

Examiners' Report January 2007

GCE

GCE German (8230/9230)

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AS Unit 1 (6481) - Listening and Writing

Assessment Principles

This paper carries 50 marks. 26 marks are given for responding to a variety of German question-types; 14 for discrete items; 12 for answers in German. 8 marks are given to each of two personal responses in the target language. The final section, a guided summary in English, carries 8 marks.

Up to 26 marks are awarded positively for correct information successfully retrieved and conveyed in response to the German question-types on passages 1-5. The quality of German in the answers is only an assessment factor in so far as it impedes communication. Up to 16 marks are awarded for two personal responses based on the same text used for the German question and answer section: 8 each for Content and Quality of German, using the grids published in the Specification. Up to 8 marks are awarded positively, according to the mark scheme, for the guided English summary.

Candidates' Responses

Examiners felt that this paper was accessible and differentiated candidate performance. On the whole, candidate performance was good, with many candidates able to cope well with the demands of the paper. A good number displayed good passive understanding of the language. There was some variety in the standard of written German: a few candidates managed to communicate enough to score some points, and a pleasing number of candidates were able to score very well in Q5. This may be due to a number of candidates resitting the paper in Year 13 with an additional term of German behind them. There was evidence that many candidates had benefited from training with past papers and understood well the exact requirements of the tasks. Candidates who failed to develop fully such skills performed less well.

Q1-3 were in general well done, although a number of weaker candidates made incorrect entries from the word box in Q2. As in previous years, such candidates often choose items to fill the gaps which are grammatically impossible. Candidates need to practise such tasks before the examination.

Q4 was felt to differentiate well, with a full range of marks being awarded.

Q4a was accessible to almost all candidates (perhaps three out of the whole entry failed to score here).

Q4b - most candidates scored for finding a new home. A good many also got the mark for 'behandelt sie medizinisch', although some did not understand what they had heard and attempted transcription such as 'behandelt sie mit der Zienisch' which of course could not score. Some others wrote 'sie behandelt die Katzen' or 'sie behandelt Medizin' which were thought not precise enough to score.

Q4c - the majority of candidates scored both points as there were three possible pieces of information to include. Almost everyone knew there were seven cats (although a handful of candidates thought there were seventeen). There were various offers for 'Karton', and spellings which appeared to be attempts at transcription which were not allowed - 'Kartong' was a frequent response which was not credited. A few (probably native speakers) offered a good synonym. The word caused problems, many were distracted by the 'Stadtwald' and put 'in der Stadt' which was not credited.

Q4d - More than half gained the mark here. A good number of otherwise excellent candidates failed to score by responding that she needed to find homes for them all.

Q4e - The word 'füttern' was unknown by many candidates and most attempted transcriptions, like 'vertan' did not work. A good many candidates, however, did manage to transcribe it correctly, though not always with the umlaut. There were some very good answers along the lines of 'um den Katzen Milch zu geben'. Sometimes the standard of the candidates' German let them down and they wrote clearly wrong information such as 'um die Katzen (mit Milch) zu essen' or 'die Pflegeeltern mussten die Katzen alle zwei Stunden fürchten'.

Q4f - This was well done on the whole and often by candidates who had found other parts of Q4 difficult. The vast majority put 'sie ist blind' and most also gave one of the two possibilities for the second mark. A few were unclear about the usage of 'verbringen' and tried to use it in unsuccessful sentences like 'die Familie muss die Katze in der Wohnung verbringen'.

Q4g - Many gave the succinct answer 'Berufstätiger' and other successful answers included the idea of people who are never at home.

Q4h - This was the least successfully answered item. Although 'Pension' should be known, 'Katzenpension' threw many candidates. There were attempts to transcribe it but few were successful. Some understood the idea but suggested sending the cat to a 'Tierheim' which is the incorrect type of institution. Many also struggled to convey the idea of finding someone to look after the cat. Some wrongly suggested taking the cat on holiday with you.

Q5

This was well done on the whole with a high standard of language. Many were highly accurate and many candidates used a very good variety of lexis and structures. A few words were still not understood, and there were a few instances of 'Katzenconsion' and 'Katzenkop', which are meaningless. It is encouraging to note that fewer candidates than previously failed to address the demands of the question, where a personal response to what has been heard is required.

Q5a - a handful of candidates misunderstood the question and answered what Frau Müller was looking for in a foster family. The majority gave a good account of her qualities.

