine their order of merit this year. If this happens, centres may need to review their internal procedures.

Candidate performance

Candidates are asked to take part in an interactive spoken activity lasting four to six minutes, which can be chosen by them. There are regulations about the notes form and the preparation of material.

Notes forms

These were generally present with the working mark sheet. Most candidates had made good and honest use of them, keeping to the forty word limit.

Timing

The four to six minutes are timed from the end of the teacher's announcement of the candidate. At the end of six minutes, the examiner may complete a question which has been started and allow the candidate a brief response. Beyond this point, no credit should be given. In some instances, recordings were too long and resulted in the reduction of marks at moderation. This was usually because a range of time frames, or opinions and justifications, were not in evidence before the six minutes and the upper bands of the mark scheme for Communication and Quality of Language were not then available. Centres whose 'Report to Centre' mentions this should review their examining technique.

Where candidates do a presentation and discussion, the presentation should not exceed two minutes. Presentations longer than this do not allow for spontaneity and candidates are unable to access the top bands for Communication if the task becomes a monologue. This should be reflected in the marking. The mark scheme specifically refers to unpredictable questions in Communication, and to get high marks candidates need to be able to deal with them. There were more tasks at four minutes this year and candidates could still achieve the full range of the mark scheme. However, tasks short of the minimum of four minutes were found to be self-penalising in that candidates were not able to include a range of vocabulary and structures, including tenses, or fully answer the questions posed.

Tasks

In general, centres set appropriate and interesting tasks. There were some good presentations and discussions, conversations and interviews. Role plays were generally conducted with more able candidates and needed careful organisation so that candidates had enough to say to be able to access the top bands for Communication.

Asking more open-ended questions gives candidates the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can enable them to access higher marks for Communication and Quality of Language.

The mark for Pronunciation and Intonation is not limited by the amount of spoken material candidates produce. Common mistakes were still the mispronunciation of *weil* as *wiel* and *viel* as *veil* and *mochte* and *konnte* for *möchte* and *könnte*. These are often used by candidates so it is important that they are pronounced correctly. Intonation can also be affected if candidates are too reliant on their notes and have not practised more difficult structures and phrases; they can sound too mechanical in their delivery of the material.

A713/01/02 Reading

General comments

There was a range of performance on the Reading paper across both tiers and most candidates seem to have been entered for the appropriate tier and to have dealt well with the tasks set. Very few candidates scored full marks on either tier, suggesting that targeting by centres was good. Equally, there were very few low marks on either tier, again suggesting that nearly all candidates had a realistic opportunity to score a grade within the range measured by the tier attempted.

Successful candidates based their answers exactly on what they read rather than by trying to apply common sense or existing knowledge to their answers.

Most candidates write upper-case letters clearly in boxes when required. Two things are worth commenting on. Firstly, lower case letters, particularly c and e, h and k, are often indistinctly written. Upper case is safer. Secondly, where candidates change their mind, they should cross out the answer and write the correct answer next to the box to avoid confusion.

It is perhaps worth commenting this year on the quality of candidate handwriting. Generally candidates do their best in public examinations. Every effort is made to read what the candidate has written, but a few candidates this year presented difficulties in this area. Centres could consider attention or additional assistance for candidates whose handwriting is not clear.

Comments on individual questions

Foundation Tier

Exercise 1: Questions 1-8

This exercise was intended to be straightforward. Most candidates gained full marks.

Question 1 was straightforward for many, but not all. A number of candidates chose K (tractor) or B (shop).

Question 2 was generally well done. Candidates were led to the picture of the fish, despite *Fischhändler* not being a very common vocabulary item.

Question 3 was unproblematic for nearly all candidates.

Question 4 was mostly done correctly, but *Bauer* clearly presented difficulty for some. B (shop) was the most frequent incorrect answer.

Question 5 was again mostly answered correctly, but B (shop) was again an incorrect choice.

Question 6 caused few problems. Some however chose K (tractor).

Question 7 showed that *Busfahrerin* was not a problem for most.

Question 8 was generally well done, but *Weihnachten* was not familiar to a few, despite 'special occasions and festivals' being a requirement in topic area 3.

Exercise 2: Questions 9-16

This exercise tested the understanding of mainly sentence-length statements. Nearly all candidates gained full marks.

Question 9: *Schwimmen* was well-known to nearly all.

Question 10 was unproblematic, with *stinkt* clear to most, and *Rauchen* also well known.

Question 11 was a little more challenging for some who were not familiar with *Nachrichten*. Some of these chose the answer to question 15.

