

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCE

GCE German (8230/9230)

Edexcel is one of the leading examining and awarding bodies in the UK and throughout the world. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers.

Through a network of UK and overseas offices, Edexcel's centres receive the support they need to help them deliver their education and training programmes to learners.

For further information please call our Customer Services on 0870 240 9800, or visit our website at www.edexcel.org.uk.

Summer 2007

Publications Code UA019200

All the material in this publication is copyright
© Edexcel Ltd 2007

Contents

Unit 1 Examiner's Report	5
Unit 2 Examiner's Report	9
Unit 3 Examiner's Report	15
Unit 4.1 Examiner's Report	21
Unit 4.2 Examiner's Report	25
Unit 5.1 Examiner's Report	29
Unit 5.2 Examiner's Report	37
Unit 6(a) Examiner's Report	45
Unit 6(b) Examiner's Report	49
Unit 6(c) Examiner's Report	53
Statistics	59

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 printed in the Specification. Up to 8 marks are awarded positively, according to a specific mark scheme, for the guided English summary.

Candidates' Responses

Q1 - 3 were in general well done. A number of weaker candidates often choose items to fill the gaps which are a grammatical impossibility. Teachers are advised to train candidates in analysing the language used in these question types so that such mistakes can be avoided.

Q4 was felt to differentiate well, with responses varying from candidates who were able to answer fully all components to others who were only able to cope with the most basic replies.

Q4(a): Most candidates were able to score the two marks available even with errors as many gave more than two pieces of information. There were some English spellings of Alkohol and Nikotin which could not be credited. It was good to see some answers like 'alkoholische Getränke und Zigaretten waren verboten'. Many candidates mentioned the number of young people at the party, but a handful gave the wrong number.

Q4(b): Many scored the three marks available, but some replied in the present tense which was not credited. A surprising number of candidates at this level did not know the past participle of 'tanzen', and there were some inaccurate renderings of the other activities, particularly 'die Arme geschwungen', which caused many difficulties, sometimes being given as 'Arme geschwommen'.

Q4(c): This was generally very well done and the vast majority gained the mark. 'Noch', 'mehr' and 'weitere' were all credited, but 'andere' was not allowed.

Q4(d): The comparative presented a number of difficulties for candidates in this question. Many candidates were able to answer well, but many others were not able to understand or perhaps use the comparative form. A very small number gave 'mehr' and the adjective in an attempt at the comparative. Some misunderstood that more and more young people are drinking alcohol rather than those who drink are drinking more. A good number claimed that boys (Jungen') were always drinking, having misunderstood 'immer jünger'. 'Häufiger' was not well known.

Q4(e): The vast majority answered correctly. A few misunderstood that the young people were policing the even themselves, or that a single parent was doing the patrolling alone. Some appeared to misunderstand the 'kontrolliert' in the question, and answered 'Herr Burmeister', presumably equating 'kontrollieren' with controlling/organising the event.

Q4(f): Many answered this correctly, but a significant number of candidates claimed that the parents allowed them into the party alone, which Herr Burmeister clearly did not allow in the text. Examiners were looking for the idea that they wanted to send them to the party unaccompanied. There was some approximate grammar from those who attempted this distinction, but the notion was carried in most cases. Some candidates suggested the problem was that the parents were dancing in the disco or indeed dancing with twelve year olds!

Q4(g): This was answered well but a large minority omitted the smoke which was essential for the mark. A considerable number attempted to transcribe the tape without understanding which led to some nonsensical German such as 'Rettenrauch'.

Q4(h): It was essential here to record the reaction of the girls, so 'man kann ohne Alkohol und Rauchen Spaß haben' was not enough. Some candidates probably had the right idea but were insufficiently clear in their answer. A smaller number understood that they had been drinking that evening.