Q5b - This was also answered quite well and seemed easier to approach than Q5a as candidates who wrote too little or misunderstood 5a nevertheless fared better with Q5b. Many, however, included ideas from the text which were not really problems.

Q6

Many responses were too long and some were horribly long. Some candidates scored no marks at all for 6c and d just by producing over-long answers. Due to the difficulties with 6c and writing more than 60 words, few gained the full total of 8 marks. There were sadly still some instances where candidates answered in German (which is a rubric offence) and therefore received no marks.

6a - the vast majority gained both marks. A few wrongly suggested that she ignored her parents or pretended not to be with them.

6b - Most gained 2 marks. A few did not make the required link between the parents having more money and that the girl benefited from this as they paid for everything.

6c - This section was answered the least well. Relatively few candidates understood 'kontrollieren' as check/monitor her comings and goings and rendered this as controlling her. Some gained a mark for saying she couldn't go the parties. Very few gained both marks.

6d - Most gave both pieces of information though a few suggested she climb over the fence and not out of the window.

Advice and Guidance

- Candidates need to be well-prepared to cope with the requirements of the paper, and there is evidence that many have been well-trained by their teachers. Practice with past papers is very helpful in enabling candidates to understand the rubrics and the demands of the paper.
- Candidates must follow the rubrics and keep within the word limits stated. In Q5a and Q5b, they should not use more than 40 words, and 60 words is an absolute limit in Q6 - examiners are instructed to disregard any information after this cut-off point.
- Q5 requires a personal response to what has been heard. Answers which do not show evidence of this are self-penalising. If the answer does not address the question, it is irrelevant and will not yield any marks for Content and therefore no marks for Quality of Language.
- Candidates who merely attempt to transcribe language run the risk of failing to communicate enough to score (see notes on Q4e and Q4h and Q5). It is often better to attempt to give the response in the candidate's own German, which should at least convey the point the candidate is trying to make.

AS Unit 2 (6482) – Reading and Writing

In this paper candidates are required to demonstrate their comprehension of four passages of German by means of a variety of exercises, one of which requires German questions to be answered in the target language, and one of which consists of questions in English to be answered in English. The final task is a directed writing exercise in which the candidates respond in German to a German stimulus with guidelines in German. Candidates may be assured that 'grammatical manipulation' test-types are not used in this module.

Assessment Principles

A maximum of 40 marks is awarded positively for correct information successfully retrieved and conveyed in response to those target-language and English questions not requiring answers in continuous prose: the quality of the language is only an assessment factor insofar as it impedes communication. Full credit is given for answers in clear, unambiguous German or, where appropriate, English, provided they contain relevant material.

For the continuous target-language writing at the end of this module, content and quality of language are equally important. Up to 40 marks are awarded positively using the grid in the syllabus. Knowledge and skills to be rewarded include the ability to communicate clearly and intelligibly; to write accurately and in the appropriate register; to produce a range of lexis and structures; and to respond relevantly and effectively to the terms of the question.

Mark Schemes

Where appropriate, at the Standardisation Meeting a few days after the examination the Examiners discuss a number of possible versions and variants which have emerged from their considering a large number of scripts prior to the meeting. A definitive mark scheme is agreed and signed at the end of the meeting by the Principal Examiner.

All tasks are marked positively, with varying marks available for each question according to the information required in the answer or the difficulty of the question. The number of marks available for each sub-section is clearly stated within the paper.

Candidates' Responses

The Examiners were agreed that the paper as a whole represented a good test, that it was user-friendly and fair to all candidates, that the texts were interesting, that the questions were well thought out and that the paper as a whole differentiated well between the weaker candidates and the very able ones.

The vast majority of candidates obtained full marks on the exercise based on the first text. Clearly the task was a welcome and up-to-date introduction to the examination. Although the rubric requested candidates to give a name as their answer, the Examiners also permitted the unambiguous use of initials.

On the first task set under the second text, the majority of candidates performed very well. Although the rubric requested candidates to give a letter as their answer, the Examiners also permitted the use of place names or even initials.

In Q2B the Examiners were pleased that the majority of candidates scored 3 or 4 marks.

It was clear to the Examiners that candidates found Q3 to be a demanding task and a good differentiator between the able candidates and the weaker ones. The best candidates answered well by using their own words, as requested in the rubric, and the Examiners were pleased to note that there was less lifting of whole phrases than has sometimes been the case. Some candidates could not be fully rewarded, however, as they lifted their answers from the text without any manipulation, despite being requested in the rubric to answer in their own words. Candidates cannot be rewarded for lifting, or indeed for merely changing a possessive adjective or the tense or mood of a verb.