Question 12 was often done well, despite the less obvious *Schlagzeug*.

Question 13 was also done well by most, despite *unterhaltsame Zeichentrickfilme* being tested.

Question 14 was not quite straightforward, but most coped with the female form *Sängerin*.

Question 15 was the least well done question in this exercise. Perhaps surprisingly, not all knew *sehe ich fern*.

Question 16: Many managed to get this question right.

Exercise 3: Questions 17-24

This exercise was done well by many candidates.

Question 17: Nearly all candidates had correct answers for this question.

Question 18: Many candidates were successful with this question. Those who were not often chose Uwe, probably because of *U-Bahn* in the statement.

Question 19: Most candidates were successful here, apart from those unfamiliar with *Strom*.

Question 20: Nearly all candidates had correct answers for this question, as *Kino* is well-known.

Question 21: This question was done well by most, with the near-cognate *Papier* helping them on their way.

Question 22: This question was not quite as well done, as not all candidates know *Flaschen*. Some candidates guessed the answer was Lotte.

Question 23: This question was done well by the majority who had understood the difference between *Zug* and *U-Bahn*.

Question 24: This was often well done.

Exercises common to both tiers

Exercise 4: Questions 25-32/Exercise 1: Questions 1-8

Many candidates did this exercise well, showing that they could carefully read texts and identify main points, extract details and recognise opinions.

Question 25/1 was done well by many, but not all. Perhaps the concept of *Ausland* was not universally known.

Question 26/2 was often correct.

Question 27/3 was nearly always correct.

Question 28/4 was not always correct. It seems that Sven's *ich sitze ungern länger im Auto* was not clear enough for some.

Question 29/5 caused few problems for most, where candidates needed to know that *auf der Terrasse* was outside.

Question 30/6 was often correct, though there were some who did not make the leap from Maria's *Ich rudere gern* to boating.

Question 31/7 was the most likely question to be incorrect. Tennis is clearly proof of being active, which many spotted but so is boating, where Maria clearly does her own rowing.

Question 32/8 was often correct, with most spotting Sven's linguistic prowess.

Exercise 5: Questions 33-40/Exercise 2: Questions 9-16

This exercise discriminated very well, and was challenging. The text on which the questions were based focused largely on 'School life in the target language country', as in topic area 5 of the specification. The difficulties candidates had in answering questions about this topic suggest that centres may well benefit from giving this topic additional attention. This comment applies to both Foundation and Higher Tier candidates.

Surprisingly, some candidates were not able to answer a question about telling the time correctly, despite this being a Key Stage 3 competency.

Question 33/9: Exact understanding of *in der nächsten Stadt* was required to get a mark here. Various renderings such as *town centre*, *outskirts*, and *northern part of town* were not allowed. However, *nearby town*, *the nearest town*, *the next town* and the use of *city* for *town* all gained credit.

Question 34/10: Only some candidates knew that *halb sieben* was 06.30. Perhaps this was because many candidates do not know that school students in Germany have to rise earlier than their UK equivalents. The answer 'half six' was accepted.

Question 35/11: This question was done more successfully by a majority of candidates. There were three possible acceptable answers.

Question 36/12: This question, testing *machen wir viele Dinge zusammen*, seemed to be difficult for candidates. There was a lot of guesswork, with hanging out, socialising, going out with friends. 'Chillaxing' was, however, not seen as an answer.

Question 37/13: Only a few candidates understood *Ich bin kein guter Schüler*. Some thought he was a good pupil, either because they missed *kein*, or because they could not conceive that the examiner was interested in a weak student.

Question 38/14: This question tested *Klassenarbeit* and *Sitzenbleiben*. Many synonyms for *Klassenarbeit* were accepted, including controlled assessment.

Question 39/15: This question focused on *muss ich in meinen Englischstunden besser aufpassen*. Answers such as 'pass' or 'get a better pass', did not get the mark.

Question 40/16: This question was intended to be a straightforward final question. Some candidates, however, did not know *Klassenfahrten* and gave answers related to *Was ich am Gymnasium gut finde*, producing many answers about enjoying gymnastics or sport lessons, or liking the school in general.

Higher Tier

Exercise 3: Questions 17-24

This exercise was done well by many candidates. Most candidates circled their choice, but some wrote it in the space. Both methods were accepted.

Question 17: Nearly all candidates correctly chose *for a few days*.

Question 18: Most candidates correctly chose the first option. However, some were tempted by the third option, *not able to cope with demand*.