On the whole Q5 was well done, with most candidates understanding the task and giving enough content for 3 marks. Most were pleased with the party idea, offering that it was good to associate fun with an alcohol and smoke-free environment. There were some very nice answers where they also said they would prefer not to have their embarrassing parents there. Some candidates misunderstood the question and held forth about their opinion of Herr Burmeister rather than the party. Such candidates often produced enough to gain 1 or 2 content marks. A very small number misunderstood 'was halten Sie von...' entirely and produced answers which seem to relate to why the parties would stop. Candidates should bear in mind that this question requires a personal response to what is heard, and that just describing the party without presenting an opinion on it is self-penalising. Very few candidates expressed the opinion that the party was an awful idea, but these were of course perfectly acceptable as long as they were well-reasoned and based on what they had heard.

Q5(b) was if anything more successful in content terms than Q5(a), with very few candidates scoring very poorly. Many gave several good points. A very small number offered evidence of success, such as the fact that more will be planned, rather than the reasons behind the success.

The quality of language for Q5 was variable. There were however frequent problems with accuracy in the written language. Examiners reported problems with word order, lack of agreement of verb and subject, inaccurate plural forms, insecure use of appropriate case after prepositions and poor attempts at subordination. Weaker candidates still have problems with rendering 'meiner Meinung nach' accurately which is a key phrase for this question. Such candidates also used frequent anglicisms, 'jemand' for 'alle' and gave 'die Gesund' for 'die Gesundheit'. It was disappointing to see 'eine spass Zeit' from candidates at this level.

Q6: A very small number of candidates persist in answering this guided English summary in German, which of course is a rubric offence and cannot receive marks. Length of response is also a key issue here as the 60-word limit is rigidly enforced. Even some strong candidates wrote far too much and therefore received no marks at all for Q6(c) and (d).

Q6(a): Many answered correctly though a few were too vague about the borders and suggested countries were more open. A surprising number did not know 'Grenzen' and this led to some interesting answers ('the door to England is open'). Some answers about the offer of languages in schools referred only to the speaker and not the general situation, which was a pity. Others thought that the speaker only spoke French at school.

Q6(b): Most gained at least one mark with many gaining two or all three. Very few knew 'Ostsee' as the Baltic, but it was possible to gain all three marks without reference to the Baltic islands. A few offered England for the notion of 'home', forgetting the speaker was German. Many mentioned going to France but omitted the course or gave 'speaking course' which does not equate to a language course. A very small number gave 'Frankreich' as 'Frankfurt' which is rather disappointing at this level. This was the section to heed the advice of not needing to write in full sentences: some candidates saved words but produced information which was too sketchy, others were more detailed but then failed to gain marks in the subsequent sections.

Q6(c): Most candidates scored here with no need to change money. Many scored both marks.

Q6(d): The majority failed to gain the mark, either through exceeding the word limit or failing to express the idea that he might go to France long-term. 'Auf längerer Zeit' was clearly not widely known, and candidates frequently gave suggestions such as 'for a longer time' or 'for a while' which were not credited.

Advice and Guidance

- Many candidates had clearly been well prepared to cope with the requirements of the paper. Teachers have clearly taken advice from previous examiners' reports and have trained candidates well. Practice with past papers is very helpful in enabling candidates to understand the rubrics and the demands of the paper. Candidates without the benefit of such training frequently suffer in that they do not follow word limits or have a good understanding of examiners' expectations.
- Candidates need to follow the rubrics and take notice of word limits given. In question 5a and 5b, they must not use more than 40 words, and 60 words is strictly enforced as the limit for the guided summary in question 6.
- Question 5, which carries 32% of the marks, requires a personal response in writing to what is heard on the tape, and 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 Language.
- Candidates who attempt simply to transcribe language (which they may not have fully understood) run the risk of failing to communicate enough to score. It is often better to attempt to give the response in the candidate's own German. This at least should 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 unit.

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, during the pre-standardisation and standardisation processes 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 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 the relevant letter as their answer, the Examiners also permitted the name of the district of Berlin or even the 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 name as their answer, the Examiners also permitted the use of names or initials, or even the sport.