Candidates should be aware that if just one mark is on offer, as throughout this question, they should be giving only one item of information in the answer. A few candidates failed to write an answer to any of the questions in this exercise. Moreover, the Examiners were concerned that some candidates elected to give their answers in English, and thus could not be rewarded at all. On the whole, however, the Examiners noted that the questions in this task were of differing levels of difficulty, thus enabling even weaker candidates to obtain some credit.

The attention of candidates and teachers is drawn throughout to the published detailed mark schemes agreed by the Examiners. Question specific points are as follows:

Q3a - the Examiners were unable to reward answers which suggested that Sabine merely worked in Germany or on the street! Clearly some candidates had taken their cue from the picture.

Q3b - the vast majority of answers were correct, although there were some which suggested that more than 800 cigarettes or even none could be imported.

Q3c - the majority obtained the mark here, though a number could not be rewarded for failing to mention cigarettes, writing simply *Schmuggler*. Some candidates responded as if the question were *wann* rather than *wer*.

Q3d - Most candidates answered this correctly, noting that cigarettes were cheaper in Eastern Europe or more expensive in Germany. However, some marks were lost through ambiguity in answers such as *sie sind billiger*.

Q3e - This question presented some problems to those candidates who thought that Sabine stopped the car purely on the basis of its Polish number plate. Indeed, there was a not uncommon view that all Poles in particular or Eastern Europeans in general are criminals. This was a cause of great concern to the Examiners.

Q3f - weaker responses merely suggested that Sabine had taught herself Polish, while others which provided an otherwise correct reply lost marks because of the candidate's inability to render 'Poland' or 'the Poles' correctly.

Q3g - this was generally correct, though there were some interesting variations of *Drogen*. A few weaker answers suggested that Hektor was a person.

Q3h - this was mainly well done, though some were of the view that the driver could move on only after Hektor had retrieved his passport. There was some lifting of *alles in Ordnung* and *nichts Verdächtiges*.

Q3i - this question was not well done, with many candidates lifting *sie schließt ihre Uniform im Schließfach* without any additional correct concept, or just suggesting that *sie wollte ihre Uniform schließen*. Answers such as *Kleider umtauschen* or *Kleider verändern* could not be rewarded.

Q3j - many candidates could not be rewarded here through the mere lifting of *ein Konzert besuchen*. However, the Examiners were able to reward such answers provided they mentioned that Sabine would be going to the concert with her husband. The not infrequent *Freund* could not be rewarded.

Candidates produced a number of good answers on Q4. Indeed, many candidates obtained at least ten marks for this task. Nevertheless, candidates could not be rewarded for answers which were lacking in focus and detail. Only those candidates who paid careful attention to the text were able to obtain high marks in this task. Candidates should bear in mind that the Examiners are unable to reward answers which show an inaccurate and incomprehensible use of English. Candidates should be aware that if two or three marks are on offer, as in Q4c and Q4i, they should be giving two or three items of information in the answer, as appropriate. The Examiners were concerned that some candidates chose to give their answers in German, and thus could not be rewarded at all. Although this kind of exercise is not one of translation, it is important for points to be rendered in English which truly reflects the meaning of the text.

Question specific points are as follows:

Q4(a) - almost all candidates gained the mark on offer here.

Q4(b) was not particularly well done. There were some correct renderings of *sich kümmern um*, though many candidates could not be rewarded because they thought that *während der Fahrt* meant while the father himself was driving. Some were of the view that the father was stressed because of the traffic.

Q4(c) - A lot of candidates gave a correct rendering of the three required points (though they often included superfluous detail which could be ignored), but many did not know *Landkarte*, rendering it as 'tickets', or 'land(ing) card'. Some thought that the father himself was holding the food and drink in his left hand.

Q4(d) - The majority of candidates were rewarded here, though some simply said 'to give sweets to the children', without adding any reason.

Q4(e) - most responses were correct, though they were often given in direct speech.

Q4(f) - *Raststätte* caused a lot of problems here, with many incorrect answers given such as 'rest place', 'rest room', or 'stopping place'. Some candidates suggested that the family had just stopped at a motorway service station, though there was no evidence for this in the text. There was some misunderstanding of *ein paar Minuten*.

Q4(g) - the majority of candidates scored the mark here, though there were some who said that the mother had to unload the boot of the car. Some native speakers rendered *auspacken* literally as 'pack out'.

