

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCE

GCE German (8230/9230)

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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 Question 5. 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.

Questions 1 - 3 were in general well done, although a surprising number of candidates did not recognise 'Halbpension' in the first question! A number of weaker candidates often choose items to fill the gaps in Q2 with words which were 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.

Question 4

Examiners felt that the range of questions in Question 4 allowed candidates to show their understanding without their having to use sophisticated language. The full range of answers were seen, from the best candidates giving precise and grammatically accurate answers, based on good understanding of what they had heard, to the weakest candidates being only able to show only the most basic understanding of the recording.

4a: Most candidates managed to score 2 points as there were 3 possible points to be made. Some candidates confused 'Schüler' and 'Schule', which is disappointing at AS level. Some of the weaker candidates also had problems with 'unterschiedlich alt' which was often rendered as 'die Schüler sind alt', which could not be credited, of course.

4b: This was done well in general, with candidates offering both 'die Großstadt ist teuer/teurer' and 'die Kleinstadt ist billig/billiger'. A number of candidates had problems with trying to render the comparative forms of 'teuer' and 'billig', but this was forgiven. It was surprising to see that a good few candidates had problems spelling these very common words.

4c: This was answered well by many, although there was sometimes some confusion regarding the language. Presumably some candidates found it difficult to imagine Germans as learners of English in an English-speaking country! A variety of answers were accepted, along the lines of 'you learn more English' / 'with friends you talk too much German' etc. Most candidates scored at least one mark here for meeting new people, although a good few failed to gain this mark by inaccurate use of the verb 'kennen lernen'. Some failed to notice the 'allein' in the question.

4d: This question was well answered by almost all candidates. Nearly all the cohort managed to express the idea of four weeks in the summer holidays. The answer 'so lange wie möglich' was also seen and accepted by examiners.

4e: This question was a good discriminator of performance: if the candidates knew the word 'Gegend' and recognised it in the 'Wohngenden' of the text, they usually coped well with this question. Some included ambiguous words in their answers, however, using 'Plätze' and 'Städte' which whilst showing some understanding of the text does not render the sense of the text accurately enough. This is an examination of listening AND writing. Amongst candidates who did not seem to recognise 'Wohngenden' there were some very poor attempts at transcription, with various renderings of 'schlechteren + Wohngenden' which could not score, for example, 'schlechterinwohngehenden'.

4f: Examiners felt that this question also discriminated performance well: the key word 'unabhängig' was known and recognised by the better candidates. Examiners credited any (even if rather clumsy) renderings of the idea that young people feared/thought they would not be independent if they stayed with families. There was some nice use of alternatives by the best candidates, for example, 'selbstständig'. Some candidates had obviously understood the concept and then actually wrote the opposite of what they (presumably) meant by failing to add a 'nicht' appropriately - which was a shame, but could not score. Many, many candidates simply did not know the key word and attempted transcriptions of all sorts: 'unemfänglich', 'uneppanig', 'überhängig', 'erpennig', 'ohne pengisch'...

4g: Most candidates managed to score at least one of the points, but very few were able to give the German spelling of 'flexibel'. This did not matter, though, when the candidate also offered an acceptable version of 'verständnisvoll'. Some candidates commendably did use their own words, but failed to convey the meaning of the original: 'die Familien sind nachdenklich' is not the same as being understanding. Some candidates also gave answers which implied that the families understood the language the candidate used. A good number clearly got the idea that staying with a family would allow you to practise the language and attempted to transcribe the text. Unfortunately, inaccurate transcription caused problems, with frequent misuse of 'probieren' and 'anprobieren'. Quite a number did not seem to understand 'in der Praxis'.

4h: It was very surprising to see this question so poorly answered by so many candidates: the majority misread it as 'warum' rather than 'wann' and so proceeded to give answers which were totally inappropriate. One native speaker (to judge from the handwriting) even wrote in German on the paper that the answer was nowhere in the text and so the question was impossible to answer! Candidates must read questions carefully and consider exactly what answer is required.