In Q2B the Examiners were pleased that the majority of candidates scored at least 5 or 6 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:

Q3(a) - the Examiners were unable to reward answers which mentioned that the man was 'blinden', as there was no clear manipulation or understanding. The conditional *könnte nicht sehen* could not be rewarded, though this was a common response.

Q3(b) - very many answers featured the lifted *Weg zur U-Bahn* and thus could not be rewarded. Some answers using *sie* failed to note whether the pronoun referred to the old lady or to Irina herself.

Q3(c) - many candidates obtained the mark here, though a number could not be rewarded as they mentioned erroneously that Irina took the people to their hotel.

Q3(d) - Most candidates answered this correctly, though some insisted that the young man probably worked in the job centre.

Q3(e) - This question presented real problems, as comparatively few candidates knew the noun *Russland*. The majority of answers featured *Russin, Russien, Russia, Russe* or *Russisch*.

Q3(f) - weaker responses merely suggested that the buses were late *wegen Stau* (lifted) or because they had travelled a long way. It was of concern to the Examiners that some candidates were of the view that the buses were late because they were from Eastern Europe.

Q3(g) - this was generally correct, though there were some suggestions that Irina took the women home with her. Weaker candidates replied using *weil* in response to *wie*.

Q3(h) - this was mainly well done, though there was some lifting of *Rat brauchen*.

Q3(i) - this question was generally well done, though a number of candidates did not understand *Obdachlose*, mentioning simply that Irina handed out the rolls because they had not been sold. Marks were also lost for *sie hat Hunger*, as this appeared to refer to Irina.

Q3(j) - many candidates could not be rewarded here because they lifted *Missionsbüro aufräumen*.

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 marks are on offer, as in Q4(g), they should be giving two items of information in the answer. 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 generally well done, though some candidates merely mentioned that a lot of people work in Liechtenstein.

Q4(c) - Most candidates gave the correct answer, though a few were of the view that Liechtenstein is bigger than Munich. Some answers lacked precision, noting without clarity that 'it is bigger'.

Q4(d) - Although many candidates were rewarded here, some lost the mark because they misunderstood *malerisch*, suggesting that Vaduz is 'an artistic town' or 'a centre for artists'.

Q4(e) - most responses were correct, though some candidates suggested that the rulers feature on the country's banknotes.

Q4(f) - Some candidates were imprecise as to the location of the flag, and others lost the mark by giving the correct answer and then spoiling it by providing wrong colours for the flag.

Q4(g) - the majority of candidates scored only one mark here, particularly because so many were of the view that the prince's collection was the biggest in the world.

Q4(h) - the majority of candidates obtained the mark on this question.

Q4(i) - this question was generally answered well.

Q4(j) - very few candidates noted that the paths were clearly marked, and thus could not obtain the mark on offer.

Q4(k) - although many candidates noted that the chapel was 1,000 years old, comparatively few related the age to the murals in the chapel.

Q5 proved to be a straightforward test of the candidates' writing skills. 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 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 (and irrelevantly) 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 looking for the candidates to state when they undertook the journey. They were then asked to give the three countries which they visited on one day, given their reasons. Weaker candidates claimed to have visited three unlikely countries for a day's excursion, such as the USA, South Africa and Russia. There were many errors in the German rendering of well-known towns and countries, with Frankreich, Spanien, Italien, Venedig, Wien and Genf not always known. 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. Some candidates managed to ski in Austria in July and then get sunburned on the Spanish beaches later the same day. Point four was done briefly on the whole, with many candidates only giving one difficulty despite the plural in the stimulus. Most mentioned what they planned to do with the money, though this response often appeared hurried at the end of the task. On some occasions, candidates had written too much on point three and had thus run out of words for the final two points.

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 weakest candidates thought that they were going to win a holiday, stating where they would go and what they would do if they were to win the prize. Some candidates took *Preis* to mean 'price' and wrote letters of complaint to a travel firm, complaining about hotels, staff and the cost of a holiday.

The Examiners were pleased with those candidates who paid careful attention to case, adjectival endings, word order and spelling. However, 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.

