



Pearson
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Examiner's Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

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In German (4GN0) Paper 03

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International GCSE/Edexcel Certificate German Paper 3 Speaking

General Comments

Although the vast majority of centres used the correct mark sheets to accompany the oral tests, a few were still using the old form which was withdrawn about 6 years ago. The contents of the exam have changed significantly and this old form is **not** fit for purpose. A small number of centres used the forms for the new specification which begins to be examined in 2019. This too is not fit for purpose as the marks awarded are different. Of course this mark sheet now becomes redundant as the new specification begins.

All mark sheets **must** be signed by the candidate **and** by the examiner. Occasionally this didn't happen and a signature had to be requested by the Pearson Edexcel examiner. This can lead to a delay in the marking of the tests. Examination Officers are advised to make sure sheets are signed before the candidates leave school on study leave or at the end of term.

Candidates are expected to participate in 3 conversations on 3 different Topic Areas, one for Section A and two for Section B. These three topic areas should be chosen from the five areas detailed in the specification and each topic area may be covered **only once**. If a Topic Area is repeated, the second one will receive **no** marks for the content.

Most recordings were clear and well-conducted. However, occasionally there were centres where there was a disturbance or noise from outside or even in one case where there seemed to be some major building work going on close by.

All tests were submitted either on a CD or on a USB memory stick. In most cases there were no problems, although a number of the recordings were rather faint or had quite a lot of noise in the background. It is accepted that some of this is unavoidable, such as traffic noise, but it would certainly be helpful if the microphone were to be placed closer to the candidate than the examiner. In a few cases markers discovered that the CD/USB stick was blank or that some of the recordings would not play. It would be useful if centres could check the recordings before sending them away as this can cause a significant delay in the marking process.

Most CDs and memory sticks were correctly labelled with permanent marker, but some still arrived with no markings and no protective case.

It was noticed that some centres are asking candidates to pick a card which they turn over for the next Topic Area. This is a good tactic as it proves correct conduct of the examination.

There were many examples of excellent questioning technique and highly differentiated questions. Good examiners encouraged their students and questions were personalised. On the other hand, some examiners rushed the students, not allowing them to consider their answers, and interrupting when candidates were offering an interesting and valid response.

The timing of the test is very important.
The specification states the following:
The presentation should be up to one minute.
The discussion on the picture should be up to three minutes.
Each of the conversations should be up to three minutes.

Markers will stop listening and marking after the 1 minute / 3 minutes have elapsed. Tests which are too short are unlikely to contain the full range of structures, vocabulary and ideas expected. Examiners should try to ensure that the discussion and the conversations are all between 2 minutes 40 seconds and 3 minutes in length.

It is not appropriate to time the two conversations together. The two conversations should be of similar length, not one of about 4 minutes and one of 2. This would result in one containing 1 minute of extra material which would not count in the assessment, and the second would not contain enough material. Most examiners did time the tests correctly. However, some discussions on the picture were far less than 1 minute. Some centres felt the whole of Section A needed to be 4 minutes and if the presentation were short, then the discussion should be lengthened. This is not the case.

Please note that the timing of each section begins when the **candidate** begins to speak.

Examiners should **not** use the suggested questions as a prescribed list. These questions are there to give the examiner some ideas. Questions should follow on from what the candidate has previously said to produce an actual **conversation**. Sometimes markers have the impression that examiners are not listening to the candidate's answers.

Candidates should **never** have prior knowledge of any of the questions in the test and should not know which of the two topics will be tested in Section B. Answers sometimes seemed to have been pre learned. This does not enter into the spirit of this examination.

Examiners should **avoid closed questions** which elicit one word answers from candidates and they should also refrain from asking several questions at once. This confuses candidates. Examiners should also refrain from providing vocabulary for candidates, correcting them or answering for them. On a number of occasions, the examiner was not familiar with the format of the examination and conducted the test incorrectly. Good examiners sympathetically re-phrased questions for candidates and varied the type of question that they were asking. They also interrupted if a candidate started to recite a pre-learned monologue. It is very important for candidates to use a range of tenses and good examiners elicited past, present and future tenses in both sections of the exam.

Section A

In the first part of the examination the candidates choose a **single** picture which they then introduce as a presentation, without interruption from the examiner. This is followed by a discussion based on the picture lasting **up to** 3 minutes. The picture chosen **must** be linked to one of the 5 Topic Areas in the specification, and this Topic Area may **not** be chosen again in Section B.

The most popular and successful were pictures of family holidays. There were a few photos of school trips which resulted in a little bit of a mix up of topics (was it school or was it holidays?), although fortunately this never actually resulted in the same Topic Area being used twice, just a bit of straying into a different Topic Area. Some examiners spent far too long asking for descriptions of people in the picture when Topic Area C, self, family & friends, was not the Topic Area chosen. Most of the pictures showed lots of people and lots of action so that there was plenty to talk about which led to good presentations and discussions.

A couple of centres used cartoons of town life. Some of these were handled well, but there was often a tendency for long lists of "es gibt" in the picture and very little range of language.