Question 5

5a: This was well answered on the whole with almost all understanding the question and giving enough content for at least 2 marks. There was a lot of very pleasing German, not just from native speakers. Most candidates were able to write well on fact that you are in small classes, have contact with different nationalities, can practise the language in the country, making new friends and so on. A handful of candidates' responses did not take into account the information in the text, and therefore scored very low content marks. The rubric states clearly 'wie sie im Text beschrieben werden' in bold, and so answers unrelated to what candidates hear cannot be credited highly. (And those which bear no relation to the text will score nothing at all, although very nearly all candidates managed to produce at least one relevant point.) Very few gave a detailed personal response to this part of the question, but it was felt the question itself did not allow the candidates much scope to do this, so this was treated leniently.

5b: The full range of responses was seen here. The majority of candidates managed to score at least 2 for content, and there were a range of personal responses to the question, with many well-argued viewpoints. Some (otherwise good) candidates did stray too far into the realms of personal reminiscence, and wasted valuable words in recounting their own experiences. Such musings should be kept to a minimum, and used to back up their personal response to what is on the recording only - otherwise content marks will be lost. Again, the rubric is very clear about this.

Language in Q5:

The full range of language marks were seen in both a and b. The best candidates were able to express their ideas in accurate and flowing German. Especially in 5b, such candidates were able to provide more individual paraphrasing and opinion of what had been heard. The need for personal response enabled the best to use the subjunctive, which, when used carefully, was impressive. Most candidates managed to score 2 from 4 on language. The most common problems were word order, verb endings and trying to 'Germanise' an English word. Genders were often rather erratic. Many candidates render 'man' as 'mann' and then use the wrong personal pronoun. Candidates must have the language of opinion to perform well in this part of the paper: 'meiner Meinung nach', 'ich finde' and so on. There are still too many candidates who struggle to use the former phrase accurately!

Question 6 was generally well done, although there are still far too many answers which are over-long. Examiners felt that the question was accessible to the majority of candidates and differentiated performance well.

6a: Nearly all candidates scored here for 'her dog'.

6b: Most candidates managed to get at least 2 of the 3 marks. A number of candidates did not understand the notion that laughing heartily can move up to 80 muscles. Examiners were told variously that laughing could help you live to be 80, that laughing gives you a good heart, that 18 (or even 8) muscles are moved when you laugh. 'Laune' caused some candidates problems, which was surprising for a GCSE word. Candidates' English spelling sometimes let them down: 'mussels' was a relatively frequent misspelling, and a number wrote about 'amune' systems.

6c: This was less well done than 6b: the detail of the verbs sometimes defeated candidates. 'Sammeln' and 'sich erinnern' caused problems here, as did the inclusion of too many examples which used up word count. 'Komisch' was sometimes rendered as 'strange/wierd' rather than 'funny'. Very few candidates could deal accurately with 'suchen Sie die Gesellschaft fröhlicher Menschen'.

6d: Most candidates failed to score on 6d: many because they had already reached the 60-word limit, but also many, many because the language in the text seemed to be beyond them or because they had not read the question with enough care. The question specifically asks 'apart from laughing...' but many responses talked

about 'different forms of laughter' and so could not receive the point. Very few seemed to understand 'Atmen' or 'Klatschen', although the latter did appear as 'gossip' (from 'Kaffeeklatsch', presumably). Versions of 'atmen' included 'going to art galleries' and 'Ardman's animations' [of Wallace and Gromit fame!] Examiners also saw wild guesses such as 'stand-up comedy', the vague 'socialising', 'tell jokes' and 'make each other go red'.

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.
- 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.
- Time management is essential to complete the paper. Candidates are advised to organise themselves to leave sufficient time to tackle questions 5 and 6 which carry almost 50% of the marks available in the whole paper.
- Candidates should ensure that they read the questions carefully: 4h should have been accessible to most candidates, but many, many just failed to read the question word! Similarly, answers in Q5 **MUST** relate to the stimulus material they hear, and it states so in bold in the rubric.

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.

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