The test is designed to assess the candidates' ability to research and communicate information on a topic related to a German-speaking country; to assess their ability to speak spontaneously and accurately; to assess the extent of their knowledge and understanding of the chosen topic.

Candidates' Responses

There was a wide variety of subjects, ranging from towns, regions, famous people, and increasingly, the German film scene, to the more unusual such as *Kunst in der Nazizeit*, and *die Firma Adidas*. Most candidates chose carefully in accordance with the specifications, which state 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, including the internet. A word of caution here: German sites are sometimes too complex for the average AS student to access and the candidate is sometimes tempted to learn incomprehensible and indigestible chunks of information. English sites create an additional problem of how to translate the information into German. A variety of sources with a degree of teacher supervision is preferable.

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 and the onus is on the examiner to interrupt and deflect. 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 specification, 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 often well-prepared and should therefore enable the candidate to overcome initial nervousness and to introduce the topic to be discussed. 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. It should be pointed out that it may not be possible, or necessary, to cover all the bullet points, nor will they necessarily be discussed in the order in which they appear on the Oral Topic Form, in that the discussion may naturally develop in a slightly different sequence.

Quality of Language

20 marks are allocated for Quality of Language: 10 marks for Accuracy and 10 marks for Range of Lexis and structures. Overseas candidates with a strong accent should perhaps be encouraged to speak more clearly and to curb their enthusiasm for fast flowing language. All candidates should be reminded not to speak excessively rapidly in the initial presentation. Some seem desperate to speak exceedingly hastily, with no regard to pronunciation or intonation.

The most common difficulties for weaker candidates tended to be the following: disagreement in number between subject and verb, gender errors, incorrect adjectival endings, and word order. Some candidates are still not able to distinguish accurately between the tenses. Candidates should be encouraged to listen carefully to the tense of the question, as it usually pre-supposes the tense of the answer.

Range of lexis was variable, depending on how much research the candidate had done. In some cases, the range of specialised vocabulary was impressive e.g. where a film was being discussed. 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. A common mistake this year was to use “wer” as a relative pronoun.

If the candidate chooses a very narrow topic, there will not be a sufficient range of lexis to lift it above GCSE level. Equally, if the topic is too ambitious, care should be taken that the relevant abstract and analytical vocabulary is known. Such language may be beyond most candidates’ ability at this stage. For example, a weak candidate may be ill-advised to choose “Nietzsche”. 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. It is noticeable that current affairs are affecting the choice of topics: for example Angela Merkel has quite often been chosen.

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 very often on the way in which the examination was conducted. Teacher-examiners in particular must remember that they are facilitators, and should not say too much themselves. It must be disheartening for a candidate to feel that s/he cannot get a word in edgewise in such cases.

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. Even if the candidate appears to have run out of things to say, it is not acceptable to resort to “Und was haben Sie in den Ferien gemacht?” However difficult it may be, the conversation must last for at least 10 minutes in total. Markers time every test and often note the exact timing on the oral topic form.

Large quantities of pre-learned material should not be permitted: 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 encourage them to continue.. They should not be encouraged to respond to a pre-arranged series of prompts. Inevitably the oral will have been practised, but spontaneity is integral to the examining process. Over-rehearsal is not to be recommended, nor should the examiner use the identical questions each time. A rehearsed recited performance cannot gain high marks. “Erzählen Sie weiter” often presupposes a recitation.

Candidates scoring the highest marks in response are those who can spontaneously develop a conversation in a natural manner.

Examiners must avoid asking personal questions which are not normally very productive and can lead to digression into personal anecdotes. The “unpredictable” question must 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 specification. Very generalised topics such as “Rauchverbot” 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.

The most popular topics remain famous places, famous people, historical events, films, the education system.

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: students taking Art may wish to talk about Franz Marc, or music students about Beethoven. However, it should be narrowed to something which is suitable for a short presentation and discussion, so talking about an entire music movement (“klassische Musik in Deutschland”) may prove to be too wide a subject.