Pictures of a person on a ski slope or a beach with nothing in the background cannot work well. There were only a few of these, but with no action going on and no other people on the picture it is very difficult for the examiner to ask questions about the picture after the presentation and the presentations themselves are often very bland.

Some of the town cartoons had so much going on that weaker candidates didn't know all of the vocabulary and were not able to deal with questions about an area of the picture they weren't prepared for.

Topic Area D, the modern world and the environment, was also very frequently chosen and Topic Areas B and C were also represented. In general teachers and candidates stuck to the correct sub-topic areas for the chosen Topic Area and if they deviated it was generally still relevant and only for one question or so. Some teachers had the whole class do their presentation on the same one or two topics. This meant that sometimes candidates had different photos but very similar presentations and it was obvious the class had been supplied with phrases to use specifically for presentations within that Topic Area. One examiner had most candidates describe a photo of a family eating either at home or on holiday (having a picnic) and tweaked it so it could come under either Topic Area E, healthy eating, Topic Area C or even Topic Area A.

Most candidates performed better in the presentation that they had time to prepare for but a few candidates' quality of language and accuracy was better in the follow-up discussion. Possibly they had been given less support and guidance prior to preparing the presentation. On the other hand a couple of candidates had very good presentations but were not able to understand many of the follow up questions.

Centres should therefore make sure that the picture is fully relevant to the chosen Topic Area. Some images could potentially fit into several Topic Areas

and it is important to focus the conversation and material on one Topic Area only. Indeed, marks were often lost because the questions asked were from a different Topic Area.

Examiners have the responsibility of assuring that the correct technique is applied to the conduct of the examination.

The candidate must not be allowed to speak for longer than 1 minute for the presentation. This may be shorter but not significantly so. The candidate is allowed to learn the presentation but it should be the candidate's own work and not corrected in advance by a teacher.

The discussion must be organised into a three stage development of questioning as follows:

- a) Questions based **directly** on the picture.
- b) Questions based **indirectly** on the picture.
- c) Questions about the **general Topic Area**.

Many examiners continue to fail to ask questions directly or even indirectly on the picture and simply move on to the General Topic Area. This is not acceptable examining technique. It makes the picture itself almost irrelevant as it is the whole basis of the discussion.

The examiner should begin with a number of questions directly on the picture. These should be varied. There is no point in asking the candidate to describe the clothes of every person on a picture. This not only wastes time but does not stretch candidates. At least three questions ought to be put directly on the picture.

This is followed by questions which are indirectly related to the picture and these questions are an opportunity to allow the candidate to use tenses by asking what might have happened or might happen next after the picture was produced. Only then should the candidate move on to questions on the General Topic Area. It is not necessary to stick to one sub topic and neither is it necessary to ask questions on all sub topics.

Yet again a number of candidates did no presentation, and a number were asked no questions at all after the presentation. This resulted in a much reduced mark. Without a presentation or discussion a candidate cannot access the full content mark scheme.

Centres are reminded that the candidates' pictures should be sent to the marker along with the oral mark sheets and the recordings. Where this is not possible a note describing the picture **must** be included. Examiners require an understanding of what the candidate and the examiner can see.

When dealing with native speakers, some examiners seemed keen to show off their level of German and knowledge about Germany to their candidates and forgot to stick to the task! Timings were not adhered to, different tenses were

not used, direct questions on the picture not asked – and this frequently prevented the candidates from getting full marks.

Native speakers should always be aware that the fact they are fluent in German does not mean they will get full marks if they do not follow the rules of the examination.

Here are some examples of good practice noted by examiners:

Some examiners had clearly encouraged their candidates to use different tenses and complex constructions throughout the exam.

Some examiners helped good candidates by asking complex questions which they could deal with at an early point in the discussions, well before the 3 minutes was up.

Some examiners helped weak candidates by not asking them questions they clearly could not deal with and keeping it simple. They allowed candidates the opportunity to use past and future tenses in a simple way, without over-complicating things and causing candidates to lose their way.

Some examiners were excellent at having a natural conversation with their candidates, asking follow up questions which did not sound rehearsed, but still managing to give candidates opportunities to produce a wide range of language.

Examples of poor practice:

Some examiners just asked too many questions and did not really give candidates the opportunity to expand.

Some examiners used the same questions over and over again and responses were obviously pre-prepared. There was a big discrepancy in the level of language if anything unexpected came up! One or two examiners insisted on asking their set complex questions even when it was obvious that their weaker candidates would not be able to deal with them and would just get more flustered and nervous.

Some examiners asked so many questions about the picture that they left no time for more straightforward questions on the General Topic Area. Some of these questions were totally contrived and unnecessary and some were not really appropriate for the type of picture, yet they were asked to more or less every candidate.

Overall, however, the above problems were very much in the minority.

Section B

In this section the candidates are required to take part in 2 conversations **of equal length** on 2 further Topic Areas from the specification chosen by the examiner. They must be different from the Topic Area chosen in Section A and must **never** be known by the candidate in advance.

