

# Examiners' Report Summer 2009

IGCSE

IGCSE German (4375)

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## Paper 1 - Listening

### General Overall Comments

It is important that candidates are prepared for the range of question types used in this paper and that they are aware of the incline of difficulty from the relatively straightforward identification of words in the initial question to the more complex skill of listening for specific detail in the latter questions.

### Question 1 - Schule

This provided an accessible way in to the paper. All candidates answered (i) and (ii) correctly; (iii) and (v) caused problems with *Erdkunde* occasionally understood as *Kunst* and *Turnhalle* often unknown, perhaps heard as *Tonhalle*.

### Question 2 - Wetterbericht

This was generally well answered, and the icons did not cause any problems. *Gewitter* was not well known.

### Question 3 - Im Fundbüro

Although many candidates scored well on this question, weaker candidates were let down by their poor spelling. A wide range of spellings was accepted, but *brown* instead of *braun* and *leather* instead of *Leder* were rejected. The biggest problem was with *Portemonnaie*, even for native speakers. Again the mark scheme allowed for a wide range of attempted spellings, but where the word was confused with *Pocket Money*, this was rejected. A few candidates did not manage to differentiate between the fact that the man had the bag in the afternoon but probably lost it in the evening.

### Question 4 - Ein internationaler Tag

*Teil 1* was well answered, although a few confused *Musik*, as suggested by *Lieder*, with *Modeschau*. Almost all managed to identify *Essen* and *Diskussionen*.

*Teil 2* was more demanding and differentiated well. Candidates need to study this type of question carefully during the 5 minutes reading time at the beginning of the examination to ensure that they know exactly what the written statements mean.

### Question 5 - Umwelt

*Teil 1*: Weaker candidates resorted to guess work here. Although better candidates tended to score in (a) and (b), they often assumed the film was about *Industrie*, which is only one cause of *Waldsterben*, rather than the correct *Natur*. In (d), it is likely that *ermäßigt* was not well known, and many wrote *kostenlos*. Very few candidates wrote nonsensical answers.

*Teil 2:* This note-taking test required careful listening, rather than an overall understanding of the gist of what was said. Many candidates managed to identify that the father bought regional products, although some lost the mark by saying that he only bought environmentally friendly products or simply that he went shopping. To gain the mark in (b), it was necessary to note that the mother used the train either often or that she took the train to work: a simple statement such as *fährt mit dem Zug* was not enough. Some candidates confused *aus* with *auf* in (c). It was not enough to note that Riccardo recycled things; the more detailed response *er recycelt alte Dosen*, or words to that effect, was necessary to gain the mark.

## Paper 2 - Reading and Writing

### General Overall Comments

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 Essen und Trinken

This question provided a gentle entry into the paper and most candidates scored full marks here. A few candidates, anxious to progress to the more challenging questions, selected incorrect answers to parts (iv) and (v), but these candidates were in a minority.

#### Q2 Ferien in Linz

Most candidates fared very well with this question. Some over-hasty reading of the text led some to select E and the value of more careful reading of the text should be stressed here.

#### Q3 zu Fuß zur Schule

Very few candidates scored full marks here. Part (iii) proved to be very challenging either because candidates failed to take on board the significance of the word *Verkehrsmittel* or because they just did not understand it. Thus, very many candidates gave *zu Fuß* as an answer, which is, of course, incorrect, or they gave the correct answer (*mit dem*) *Fahrrad* but then shot themselves in the foot by adding *zu Fuß*. Incorrect information will negate any correct answer, so candidates should be wary of 'hedging their bets'. On the positive side, the majority of candidates now know to limit the amount of information they give under each heading: instances of extended replies were relatively rare.

## Section A

### Part 2

#### Q4 Was machen Sie für Ihre Fitness?

Candidates were clearly motivated by this topic and had plenty of things to say about their 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 Medien

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. The most frequent incorrect response here was (i).

## Section B

### Part Two

#### Q6 Einkaufen rund um die Uhr

Question 6 targets grades B, A and A\* and is 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. 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. Candidates should be dissuaded from lifting from the text: firstly, lifting does not demonstrate unequivocally good understanding of the text and secondly if candidates lift their answer, they cannot expect to score a high mark for the quality of their language - since it is not their language.

- (a) Examiners were looking for answers which went beyond the more factual *shops close at 20.00* and credit was given to answers which suggested that one had had to work late or had forgotten to buy something important etc.