Question 19: Most candidates chose *remove fear of hospital stays*.

Question 20: Although some candidates did not spot that *Medizinstudenten* were involved, most realised that the teddy bears were *treated like normal patients*.

Question 21: A large majority were successful, and *goes to the operating theatre* was the usual incorrect answer.

Question 22: Most candidates had the correct *the body works* but there were some who chose to *eat healthily*.

Question 23: Nearly every candidate correctly chose *the last activity of the day*.

Question 24: Most candidates chose the correct *increasing public knowledge*, with *the most popular tourist attraction* being chosen by most of the rest.

Exercise 4: Questions 25-32

This exercise was intended to discriminate between high achieving candidates and did so effectively. Few candidates showed total command of the passage. Some lacked knowledge of some key vocabulary items being tested and were too concise on the gift of the red rose.

The questions were intended to show whether candidates could identify main points, extract details, recognise points of view, attitudes and emotions and draw simple conclusions.

Question 25: Candidates showed understanding of the *Eiscafé* but there were some for whom it was either a shop or an alien concept.

Question 26: The answer required was that Pamela had to look after her sick child. The singular 'child' was insisted upon. There was some confusion about whose child was ill; some thought it was Käthe's rather than Pamela's.

Question 27: This question tested *ein echt gut aussehender Mann* as well as Käthe's first impression of Markus. This was intended to locate her initial opinion of him in the passage. Some just offered 'he was nice', which is insufficient towards the end of the Higher Tier paper.

Question 28: Answers to this question rewarded those who had understood *Können Sie Ihren Eisbecher empfehlen?* Some candidates thought he was offering to buy her an ice cream or a drink, or asking about her ice cream preferences in general. A few thought he was asking her for a date.

Question 29: The question wanted candidates to state why Käthe found Markus cheeky. This was because he ordered a spoon to share her ice cream without asking if she minded. General guesses as to why she could think him cheeky were given in many answers.

Question 30: The passage states that *Markus und Käthe haben sich sofort bestens verstanden*. The majority of candidates managed to get this right. They got on 'quite/fairly well' was not credited, as that is not what the text says.

Question 31: Many candidates spotted the cognate *Rose*. To get the mark at this stage in the Higher Tier paper, a red rose (or roses) was required. Many candidates produced this answer.

Question 32: This question focused on *Ostern* and *heiraten*. Most candidates could manage this question. However, *Ostern* was not known to some, despite 'Special occasions and festivals' being a requirement in topic area 3. Consequently there were some answers about travel to Austria, the East or to *Osterhase*. *Heiraten* was misunderstood by some candidates as 'move in together' or 'go on a holiday or trip'.

Exercise 5: Questions 33-40

This exercise is intended to differentiate between competent and very competent candidates, and seems to have done so.

Question 33: Only a few candidates successfully chose option B here, with A being very popular.

Question 34: Candidates found this question easier, with a majority getting the correct answer, B. Option A, about staying slender and healthy was the next most popular answer.

Question 35: Candidates had relatively little trouble with this one, most choosing *Pasta*, with *Schnitzel* attracting most of the remaining answers.

Question 36: This was also straightforward for many candidates, who were able to work out parts of the day. Most of the remaining answers were B, *Halsschmerzen*.

Question 37: Candidates did not seem to know *Verschiedenes* and did not understand that Eva and her husband agree to differ about food.

Question 38: A majority of candidates spotted that *Routine* was important. Incorrect answers were mainly B, *ärgerlich*.

Question 39: Candidates who got this right understand *mit wenig Übung* and that a good recipe book will contain recipes that work if followed.

Question 40: The majority of candidates were successful with this question, choosing B, *weil sie kein Herd hatte*. This was pleasing, as they really needed to understand that Eva had moved house, and *Erst hatte ich keine Küche und dann keine Lust*.

Conclusion

The 2013 Reading papers had something in every exercise that most candidates could do but they were still appropriately challenging for the most able. At Foundation Tier candidates generally had a good grasp of the items in the vocabulary list.

There were, however, some areas which would repay additional attention, in particular: schools in the target language country, telling the time and festivals. Centres should guard against excessive concentration on a limited number of topics for Writing and Speaking controlled assessment at the expense of a broad knowledge of the specification.

A714 Writing

General comments

Preparation for this unit is acknowledged to be time-consuming, and there is little doubt that those candidates who invested a reasonable amount of their own time in each assignment produced some independent and high quality writing. Such pieces had been carefully and thoughtfully constructed and were convincing in their delivery of what the writer knew and could do. They were of the correct length. They did not have to be flawless.

