

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

IGCSE

IGCSE German (4375)

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Paper 1 - Listening

There was a relatively wide range of performance on this paper, although the majority of candidates managed to score above 20 marks in total. Teachers should bear in mind that candidates must learn to listen for detail (e.g. individual words or phrases) and also for gist (i.e. the overall meaning of a piece of spoken German). Those who fail to do the latter are often at a complete loss in Section B of the paper when the questions become more dependent on a wider understanding of what is being said.

Section A

Geburtstag This caused very few problems except for a few candidates who were not familiar with *Armbanduhr*.

In der Stadt Again this was mostly answered correctly. Occasionally weaker candidates crossed *Hotel* rather than *Markt* for the question 10.

Essen This was fairly accessible for all, with even weaker candidates scoring 2 or 3 points. The most common error was a failure to identify whose birthday was imminent.

Section B

Deutsch-Türken - Teil 1

It is worthwhile reminding candidates that in this sort of question at this level, the word that they hear will rarely be the word to enter in the space. Listening for gist is crucial here. Thus an awareness of tense was necessary to make the jump from *nicht so viele* to *weniger* in (b). Many candidates were confused by the word *Sprachen* in (a), assuming it to be the verb *sprechen*. They, therefore, entered *Türkisch* or *Deutsch* rather than the correct *zwei*.

Deutsch-Türken - Teil 2

This question discriminated well. There were many good answers in clear German. However, weaker candidates tended to omit a vital detail which did not allow the mark. For example, some wrote simply *lustig* as an advantage rather than the more accurate *Deutschstunden sind lustig*. Other wrote the lessons were *lang* rather than *langsam*. Curiously *internationale (Atmosphäre)* was sometimes heard as *Internet*.

Das Leben auf dem Lande - Teil 1

Very few candidates crossed more than the required four correct sentences, although on some occasion only 2 or 3 were crossed. Candidates should be reminded that it is always worth having a go in this type of exercise. A surprising number though that (e) was correct. Sentences (c) and (d) caused some confusion for those who did not hear or in fact understand *Kühe* or *Flüßchen*.

Das Leben auf dem Lande - Teil 2

This question targeted at A* level required careful thought and only the best managed to score all 4 points. The listener had to pick up the crucial detail of *fast nie* to answer (a) correctly, *in der gleichen Situation wie ich* for (b) and the difference between the conditional and the present tense for (c).

Paper 2 - Reading & Writing

On the whole, most candidates coped well with the demands of both the Reading and the Writing tasks, although a broader range of ability was evident this year.

Examiners felt the paper reflected the interests of young people and all questions worked well. Some candidates still appear unfamiliar with the format of certain questions and Centres are reminded of the need to prepare candidates specifically for the demands of the questions so that they are confident with the format.

Section A

Part One

Q1 Urlaub

This question provided a gentle entry into the paper and the vast majority of candidates scored full marks here.

Q2 Oliver Pocher

Most candidates fared very well with this question and now know to limit the amount of information they give under each heading: instances of extended replies were much less frequent than in previous series. One or two candidates were confused over the *Wohnort* and predictably, perhaps, gave *Hannover* rather than *Köln*.

Q3 Gesundheit

Some candidates scored full marks here. A significant majority, however, as well as identifying all the correct responses were misled into thinking Laura still eats sweets and so put a cross next to c). This meant they gave six answers in total - despite there being only five marks for the question. Assessment practice here dictates that the number of superfluous crosses is subtracted from the number of correct ones. Candidates should be reminded to read the rubric carefully (for this question it states quite clearly *nur 5 Bilder*) and to look at the number of marks available.

Section A

Part 2

Q4 Sind Sie gesund?

Candidates were clearly motivated by this topic and had plenty of things to say about their health and lifestyle choices. More able candidates were able to draw cleverly on the information in the linked Reading text, without merely lifting. Good performances were characterised by a confident, fluent use of the language. Such responses were fully relevant to the task and wholly comprehensible. They were not necessarily 100% accurate but full communication was achieved. Centres are advised to share with candidates the assessment grids on p16 of the Specification so that they understand the demands of this question.

Section B

Part One

Q5 Klima-Reisetipp: Deutschland

This question led to mixed fortunes. It targets higher grades and it proved to be a reliable discriminator. Candidates must demonstrate the ability to understand synonymous phrases and not all were able to do this. Centres would be advised to spend some time developing their candidates' vocabulary bank by looking at paraphrase, synonyms and indeed antonyms.