Q4(h) - while this question was generally understood, quite a few candidates had a somewhat traditional view of women's roles, stating that it was the mother's job to do the unpacking. Those who suggested that the father was tired or exhausted could not be rewarded.

Q4(i) - although some candidates obtained both marks, many suggested that the father just lay in the sun or lay back. Others were of the view that the father went into the sea for a bath. Some candidates rendered *Meer* as 'lake', and some gave it as 'see'. Although English demands that the father 'lie down', the Examiners reluctantly accepted the common - though inaccurate - 'lay down'.

Q5 proved to be a straightforward test of the candidates' writing skills. There was, however, a variety of approaches, with some applying for membership of the organisation, some saying they were already members and would like one or more partners, and others addressing their emails directly to a specific or prospective partner. All of these approaches were acceptable, providing the email as a whole was convincing. There were some excellent responses in which candidates showed genuine interest, imagination and accuracy. Nevertheless, though most candidates attempted to include all of the content required, they often dealt with some points in one short sentence.

The average response stated that candidates wished to improve their German as they were studying it for A-Level, that they wished to make lots of new German friends with a view to visiting them or doing an exchange, and that they wanted to be a German teacher, or an English teacher in Germany, because they liked children (or even because in their view teachers are well paid).

The Examiners were surprised at the number of candidates who failed to refer to all the points which were required. If candidates wish to earn high marks for this question, it is vital that they address each point of the stimulus with the utmost care. Some candidates wrote an imbalanced answer, writing at great length about themselves and about their hobbies, to the detriment of other points. Another noticeable feature this year was the number of scripts where candidates listed in their plans all the grammatical structures which they had been told to include. Whereas good candidates were able to do this without too much distortion, weaker candidates thus included sentences in their email which were totally irrelevant to the task, thus affecting the content mark, or they proved unable to handle complex structures and lost marks on the language component.

In the first stimulus point the Examiners were ideally looking for the candidates to state who they were and why they were hoping to improve their knowledge of German. Too many candidates missed this second point, merely stating why they were writing. Clearly some candidates did not know the word *verbessern*.

In point two, candidates were asked to specify what they hoped for from the contact with their partner. This was addressed at least superficially by the majority of candidates, though a number failed to give any information beyond their desire to improve their German which had been dealt with above. Some candidates had high expectations of their new contacts, hoping that they would be able to provide them with a wealth of information on German culture, history, and geography. The Examiners wish to remind candidates that they no longer need to demonstrate any knowledge or understanding of German-speaking countries in this task.

Point three was generally well done, with candidates making full use of the opportunity afforded them to be creative. However, a number of answers did not go much beyond the requirements of GCSE.

Point four was done well on the whole, though a number of candidates failed to suggest why they had chosen a particular profession. It was clear that *Beruf* was not universally known. In some cases, candidates stated that they had not yet chosen their future career. This is an example of where rather more creativity would have helped them. It should be remembered that this sort of exercise may require a certain amount of imagination, and those candidates whose answers were bland did not perform as well as those who produced something rather more scintillating, whether factual or not. The ability to be creative is part of the task. Candidates are not assessed for absolute truth in this question.

A very few candidates wrote totally irrelevant essays which bore no relationship to the rubric at all and which therefore could not be rewarded in terms of content and thus in terms of language either.

A very few candidates wrote their answers in English, and thus could not be rewarded.

Some answers were too long (up to 700 words in length), which meant that the points were not covered within the prescribed word limit and candidates could therefore not be rewarded fully for their efforts. Likewise, a number of responses were too short, and thus could not convey all the points expected in the answer. In such cases the mark for language is reduced on a pro rata basis. Nevertheless, the Examiners were pleased to note that in this examination series the majority of candidates wrote within the prescribed word limit.

A fair number of candidates had obviously prepared a response in advance and endeavoured to reproduce their email within the confines of the demands of the question. This did not always prove to be an easy or worthwhile task. Similarly some candidates padded out their answers with pre-learnt phrases which were not always apposite to the task at hand.

The Examiners were pleased with those candidates who paid careful attention to case, adjectival endings, word order and spelling, though they were disappointed by the failure of many candidates to use the correct register or to use inappropriate forms of address in their email. Too often candidates failed to use the correct form of the verb. The level of language was often weak and candidates too often made very basic errors. A tendency towards anglicisms prevented quite a number of candidates from achieving marks in a higher band. There were many examples of candidates using an English word if stuck, and there were instances of carelessness. Too few candidates deployed a wide range of structures and lexis appropriate to the task. Good candidates were careful to use correct register and expression. Those candidates who performed best ensured that each aspect of the task was addressed appropriately and relevantly.