- (b) Candidates could gain the mark here by giving either a factual answer explaining that politicians had decided to change the rules/laws on opening times, or an answer based more on inference i.e. to enable people to shop for longer. The factual answer was the more common, although unfortunately there was a lot of lifting of the phrase *Politiker haben dort beschlossen, dass die etc...*
- (c) Most candidates enjoyed success here. Exceptionally, examiners did accept a targeted lift in this instance of *von Montag bis Samstag rund um die Uhr* although many candidates were able to communicate this message successfully in their own words. Candidates who lifted just *von Montag bis Samstag* did not score the point, as this lift does not contain all the vital information to answer the question.
- (d) This was not always answered with adequate focus. Again, there were two potential answers, namely that people in Bavaria are not able to shop longer and/or later, or that a decision on the opening hours will be taken next year. Examiners saw both answers in equally measure.
- (e) Weaker candidates struggled with this question and tended to lift randomly from the text. More able candidates could access the relevant section of the text and were able to come up with an answer which suggested that one might go shopping at night if one had had to work late/in the evening.
- (f) Most candidates were able to gain a mark here.
- (g) Many answers were vague and in some instances highly ambiguous. It is essential that candidates communicate clearly what they have understood. Candidates made reference to *sie* but it was unclear whom they meant with this *sie*- the *Ladenbesitzer* or the *Mitarbeiter*.
- (h) Very few candidates met with success in this question. Lifting of the sentence *Es ist jedoch niemand gezwungen...* etc was commonplace, but this does not represent an answer to the question set. This question served as an excellent discriminator of the very best candidates.
- (i) Candidates struggled to give a reasonable answer to this question and so examiners again accepted a targeted lift: *ein Tag ohne Einkaufen. Kauf-Nix-Tag* was a popular lift, but unless candidates went on to explain what this meant, they were not awarded the mark. Many candidates answered incorrectly that all shops would be closed on that day.
- (j) This question proved to be equally challenging and only the best candidates were able to score a mark here. Weaker candidates again lifted a big chunk from the text, hoping for a lucky strike.

The standard of original German used in the responses varied immensely, but 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. All titles offered candidates some guidance in the structuring of their writing via the questions -option (a)- and the bullet points - options (b) and (c) - 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. Weaker candidates appeared to have misunderstood the crux of the task - to describe a past class/school trip, and chose instead to narrate their plans for a forthcoming 'holiday'. They were presumably misled by the opening statement of Anton's email. There were some rather pedestrian accounts of trips, some with a school group, some not. Therefore, this proved to be an unwise choice for many.

(b) Candidates opting for this title met with mixed fortunes. Those who read the bullet points and addressed them fully and relevantly fared well. Many candidates did not give any real details about their best friend in response to bullet 1 - examiners had expected to read descriptions of both physical attributes and characteristics. Bullet 2 was often addressed in the wrong tense - most commonly in the present tense. This meant that these candidates were not demonstrating an adequate range of language in their responses. The bullet points are carefully constructed to 'force' candidates to use a range of language: bullet 1 - present tense, bullet 2 - past tense, bullet 3 - future tense/future time references. Bullet 3 was often dealt with perfunctorily - just one brief sentence at the end of the essay.

(c) This was a most popular choice and overall candidates fared better here. Many candidates were able to write confidently and persuasively about this topic and examiners were delighted to read accounts of such motivation in language learning. Candidates cited many interesting ideas and reasons as to why one should learn a language and went into great detail about which languages they commanded and why they had learnt them. Unfortunately, some overlooked the last bullet point which had an impact on the mark for communication and content.

## Paper 3 - Speaking

### General Overall Comments

This summer's session 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. 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 in the spirit of the examination for the Interviewer to ask exactly the same questions of each candidate: such an 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 allow 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. 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 identify the two discrete topic areas being discussed.

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 cannot access 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, however, remains 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. Examiners are happy to receive candidates' speaking tests on either cassette or CD. For this latter, orals recorded in audio file or mp3 formats are acceptable.

## Statistics

### Paper 1 Listening

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Paper 1 grade boundaries	30	26	23	20	18	15	12	9	6

### Paper 2 Reading and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Paper 2 grade boundaries	60	47	42	37	32	26	21	16	11

### Paper 3 Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Paper 3 grade boundaries	60	51	45	39	33	26	19	13	7

## Notes

**Maximum Mark (Raw):** the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

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





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