The examiner should announce the start of the Topic Area and again before the second conversation.

Tests which are too short are unlikely to contain the full range of structures, vocabulary and ideas expected. Examiners should try to ensure that the discussion and the conversations are all between 2 minutes 40 seconds and 3 minutes in length.

Centres had different approaches regarding the choice of topics.

One centre made errors whereby 3 candidates had the same topic for the second conversation as they had for the presentation and discussion.

Another centre got the student to pick at random two cards to decide on the conversation topics and this worked well. Some examiners didn't ask a great variety of questions and were sticking to a narrow and predictable bank of questions, sometimes even only very straightforward questions which meant that candidates didn't necessarily show an ability to respond to a variety of questions and weren't encouraged to express complex ideas, opinions and attitudes.

One examiner always started the conversations with an "*Erzähl mir über...*" question which meant that the candidates were answering with a "mini presentation" to begin. This did not always help the candidates as they sometimes got lost in very repetitive language and simple content (for example describing several family members' hair, eyes etc.).

Another examiner asked follow up questions before the candidates had time to develop their point or give reasons which wasn't particularly helpful either.

However on the whole examiners were able to get the candidates to show how much they could understand and say in German

Overall, the standard this year was very high. Once again however the German native speakers did not necessarily get the highest marks. This was often due to the examination being too short. Although, the candidate may speak fluently the timings and other regulations must still be taken into consideration. Sometimes the candidate had not really prepared properly and did not have a lot to say. Sometimes the wrong types of questions were asked, including a lack of tenses.

At a few centres the examiner did not really use a conversation-style technique in Section B. A question and answer style was used, which can lead to unnatural responses, including apparently pre-learned material and/or lack of spontaneity in the candidates' responses. Also, in one particular case the examiner had a tendency to dominate the conversation, not allowing the candidate to perform or simply to give *Ja* or *Nein* answers when they were clearly capable of much more. The problem of the examiner asking far too complicated questions for the level of the candidate's ability and thereby overwhelming the candidate occasionally happened again this year.

Section B was generally successful and there were some outstanding examples of spontaneous and fluent German. The rapport between candidate and

examiner was very important in this section of the examination and less able pupils who were examined by their class teacher tended to perform better than pupils of similar ability who were examined by an examiner who did not know them (often a native speaker invited specially to conduct the orals).

Failure to use a range of tenses and insufficient length of either conversation were the main causes of lost marks for the most able pupils.

Some centres asked their candidates questions on the same topic areas, even when there were a lot of candidates. Topic Areas A, B and C were most popular but those offered D produced some very good conversations. There were occasions again this year where some examiners noticeably strayed too far from the selected topic area.

Insufficient time was sometimes spent on one conversation area. Often if a conversation went on longer than necessary, examiners compensated in the second conversation. Another problem, also noted last year, with longer conversations was that the more stretching questions tended to come towards the end, and therefore often after the 3 minutes. For the most able candidates some of the straightforward questions could be missed out in favour of the more advanced questions. Even when a stopwatch was used the examiner seemed to think that the 3 minutes was just an indication to think about finishing the conversation rather than the requirement to finish at once.

At one centre the examiner made any discussions and conversations far too long, sometimes over 4 or even 5 minutes, with occasional ones too short. Expansive language could often not be credited because it was beyond the 3 minutes limit. There were too many pointless questions on the picture, like "*What do you think this person is saying?*", when he is clearly not saying anything! At this Centre every candidate had the same questions, so it was clearly pre prepared. There was very little general conversation and personal questions about the wider topic.

A number of points of concern were noted by the team of markers this year which included the following:

The repetition of the same question with the same wording when the candidate had not understood.

The interruption of the candidate.

Closed questions.

Mocking the candidate when they made a mistake.

Spending too much time shuffling and getting papers sorted, which made the candidate more nervous.

Unsuitable questions, such as '*Können Sie mir erklären, was ein Vertrag ist?*'

Interruption before the candidate got to say the verb at the end of the sentence.

Lost marks due to timings being short, or no questions encouraging different tenses.

The examiner completing sentences for the candidate.

Tests of up to 19 minutes!

Too much talking by the examiner about their own holidays for example.

Asking questions that the candidate had already answered.

It should be remembered that the candidate is under a lot of pressure. Clearly

most examiners understand this, but those who have an unsympathetic examiner are disadvantaged, often considerably. A number of examiners once again this year were too aggressive and this is not fair. Candidates are also often thrown by an examiner who does not appear to be listening and does not develop the conversation.

As was the case last year very few recordings in Section B were too long, but a significant number were too short, in some cases shorter than two minutes, which meant that candidates could not score highly. Even if a candidate is extremely good and speaks quickly, the section should **not** be shortened. The vast majority of examiners and candidates performed very well and overall the examination this year has once again been very successful.

All markers would like to express their thanks for the hard work undertaken by both candidates and examiners.

Grade Boundaries

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