Advice and Guidance

Superfluous information, information not contained in the printed target-language material, and self-contradictory combinations of correct and incorrect information earn no credit. Similarly, non-synonymous alternatives can be given no credit. Candidates are encouraged to cross through any alternative answer rather than leaving Examiners with a choice. Candidates should note that if two marks are available for a question, they should give two discrete points in their answer. Candidates should remember that in the final question the examination prescribes between 140 and 160 words in German. They must note that shorter answers cannot be rewarded in the same way as an answer of the required length, and they should likewise bear in mind that the Examiners will not mark more than 160 words. This means that the task should be completed within the prescribed word limit, otherwise full credit cannot be given.

AS Unit 3 (6483) - Prepared Oral Topic

Assessment Principles

The prepared oral topic carries 60 marks, 20 for each of the following categories, Quality of Language (10 for Accuracy, 10 for Range of Lexis), Response, and Knowledge and Understanding. The test is assessed positively. All marking is carried out by Edexcel markers.

Candidates' Responses

There was a wide variety of subjects, ranging from towns, regions, famous people, films, to the more unusual such as 'die Magnetschwebbahn', and 'die Firma Haribo'. Most candidates chose carefully in accordance with the specification, which states that the topic must deal with an aspect of culture and/or society of the target language country. Many candidates had undertaken admirable research from a variety of sources. However, native speakers, especially those from international centres, should bear in mind that it is not enough simply to give an account of their home town or region, without any evidence of research. It is perhaps worth ensuring that the candidates have a copy of the mark grid, so that they appreciate that a third of the marks are allocated for knowledge and understanding.

The problem of excessive amounts of pre-learned material remains. Monotonous recitation where it is patently obvious that the candidate does not even understand what s/he is saying reveals nothing about their ability to speak German and does not fulfil the criteria laid down in the specifications, which stress spontaneous discourse. It is also contrary to the essential spirit of the oral examination, which is to test the candidate's ability to communicate in German as naturally as possible.

The quality of presentations was variable. The maximum time is 2 minutes but it need be only one minute. It should not be significantly less than this. It is inevitably well-prepared and should enable the candidate to get started, the rationale being that it is a confidence booster. In some cases, candidates made all their points in the presentation and then had very little to add. The best strategy is to summarise the main points, using the bullet points on the oral topic form as a guideline, giving a framework to the ensuing conversation, which must last for another 8-10 minutes. The total time must under no circumstances exceed 12 minutes.

Quality of Language

The 20 marks are allocated for accuracy and range of lexis. For the January modules, it is almost inevitable that there is a considerable number of native speakers who are taking the oral unit early so that they have less to do in the summer. Or they are very competent non-native speakers who enter at this time for the same reason. A certain proportion seem to be re-take candidates.

Overseas candidates with a strong accent should perhaps be encouraged to speak more clearly and to curb their enthusiasm for fast flowing language.

Weaker candidates tended to have the following difficulties: disagreement in number between subject and verb, gender errors, incorrect adjectival endings, and word order being the most common examples. Some candidates are still not able to distinguish accurately between the tenses. Range of lexis was variable, depending on how much research the candidate had done. Candidates are expected to have learned the vocabulary relevant to the chosen topic, but should be able to employ this **spontaneously**. The range of structures is also sometimes very limited, with 'weil' and 'dass' still being the only subordinating conjunctions. Some candidates are still not confident with relative clauses, or modal verbs.

There are two difficulties here; firstly, if the candidate chooses a very narrow topic, there will not be a sufficient range of lexis to lift it above GCSE level. Secondly, if the topic is too ambitious, care should be taken that the relevant abstract and analytical vocabulary is known, which may be beyond most candidates' ability at this stage. For example, a weak candidate may be ill-advised to choose "Albert Einstein". The danger then is that the examiner supplies the missing vocabulary or long and unproductive pauses develop, while the candidate struggles to find the appropriate expression.

Pronunciation and intonation were noticeably affected if the candidate was permitted to regurgitate large amounts of pre-learned material. This should not occur, as it is invariably detrimental to the overall performance and final mark. Candidates who had recently visited a German-speaking country were usually able to capitalise on this experience, although they need to be careful that it is not merely personal reminiscence.