Section B

Part Two

Q6 Wildes Wasser

Question 6 targeted grades B, A and A* and was therefore more demanding. It discriminated exceptionally well. Individual questions tested a mix of factual understanding, inference and the drawing of conclusions and whilst the majority of candidates coped with the factual knowledge, fewer enjoyed success in those questions requiring some level of inference. This ability to demonstrate understanding at a more complex level is a vital skill at grades A and A* and Centres would be advised to practise and reinforce this with their more able candidates to ensure greater confidence and proficiency. In addition, close and careful reading

was required and some scripts showed evidence of superficial skimming only. On the whole candidates were able to communicate their answers effectively, if not grammatically accurately. Candidates should be dissuaded from lifting from the text: they should bear in mind that questions are set in such a way as to make lifting difficult if the answer is to make any real sense. Answers were assessed first of all for communication of correct information, and then a global mark was awarded for the quality of the candidate's German. There was some considerable confusion over the gender of Heike, but clearly Examiners did not penalise this.

(a) Weaker candidates tended to lift chunks from the opening paragraph e.g. *für Kanusportler* which did not provide an adequate answer to the question.

(b) This was the first inference question and proved a very good discriminator.

Some

candidates lifted from the text again e.g. *die meisten bekannten Sportarten* whilst better candidates were able to offer specific examples of these sports e.g. *Fußball, Tennis*. In preparation for this type of question, candidates should be trained to recognise the significance of the words *wahrscheinlich, wohl, vielleicht* and to demonstrate understanding beyond the immediate confines of the text.

(c) Most candidates enjoyed success here: there were three possible characteristics to choose from to gain one mark.

(d) Again, most candidates were able to score the mark here.

(e) Candidates struggled with this question. Weaker candidates tended to lift from the text and often came up with answers which made little sense grammatically e.g. *Mut und Kraft*. Only the best candidates could deduce that she finds it e.g. *anstrengend* or *ermüdend*.

(f) This inference question was aimed at the A* candidates. Many better candidates gave answers along the correct lines such as *Kanufahren ist ein Wassersport* but such answers did not quite hit the mark. Weaker candidates again just lifted from the text and gave answers which made little sense.

- (g) Surprisingly, perhaps, this question thwarted many.
- (h) Again, there were many possible answers here and most candidates enjoyed success.
- (i) This was generally answered well.
- (j) The instruction to give *ein Beispiel* was not a great help to many candidates in this inference question. Examiners had expected to see some indication that candidates understood *Mode und Internet*. Therefore, any answers which demonstrated such an understanding were viable e.g. *sie schreibt/schickt Emails, sie kauft Kleider*. No marks were available for merely giving *Mode und Internet* as an answer.

The standard of original German used in the responses was very encouraging overall. Only in rare cases was communication hindered by poor and inaccurate language.

Section C

Examiners were pleased to note that candidates were inspired by all three titles in this writing section although (c) was the most popular option. All three titles offered candidates some guidance in the structuring of their writing via the bullet points and whilst many candidates were able to demonstrate the ability to communicate a wide range of ideas, weaker candidates were unable to convey all the specified information.

To access the top marks, candidates should be able to link the concepts within their essay so that it forms a coherent whole rather a sequence of disparate episodes. It is also important to use a range of tenses and verb forms, show evidence of a confident use of a variety of more complex structures and lexis. High scoring responses were typified by this but in general, the range of language used and the levels of accuracy achieved were variable. To achieve a coherent essay, candidates should be encouraged to use linking words such as *außerdem, jedoch, leider* more confidently: for the most part there was an over-reliance on simple sentence structures and any attempt at subordination involved the use of *weil* with the verb *ist*.

Candidates must observe the word count for the essay: those who submit shorter responses will not be able to access the full range of marks since the mark grids are assessing responses of 150 words. Essays which exceeded 150 words were not penalised but some were, in fact, self-penalising as the quality of language tended to deteriorate after the 150 words.

- (a) There were some disappointing essays here. In the main, weaker candidates appear to have opted for this title and Examiners read some rather pedestrian accounts of bizarre events which were often difficult to relate to the stimulus. The final bullet point was frequently ignored, perhaps because the situation giving rise to the *accident* described did not lend itself to being improved. Therefore, this proved to be an unwise choice for many.
- (b) The essay must demonstrate a connection with the title for it to be admissible. This title gave rise to accounts of candidates' family situation and life e.g. how many siblings and profession of parents etc. Irrelevant essays which do not address the title appropriately will score 0 for content and consequently 0 for language. Candidates should therefore choose their title very carefully. For those candidates who understood the significance of the title, bullet 3 was often neglected. This affected both the mark awarded for Communication and Content and the marks awarded for Knowledge & Application of Language since this bullet required candidates to use future time references. Candidates must ensure they have made reference to each point, however briefly.
- (c) This was the most popular choice and overall candidates fared better here. Many candidates were able to write confidently about this topic with which they are both comfortable and familiar. Examiners read some detailed essays here, in which candidates demonstrated their ability to narrate events and express opinions using a wide range of structures and lexis.

Paper 3 - Speaking

Once again, a large proportion of candidates entered for this Specification took the optional speaking component. Examiners were pleased to listen to some very proficient speaking tests sympathetically conducted which evidenced a pleasing standard of candidate performance.