It is important for teachers to emphasise that task suggestions are no more than that and, ideally, to encourage candidates to come up with their own individual suggestions for content which go beyond a simple substitution of details. It is much more difficult for candidates to give their best work when they feel obliged to relate ideas that are not their own or that they may not share. Different abilities need the support of different suggestions if individual motivation is to be maintained. More able candidates will need very few, if any, whilst others will probably benefit from more exemplar support and more time spent trouble-shooting ideas at the initial stage.

Approach to tasks

The requirement of *Purpose* is there to help candidates focus on how best to develop the task set, given that 'effectiveness' is an important mark-scheme descriptor for Communication. It should therefore be selected at an early stage in order to direct the candidate's thinking, or, even better, candidates can be invited to select their 'purpose' individually, so that this aspect is properly thought about for the topic concerned.

Ideas for task differentiation, which teachers are at liberty to use or to adapt, may be consulted in the original OCR Guide to Controlled Assessment – Writing. It will be seen here that each sub-topic area has a 'Possible adaptations' feature, which contains alternative ideas for tasks which are contextualised but without specific content suggestions. These alternatives exemplify different approaches that may well interest different candidates.

The format of a 'report' or 'article', can encourage individuality but only if there is a defined purpose or point; e.g. for a defined readership or delivered for a certain reason. Similarly, a 'Competition entry' should indicate clearly in the heading what the context of the competition is and a 'blog', which is looking to interest its readers and gain followers, should define its focus of interest. These task types offer able candidates an opportunity to use fantasy and imagination if they wish. Items written with the point of the task clearly maintained are more likely to be seen as 'effective'.

It must be said, however, that 'diary' sequences, or sequential 'blogs' over several days, make 'coherence' and 'development' more challenging, and/or structural and vocabulary variation less likely. If a 'letters' and 'emails' are chosen as the format, then attention is needed to simple letter elements, such as *mir geht's gut* and to the roles of *du*, *Sie* and *ih*, *Ihr* and *dein* so that they are used consistently in the correct form.

An 'interview' of the question-and-answer pattern is more suited to a verbal exchange exercise, making it more difficult to develop content effectively and so to access the full range of the writing descriptors. Equally, a 'brochure', is unsuitable for this writing unit: completion within the permitted sixty minutes is unlikely to be achieved and to exceed this contravenes the regulations.

Film or book reviews can provide a suitable stimulus, but these are without doubt difficult at GCSE level and candidate ability should be carefully weighed. The appropriate language and the structures needed are complex and, if not fully understood, there is an unfortunately high risk of communication loss.

In giving more status to 'purpose', teachers may find it easier to differentiate task ideas, especially for more conventional topics such as School, Home Life and Local Area. These primarily descriptive topic areas, for which each candidate cohort shares more or less the same experience in terms of target language learning, need careful design of task, in order to allow good candidates the best chance to distinguish themselves on paper. There is more scope for originality if a particularly imaginative task invites it.

Where the starting-point has obviously been the candidate's own interests, some excellent work was submitted. Teachers know their candidates best; hence tasks tailored to account for differences will offer candidates the best chance to show what they can do.

Quality of Language

In allowing all candidates the chance to reach their individual 'ceiling' it is essential that they write within the maximum length guidelines of 175 words (G to D target) or closer to 300 (C to A*). The preparation time allowance is specifically intended to allow candidates time to plan the development, logic and coherence of their item. Candidates should not expect to earn a high mark in return for list-like material in response to an apparently diverse series of bullet points in no meaningful depth. Such bullet points can appear quite random and unconnected.

It is important that candidates know that it is not the inclusion of particular individual lexical items or structures alone which provide good communication, but the effectiveness of their use within the overall intended message.

Basic requirements are subject/verb agreement (see band 8-9 of the mark-scheme), and simple main clause word order showing awareness of the inversion rule (idiomatic German). There is in general over-reliance on straightforward subordinate clauses - *weil, obwohl, dass, wenn* with the verb 'to be', which are all, structurally, the same 'type'. The subordinate conjunction *obwohl*, in particular, is also misused as a stand-alone main clause, in place of 'though' in the sense of 'but'/'however'. The effective use of differently introduced infinitive clauses with *zu*, for example, could be more effectively exploited, as well as other strategic usage of adverbial connections, such as *trotzdem, deswegen, darum* etc, prepositional structures, and the whole range of modal verb application.