Candidates who were able to move away from the target language headings on the oral topic form and sustain a conversation in less predictable areas of their chosen topic, also scored more marks here.

Response

Candidates' responses varied considerably and depended to a certain extent on the way in which the examination was conducted. Teacher examiners must remember that they are facilitators, and should not say too much themselves.

At times, the moving away from the bullet points was carried too far, taking the candidate into uncharted territory and causing confusion, or resorting to irrelevant personal anecdotes. The entire conversation must relate to the chosen topic.

Large quantities of pre-learned material should **not** be permitted: teacher examiners should adroitly interrupt "the flow". Questioning should above all facilitate independent discourse; open-ended questions or an invitation to provide further explanation often elicited the best response. Some candidates are very nervous and sometimes a sympathetic "Ja und?" is enough to get them going again. They should not be encouraged to respond to a pre-arranged series of prompts. A degree of spontaneity is integral to the examining process. A rehearsed recited performance cannot gain high marks. "Erzählen Sie weiter" is not to be recommended. Examiners must avoid asking personal questions which are not normally very productive and can lead to digression into personal anecdotes. The "unpredictable" question should still relate to the chosen topic but be away from the bullet points: it is not appropriate for the candidate to be questioned about something totally unrelated.

Knowledge and Understanding

The choice of topic is crucial. Centres must adhere to the specifications and candidates should choose a topic from the General Topic Area as outlined in the specifications. Very generalised topics such as "Gewalt im Fernsehen" or "Die Umwelt" with "in Deutschland" as an afterthought, are not suitable, unless they are linked to particular research undertaken in the target language country.

Candidates who scored highly were those who could show evidence of detailed research in books, magazines, on the internet or from visits to the target language country. It is advisable to start doing the research well in advance of the oral test. They must then be able to organise their material and present it logically and relevantly. Some candidates had an impressive amount of information and had clearly learned a lot in the process of acquiring it. Praise must also go to the teachers and language assistants who in many cases facilitated the research.

On occasion, candidates were overloaded with information, which they then struggled to organise and present. A huge topic such as "Der zweite Weltkrieg" is not to be recommended. It is quite legitimate for candidates to re-cycle knowledge acquired in another A Level subject: however, it should be narrowed to something which is suitable for a short presentation and discussion. They should bear in mind that the total oral is only 10-12 minutes long. Centres should note that comparisons with England or any other country are not an acceptable element of this unit, nor should examiners invite comparison.

The most popular topics were:

Die Berliner Mauer
Die Weisse Rose
Mozart
München

Candidates whose research was limited lost marks here; there was also a danger that they became repetitive. It should also be borne in mind that understanding as well as knowledge should be demonstrated. It is all very well to have a wealth of factual information but the candidates must also be able to comment and analyse. They should also be able to show that it is significant to the culture/society of the target-language country.

Advice and Guidance

1. **Topic:** Candidates should choose a topic which has the potential for evaluation. Entirely descriptive or narrative topics will not enable the candidate to access the higher mark range. Examples of appropriate topics can be found in the Oral Training Guide but these should by no means be regarded as prescriptive. If in doubt, centres should contact the assessment leader at Edexcel.

2. **Conduct:** Teacher examiners' interventions should be minimal and productive. The candidates must be given ample opportunity to display their knowledge; however, regurgitated material must be interrupted. It is clearly totally unacceptable for the entire oral to be a dramatic performance, with the TE providing "cues" for the next recitation. Candidates should be encouraged to take the lead in the conversation. Teacher examiners should resist the temptation to correct, or to supply missing vocabulary. It is very important to keep to the correct timing: a presentation which exceeds 2 minutes must be interrupted. The overall timing is **10-12 minutes** and must not over-run. Conversation after 12.5 minutes will not be assessed. Nor should it be less than 10 minutes. Timing for written papers is always rigorously observed. The same **MUST** apply for oral exams. Unfortunately despite comments every session to this effect, there are some centres who still do not adhere to this and it disadvantages the candidates. An additional problem this year was late entries. Centres **MUST** be aware of the final date in the examining period (this year 12 Jan 2007) and conduct the orals in time. Otherwise it poses tremendous difficulties for the marking regime. Late entries for written papers would never be accepted.