They should bear in mind that the total oral is only 10-12 minutes long. Examiners should note that comparisons with England or any other country are not an acceptable element of this unit, nor should examiners invite comparison.

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. There is an encouraging increase in the number of candidates talking about a topic related to Austria or Switzerland or in one case “die deutschsprachige Amish Gemeinde in Pennsylvania”.

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.

2. **Conduct:** Examiners’ interventions should be minimal and productive. The candidates must be given ample opportunity to display their knowledge; however, regurgitated material must be interrupted. 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 12½ minutes will not be assessed. Nor should timing be less than 10 minutes. Incorrect timing disadvantages the candidates, therefore centres should adhere to the correct timings.

3. **Oral Topic Form:** Bullet points should be given in concise German. About 5-8 main points are probably sufficient. 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 not acceptable. The title must also be stated on the form, in German. Care should be taken when completing the Oral Topic Forms so that they are legible and written in accurate German. Nothing other than the Oral Topic Form can be taken into the examination, as per the Specification. 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.

4. **Recording:** Good sound quality is essential. Please use new cassettes, not those which have already been used before. 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 to the examiner.

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. Teacher examiners have the responsibility to prepare adequately, in order to bring out the best from their candidates.

6. **Administration:** Centres should take care to enclose the correct paperwork with the cassettes: i.e. the attendance register and a note of any unusual circumstances e.g. fire alarm, candidate illness. Care should be taken with packaging: unfortunately quite a few cassettes arrive in a damaged state.

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 (10 for Accuracy, 10 for Range of Lexis), Response, and Justification and Debate (5 for grasp of the issue, 15 for the ability to debate and justify). The test is assessed positively.

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 genuinely 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 had a wealth of detailed knowledge and had clearly researched their chosen issue. Those who had given thought to the stance were able to debate and justify in detail, refuting the examiner's interventions with pertinent arguments and facts. It is possible for candidates to gain high marks in the first part of the discussion, because they are on familiar ground. There were some very dynamic debates, with passionately held views being propounded and defended.

The unpredictable areas were more problematical. 10 minutes proved to be a long time for some candidates with a large number of topics being 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.

Examiners should prepare a list of possible topics and should vary them for each candidate. It is not in the spirit of "unpredictable" topics for each candidate to be questioned on the identical subjects, albeit in a slightly different sequence.

Quality of Language

The 20 marks are awarded for Quality of Language (10 for Accuracy and 10 for Range of Lexis and structures (10 + 10)).

Overseas candidates with a strong accent should perhaps be encouraged to speak more slowly and to curb their enthusiasm for fast flowing language. All candidates should be advised to speak at a moderate speed during the one minute initial presentation. Nervousness clearly plays a role, but pronunciation and intonation can be adversely affected by a rapid pace.

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. With 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. Unpredictable areas are likely to relate to current issues, such as terrorism, the EU, the learning of foreign languages, and will presumably have been covered to a greater or lesser extent in class. However, the candidates must not know in advance which topics are going to be raised.

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 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. Unfortunately it was sometimes apparent that the "unpredictable" areas were in fact totally expected. This is not within the spirit of the examination. It should essentially be a spontaneous discussion on issues of general interest. This is not the forum for personal anecdote, future plans or 'chit-chat'. Examiners must take care to choose stimulating and provocative topic areas, which engender lively discussion. The best candidates were able to defend their points of view vigorously, and clearly relished the opportunity to express their opinions.

Justification and Debate

It is essential to choose a controversial topic which can be debated for 5 minutes.

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

Immigration

Homosexuelle Ehen

Der türkische Eintritt in die EU

Less successful is something like "Globale Erwärmung", as there is no clear stance here, merely a discussion of the facts.

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. This is particularly important if there is a visiting examiner, in that s/he must be able to prepare in advance.

The presentation of the issue should be just that: an introduction to what will subsequently be debated. In some cases, candidates presented everything in the first minute, leaving little to develop in the following 4 minutes. Candidates are expected to maintain their initial stance, even if they concede that the opposing argument may have some validity.