It is essential that candidates take care with the legibility of their handwriting. It cannot be repeated often enough that the absence of *Umlaut* on *würde, könnte, möchte, schön* etc is not a minor error; it changes meaning substantially, and also sounds quite different from the form of the accented word. Similarly misspellings, e.g. *blieben/bleiben, triebe/treibe, Riese/Reise*, etc and, for example, *denn, den* and *dann* will reduce or confound comprehensibility.

Candidates should also pay attention to punctuation, as a misplaced full-stop can easily spoil a structural sequence and suggest that the candidate does not understand what s/he has written. Good organisation and clarity need the underpinning of correct punctuation, and with careful exploitation of the preparation time, nothing need be written subsequently in haste. There was some awkward recourse to margins this year, as well as various forms of asterisk indicating omission, which made items both untidy and difficult to follow.

The expression of opinions presents no difficulty in the explicit form of *ist/war* + adjective but, if offered to excess, become repetitive and do not offer 'range'. Attention should always be paid to relevance and point. Some candidates may wish to explore more varied and interesting ways of expressing opinions as well as points of view, for example via verbs (*enttäuschen/stören/erstaunen* etc) and tenses (*niemand möchte/sollte/würde; Alle Jugendlichen wollen; niemand will...; man braucht...* etc), via adverbs (*komischerweise; sicherlich* etc), via nouns (*(Zeit)Verschwendung; Fehler; Nervensäge* etc) and via prepositions (*ohne Zweifel; im Idealfal* etc). There is potential for creativity and candidates could perhaps be routinely encouraged to explore different ways of expressing the same idea or opinion in English. This could then be followed by individual dictionary research.

Dictionaries remain an excellent research tool, as long as candidates receive guidance on how to use them. Candidates need to be able to identify different parts of speech, such as nouns as opposed to adjectives, and be able to check both into and out of the target language for different meanings and applications of the same word. Dictionaries are of little use to those who rely on them as a first resource on the day. Their value then should be as a double-check facility, for example for spelling, gender or case requirement.

Just as every statement does not need to be supported by an opinion, so every opinion does not need to be reinforced by an emphatic adverb. In extreme instances this can lead to unreal combinations such as *außerordentlich/sehr fantastisch*. It may be, of course, that such unusual emphasis is in fact desired, but this needs to be made clear with a supporting justification/explanation.

This year, there was increasing variety in the expression of justifications beyond the standard *weil*. More candidates showed awareness of such justifying adverbial words or phrases as *daher, deshalb, deswegen, infolgedessen, aus diesem Grund* etc. These and other adverbial links such as *außerdem, immerhin, trotzdem, zwar* etc were often used to good effect.

Whilst it is important to demonstrate variety of language, consideration also needs to be given to the weighting of some expressions. *Aus dem Grund, dass* is, for example, relatively 'heavy' and implies an emphasis which is not conveyed in the simple statement *ich bin ins Bett gegangen aus dem Grund, dass ich müde war*. In addition, it should be remembered that the English justifier 'so' is a 'false friend' for German.

Above all else candidates should be encouraged to think for themselves and to carefully consider how to create, from what they have learned, their most effective response to the task title and the purpose it is given. This is why different abilities will need different guidance and tasks with different demands. Specific lexical items or structures are stepping-stones for guidance towards that end, but assessment is according to individual application and outcome.

Administration

The deadline for submitting work to examiners was properly observed by nearly all centres. Occasionally writing tasks were sent to the centre's allocated speaking moderator along with the centre's speaking materials, leading to delays. Notes and written work were not always properly collated or in the correct order. Treasury tags are by far the preferred system for ease of reference and keeping sheets together. Plastic wallets are impractical, making extraction and re-insertion unnecessarily time-consuming.

Some teachers included Teacher Information forms with suggested task details. This is not required and they are not cross-referenced. These should be retained at the centre until the December following submission. Notes forms, however, are mandatory, and it is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the forms are properly headed, as well as signed and dated by candidates, even if they are otherwise left blank. They may show a maximum of forty words over five bullet points, without pictures or any form of code. Teachers are required to check that these rules have been correctly observed. Crossings-out, if still legible, must be included in these forty words. The signing of the Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) is confirmation of compliance with these and all controlled assessment regulations.

Centres are reminded that a (Writing) Centre Authentication form (CCS160) must be included with the entries, and that a separate form is necessary for the Speaking Unit, as these performances are processed by different assessors. The OCR attendance register should also be included with the scripts and allows the examiner to check that all expected candidates' work has been included in the package.

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