3. **Oral Topic Form:** Concise bullet points are best. About 5-8 main points are probably enough. A small essay which is then read out, is not permissible. Points should be brief and lend themselves to expansion, discussion, opinion and evaluation. Half sentences, which are clearly prompts to pre-learned paragraphs, are a give-away and not acceptable. Despite clear instructions on the form, the title is often not stated, and sometimes the bullet points are in English. It would be nice if the Oral Topic Forms were filled in neatly and legibly, in accurate German. Nothing other than the Oral Topic form can be taken into the examination. Centres should check that the most recently published Oral Topic form is used, with the mark boxes and comments to be ticked. Oral topic forms and cassettes are returned to centres and in addition, in certain cases, letters outlining particular difficulties, e.g. quality of recording, or timing. Centres are advised to take note of any comments made on the Oral Topic Form, as in many cases, this is the only feedback.

4. **Recording:** Good sound quality is essential. Please use new cassettes. It does the candidates no service to be recorded over last year's French orals or music practice tapes. It is also important to have the right balance between the candidates' and examiners' voices. Neck microphones are ideal, but free-standing microphones should be angled towards the candidate, whose voice is normally quieter than the examiner's. All mobile phones must be switched off (not just on silent, as there is otherwise electronic interference) and there should be no background noise. Centres should check that every candidate has actually been recorded, that it is audible and at the correct speed. U3 and U4/1 tests must be recorded on separate cassettes, even if there is only one candidate. Please check the length of the cassette, whether it is C60 or C90 so that the tape does not run out in the middle of the test. It is helpful to label the cassette as well as the box. Please ensure that the cassette is rewound to the beginning before posting it off. Markers can lose an enormous amount of valuable time if they have to rewind many cassettes.

5. **Handbook of Instructions to Centres:** Teacher Examiners should be thoroughly acquainted with this publication, as observing correct procedures is vital. It is recommended that teacher examiners attend training sessions at Edexcel if at all possible. An Oral Training Guide with accompanying cassettes is also published by Edexcel, to help teachers to prepare for this examination. It is unfortunate that candidates are sometimes deprived of marks because the test has been incorrectly conducted. Teacher examiners have the responsibility to prepare adequately, in order to bring out the best from their candidates.

Unit 4.1 (6484/01) - Oral Discussion of Issues

Assessment Principles

The Oral discussion of issues carries 60 marks, 20 for each of the following categories: Quality of Language, Response, and Justification and Debate. The test is assessed positively. All marking is carried out by Edexcel markers.

Candidates' Responses

Candidates are reminded that they must take a stance to the chosen issue, and this must be clearly stated on the oral topic form. It is therefore advisable to choose a provocative issue, to which a stance can be taken. Timing is also crucial. Candidates have up to 1 minute to outline the issue, adopting a definite stance. They then have to defend and justify their opinions for 4 minutes. The examiner should present the opposing view and a debate should ensue. Subsequently the conversation will move on to at least two unpredictable areas, probably more. This part of the discussion should last for 10 minutes, making a total of 15 minutes.

Many candidates were well prepared and had clearly researched their chosen issue. Those who had given thought to the stance were able to debate and justify in detail. It is possible for candidates to gain high marks in the first part of the discussion, because they are on familiar ground. The unpredictable areas were more problematical. 10 minutes proved to be a long time for some candidates and a large number of topics can be covered in that time. Centres are reminded that these should be genuinely unforeseen topics; rehearsed and regurgitated quantities of material cannot gain high marks. This should be a spontaneous discussion, not merely a question and answer session, covering a wide variety of subjects. These do not have to be related to the target-language country, nor to the initial issue, but they can be if so desired. Additional topics must be covered, and the topics should be ones which lend themselves to debate, not narrative.

Quality of Language

The 20 marks are awarded for accuracy and range of lexis (10 + 10). In the January entry there are a considerable number of native or near-native speakers, so in general the quality of language was high.

Overseas candidates with a strong accent should perhaps be encouraged to speak more slowly and to curb their enthusiasm for fast flowing language.

Candidates should be able to demonstrate that they have moved on from AS level and are more confident with advanced grammatical structures such as the conditional and the subjunctive. They should know a wider range of subordinating conjunctions and be able to use the passive and reflexive verbs. They should have accurate possessives and adjectival agreements. Similarly, they should be able to demonstrate a wider range of lexis. If they had done adequate research for the chosen issue, the range of lexis was broad and relevant. Some had also prepared the language of argument and debate, and were confident in using it to give and to elicit opinions.

The more testing element was the unpredictable areas, where some candidates revealed a lack of lexis, and hesitancy with certain grammatical constructions such as the conditional, or indirect speech. Centres should refer to the grammar list at the end of the Specification for Modern Foreign Languages.