Section A: Presentation and discussion based on a single picture.

For this part of the Speaking test candidates must select a picture. It is very important that candidates choose this picture wisely since it should allow adequate exploitation to enable candidates to demonstrate their speaking proficiency. Whilst there were some excellent examples which reflected the interests of the candidates and gave rise to some very lively discussions, there were, sadly, some less inspiring samples which failed to facilitate adequate discussion material.

Candidates should start this section by giving a presentation for up to a **maximum of one minute** on their picture. They then take part in a conversation, which should last **no longer than 3 minutes**, based on their chosen picture. This **total of 4 minutes** represents an adequate length of time for candidates to give a personal interpretation of the picture, express opinions and discuss issues arising from the picture. In general, conversations which exceeded 4 minutes were self-penalising and Examiners were instructed to listen to 4 minutes only: thus any excess material was not assessed. Centres are therefore advised to respect these time limits in the best interests of their candidates. Furthermore, it is more reassuring for the candidate if the conversation is brought to a fairly natural close rather than ending abruptly almost in mid-flow.

On occasions information was asked for in the discussion which had already been given in the presentation. This should be avoided wherever possible since candidates cannot be credited twice for the same information and language. It is not perhaps in the spirit of the examination for the Interviewer to ask exactly the same questions of each candidate: it could be argued that this approach takes away any element of unpredictability. Questions may be repeated or rephrased to enable candidates give a suitable answer. Interviewers should be careful not to ask what are essentially repetitive questions i.e. variations on the same question several times. Thus it is more profitable to ask a candidate to describe only **one** person in the picture rather

than all of them. This would then allow time for a wider range of questions to be posed e.g.

Was hat diese Person eben gemacht?

Warum sitzen diese Leute im Wohnzimmer?

Was wird bald geschehen?

Interviewers should ensure their candidates have the opportunity to fulfil the requirements of the assessment criteria, namely express and justify opinions, give extended responses to a wide range of question types, and use an appropriately wide variety of structures and lexis, including a full range of tenses. Such performances would give candidates access to the full range of marks.

Section B: Two conversations

In this section candidates are required to take part in conversations with the Interviewer on **two separate conversation topics chosen by the Interviewer**.

Centres are advised to read p39 of the specification which states explicitly that candidates may not know in advance of the test which topics they are going to be asked questions on in Conversations 2 & 3: there is, therefore, no option for candidates to choose one of these two topics. The transition between the conversation topics should be made plain to help both the candidate recognise that the conversation is moving on and the examiner identifies the two discrete topic areas being discussed. There were examples this year of centres asking candidates questions on only one topic area in Section B. This clearly has significant negative implications for the candidate's overall score.

In Section B, Interviewers should again adhere to the timings laid down in the Specification, namely a maximum of 3 minutes for **each** conversation topic to make a total of 6 minutes for this section. In section B Examiners were instructed to listen to only 3 minutes per topic. In general longer conversations were self-penalising as candidates began to struggle to find things to say and incidence of error increased.

Whilst Interviewers are free to develop any area within the chosen conversation topics, care should be taken to avoid any overlap with the material covered in Section A and with the other topic in section B of the test. Interviewers are reminded

that the questions in the Specimen papers are **suggestions** only and that they should be mindful of the need to respond naturally to a candidate's previous answer to facilitate a more natural flow to the conversation.

It is preferable to ask candidates, particularly the more able, open-ended questions rather than closed ones. Thus *Beschreiben Sie, wo Sie wohnen!* or *beschreib dein Haus* are infinitely better than *Wohnst du in einem Haus oder in einer Wohnung?*

Centres' attention is drawn to p12 of the Specification where it is stated that 'in order to achieve grade C and above, candidates will be expected to express opinions and use past, present and future tenses.' This should be demonstrated in each of the two conversations of section B. Interviewers did not always give candidates the opportunity to use a wide range of verb forms, use past, present and future tenses or express opinions. Candidates will not have access to the full range of marks if they do not fulfil these criteria. Centres' attention is drawn equally to the Grade Descriptions on page 14 of the Specification. These detail typical performances at the key grade boundaries.

General

Interviewers are to be commended on their sympathetic and encouraging conduct of the speaking tests. However, it should be noted that closed questions rarely encourage candidate participation. Those candidates wishing to access the higher bands in the assessment grids must show evidence of the ability to expand and take the initiative in the conversation and open-ended questions are therefore more relevant.

Centre administration for the Speaking Tests was good. The quality of the recordings was, however, very variable. In some instances candidates were virtually inaudible due to either extraneous noise or poor quality recording hardware. Reference should be made to p37 & p39 of the Specification which outline the requirement for a quiet environment and audible recording.

Statistics

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Grade Boundaries	80	72	64	56	46	37	28	19

Notes

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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