Good candidates who had revised the topics covered in the A level course, and who had a range of general interests, were able to sustain lively discussions on a variety of topics, revealing a depth of knowledge and enthusiasm which was extremely pleasing. 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 candidates need to acquire the relevant lexis: meiner Meinung/Ansicht nach, die Vor/Nachteile, einerseits, andererseits, langfristig, kurzfristig.

Advice and Guidance

1. Issue: Candidates should choose an issue which has the potential for debate. A stance must be stated and maintained. The issue must not be related either to the topic of Units 3 or 5. The title of the issue must be written in German, not English.
2. Conduct: When discussing the chosen issue, examiners must take the opposing viewpoint, to enable candidates to reveal their ability to justify and debate. However, examiners are advised not to be too aggressive in their attitude, as this can be intimidating to the candidate. 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 oral examination relate to the chosen issue, as this reveals nothing about the candidate's ability to discuss unpredictable areas. This second part of the oral should last 10 minutes. The whole oral should last for 15 minutes. Over-long tests do the candidates no favours: they tire, and in any case, the excess material is not assessed. Similarly, short tests cannot access the highest marks.
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 when completing the Oral Topic Form so that they are legible and written in accurate German. Candidates are permitted to take a short newspaper or magazine article into the examination, if they wish. 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, will be sent to the centre.

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 cassettes are rewound to the beginning before posting them to the examiner.

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. 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.

6. **Administration:** Please ensure that the correct paperwork is enclosed with the cassettes: i.e. the attendance register, the oral topic forms, and a note of any unusual circumstances such as the fire alarm, or candidate illness. It is advisable to package the cassettes securely: otherwise they could be broken in transit.

A2 Unit 4.2 (6484/02) - Interpreting

The Interpreting Test is assessed positively. There are three assessment categories:

- 1 Accuracy of Target Language (20 marks)
- 2 Appropriateness of Target Language (20 marks)
- 3 Transmission (20 marks)

General Notes

The Interpreting Test is not a word for word translation exercise. Candidates are required to transmit the essential meaning given in each section and to render this in the appropriate language. Credit is therefore given for the process of transmitting information in the relevant language, the correctness of this information and detail according to the descriptors in the Transmission Grid. The range and appropriateness of individual lexical items and structures deployed in the rendition are assessed according to the criteria detailed in the Appropriateness of Target Language category. Here credit is given for the knowledge of individual words, phrases and idioms. Candidates should be instructed that they should always endeavour to produce an utterance for each section and not remain silent. They should think of the basic meaning of the phrase and give the most accurate version they can with the structures and vocabulary they have at their disposal.

It must be emphasised that this option does not suit everyone. Students should be carefully selected, and centres are strongly advised to start preparing candidates for this option well in advance of the examination and not assume that students are equipped with the wide-ranging and complex skills required for interpreting without sufficient practice. Intensive preparation is vital. In addition, students should familiarise themselves with the five topic areas (school/college, work, business, leisure, holidays) on which the Interpreting Tests are based, and the pertinent lexis associated with each topic.

Conduct of the Tests

This was done well on the whole and colleagues are to be congratulated on the professional manner in which the tests were conducted. However interlocutors should bear the following points in mind: -

1. The syllabus states that candidates may request occasional clarification. The request for this must come from the candidates themselves and interlocutors should not explain lexical items or phrases unless specifically asked to do so by candidates.
2. Interlocutors are permitted to repeat a section once only, and, as above, only at the request of the candidate.
3. No test should exceed the time limit as stated in the specification.
4. The text should be read at the normal speed.

Further copies of this publication are available from
Edexcel Publications, Adamsway, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 4FN

Telephone 01623 467467
Fax 01623 450481

Email publications@linneydirect.com

Order Code UA 019200 Summer 2007

For more information on Edexcel qualifications, please visit www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications
Alternatively, you can contact Customer Services at www.edexcel.org.uk/ask or on 0870 240 9800

Edexcel Limited. Registered in England and Wales no.4496750
Registered Office: One90 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7BH