Response

Candidates' response was variable, depending to a certain extent on the way in which the discussion was conducted. Some teacher examiners failed to engage their students in a debate and so they were unable to demonstrate their potential to argue and justify. Although it is quite legitimate to lead from the chosen issue to a similar topic, it is advisable to cover a range of subject areas. This should enable candidates to show that they are able to discuss a wide range of issues, and they are then not in danger of repeating similar lexis and concepts. The best candidates spoke spontaneously, with minimal prompting from the teacher examiner. They were able to develop ideas without hesitation, and it was apparent that they had been well prepared in advance and were able to take the initiative. However, candidates must not be permitted to recite large amounts of pre-learnt material. It should essentially be a spontaneous discussion on issues of general interest. This is not the forum for personal anecdote, future plans etc. Particularly with native speakers it is tempting for the discussion to fall into chit-chat. Teacher Examiners must take care to choose stimulating and provocative topic areas.

Justification and Debate

Successful topics to which a stance could be taken, included;

Tierversuche
Der Euro

Less successful is something like 'Rauchen', in that it takes a brave, if not misguided examiner to argue in favour of smoking.

Candidates are expected to show a thorough and detailed knowledge of the chosen issue, and some certainly revealed a considerable amount of in-depth research, either from books, magazines or increasingly, from German websites. Candidates must state on the oral topic form whether they are **for** or **against** the issue.

Weaker candidates found 10 minutes' discussion on unpredictable areas difficult to sustain. There was a tendency to jump from topic to topic in the hopes of finding a stimulating subject. Please note that the unpredictable areas do not need to relate to the target language country: they are topics of general interest and factual knowledge is not being tested. At this level, students should be able to give evidence of insight and independent judgment. They should be able to express opinions and justify them. Some need to acquire the relevant lexis: meiner Meinung/Ansicht nach, die Vor/Nachteile, einerseits, andererseits.

Advice and Guidance

1. Issue: Candidates should choose an issue which has the potential for debate. A stance must be stated and maintained.

2. **Conduct:** When discussing the chosen issue, examiners must take the opposing viewpoint, to enable candidates to reveal their ability to justify and debate. The presentation must take **no longer than 1 minute**, and must be interrupted if it shows signs of continuing. The subsequent discussion should last **no longer than 4 minutes**. Under no circumstances can the whole discussion relate to the chosen issue, as this reveals nothing about the candidate's ability to discuss unpredictable areas. This part of the oral should last **10 minutes**. The whole oral should last for **15 minutes**. **Keeping to these times is of the utmost importance**. Centres are meticulous about the timing of written papers: the same rigour must apply to oral tests.
3. **Oral Topic Forms;** Centres should ensure that they are using the most recent version of the form, which has mark boxes printed at the bottom. They should also ensure that every candidate has signed the declaration. Candidates should take care to write legibly and in accurate German. Forms which are scruffy, illegible and inaccurate do not make a good impression on the marker. Oral topic forms and cassettes will be returned to centres, and in addition, in certain cases, a letter outlining any particular difficulties e.g. timing, or quality of recording.
4. **Recording:** Good sound quality is essential. The microphone generally should be nearer to the candidate than the examiner. All mobile phones must be switched off (not just on silent, as there is otherwise electronic interference) and there should be no background noise or interruptions. U3 and U4/1 candidates must be recorded on separate cassettes. Please check that the tape is long enough: one candidate on each side of a C60, two on a C90. Please also check that every candidate has been recorded, that it is audible and at the correct speed. It is helpful to label the cassette as well as the box. Please ensure that every cassette is rewound to the beginning before posting them off. Markers can lose valuable time if they have to rewind a large number of cassettes.
5. **Handbook of Instructions to Centres:** Teacher Examiners are referred to this publication as observing correct procedures is vital. It is recommended that teacher examiners should attend training sessions at Edexcel if at all possible. An updated Oral Training Guide with accompanying cassettes is also available from Edexcel Publications. Candidates are at a disadvantage and in danger of not being able to access the highest marks if the teacher examiner is inadequately prepared and/or is not familiar with the specifications.

Statistics

Unit 1 Listening and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	50	42	37	33	29	25
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 2 Reading and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	62	56	50	44	38
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Unit 3 Prepared Oral Topic

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	46	40	34	29	24
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

Unit 4.1 Oral Discussion of Issues

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	47	41	36	31	26
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

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