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Examiners' Report June 2010

GCE German 6GN01

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Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response

Assessment Principles

This paper carries 50 marks. It consists of a conversation between the visiting or teacher examiner on an AS topic area chosen by the student.

The general topic areas (available) are:

Youth Culture and Concerns

Lifestyle: Health and Fitness

The World Around Us

Education and Employment.

Stimulus cards are provided for each area. Before starting the examination, the candidate has 15 minutes to prepare him/herself for the examination with the stimulus card provided. He or she may make notes of up to one side of A4 during this time, and he or she may refer to these notes during the examination.

The conversation lasts between 8 and 10 minutes and is made up of two parts. In Part A, the candidate is asked 4 questions relating to the stimulus card which are set by Edexcel. These questions are mandatory and may be repeated, but not re-phrased in any way, although the examiner may change them to use 'Du' rather than 'Sie'. This is the only change that can be made. They must be asked in the order provided and at the outset of the examination. The first two questions relate specifically to information in the stimulus material, the second two to the wider issues developing from the stimulus material. It is expected that the candidate will give answers which are as full and detailed as possible. The candidate's understanding of this stimulus-specific topic area is marked out of 4.

In Part B, the examiner should move away from the specific topic on the stimulus card and develop a wider conversation about the general topic area. The candidate's understanding of the general topic area is marked out of a total of 10.

The marks of 8 for Quality of Language (Accuracy), 8 for Quality of Language (Lexis) and 20 for Response apply to the test as a whole.

Candidates' Responses

Examiners reported that they had assessed the full range of performance by candidates, from those who were very good indeed to those who showed little or no evidence of progression from GCSE. There was also a good proportion of native or near-native speakers.

'Lifestyle, Health and Fitness' remained the most popular topic choice, followed closely by 'Youth Culture and Concerns'. 'The World Around Us' is still relatively unpopular, and there were few candidates who tackled 'Education and Employment'. Candidates who chose the more unpopular topics often performed well, perhaps because they have a genuine interest in these topics, perhaps because there is a clearer idea of progression from GCSE. Examiners remarked that 'The World Around Us', for example, often allowed candidates to demonstrate good understanding of the general topic area combined with a detailed knowledge of subject-specific lexis.

Candidates and teachers should bear in mind that this examination requires the candidate to demonstrate the ability to express and justify opinions and conclusions, based on good understanding and knowledge of the topic area. Candidates need therefore to research and prepare the sub-topics carefully. Native speakers, especially those from international centres, should bear in mind that it is not enough simply to have a conversation in fluent German: what they say should be relevant and knowledgeable about the topic area chosen. Examiners also reported some confusion in centres regarding possible sub-topic areas of 'Lifestyle, Health and Fitness' and 'Youth Culture and Concerns'. There is guidance on the Edexcel website that, for the purposes of this examination, alcohol, drugs and smoking were permissible subjects of discussion for **both** these topic areas.

Examiners reported that the stimulus texts were well-selected and appropriate. Some teacher examiners did not adhere to the prescribed distribution of cards at the front of the teacher examiner handbook. This is a requirement of the examination. Equally, teacher examiners must remember that asking supplementary questions in Section A is not permitted: questions may be repeated, 'Sie' may be changed to 'du', but these are the only changes to the questions allowed. Examiners reported that there were instances where candidates were interrupted when they began what appeared to be a wrong answer and questions being repeated after the candidate had completed a wrong answer. No credit can be given for answers in such cases. Most teachers realised that the timing as envisaged in the specification (half on the stimulus material and half on the Section B discussion) was impractical and moved onto to the section B discussion reasonably quickly, the average being after about 2 - 2 and a half minutes. That said, whereas answers to questions 1 and 2 may be very short, centres do need to train candidates to understand that questions 3 and 4 on the stimulus cards are designed to invite expansive and detailed answers. They can only score the full 4 marks for 'full and detailed answers to prescribed questions'.

Comments on stimulus cards:

Examiners are aware that some of questions on the cards moved into the general topic area rather than focusing entirely on the subtopic.

YCC 1A/B: Teacher examiners sometimes found it difficult to work in the 'warum (nicht)?' at the end of Q3. Edexcel will bear this in mind for future series. A few candidates were stumped by the idea of not drinking alcohol at all in 1B Q4, but otherwise most managed this card well.

YCC 2A/B: Candidates generally understood Q3 was about bullying, but many failed to respond to the end of the question - 'im Internet' (2A)/'unter Jugendlichen' (2B), giving general answers instead.

LHF 1A: most managed to produce something relevant for each question.

LHF 1B: Q3 seemed to perplex a number of candidates - perhaps the desirability of sport for young children is something to which the average 17 year old candidate cannot relate. Q4 produced some good, well-developed answers but quite a few could only come up with the idea of investing more money.

LHF 2A: Q4 - most candidates took this to mean illness caused by exposure to the sun and not diseases in general.

LHF 2B: generally few problems, except that some found it difficult to find something to say about tanning shops.

WAU 1A: mostly answered well.

WAU 1B: some candidates struggled with Q3 but generally well done.

WAU 2A/B: most candidates understood the questions and answered appropriately, although a few did not understand 'die öffentlichen Verkehrsmittel' and 'in Ihrer

Legend', which is a little surprising considering the topic area is about the environment.

EE 1A/1B: chosen by few but generally very well done.

EE 2A/2B: again, chosen by few but well done.

Quality of Language

The marks are allocated for accuracy, and for range of lexis and structures. Weaker candidates often had difficulties with tenses, agreement with subject and verb, gender, adjectival endings and word order, and the range of lexis and structures used was limited. Stronger candidates were able to use a wider variety of structure and expressions, some being excellent.

Interestingly, examiners reported on a number of candidates whose grammatical accuracy was disappointing, but who were able to demonstrate sound knowledge and appropriate use of some quite impressive lexis, particularly when they had chosen the topic 'The World Around Us'. Obviously, the better the candidate has prepared him/herself for the linguistic and thematic demands of this examination, the greater the range of lexis and structures he/ she should be able to employ.

Some candidates had obviously pre-learnt whole swathes of text, which they then reproduced in the examination. Teacher examiners need to interrupt long recitations of pre-learnt material to ensure that the candidate can display genuine communication skills. Although the questions in Section B are to an extent predictable, a candidate who has rehearsed endlessly will not produce a spontaneous or genuine performance. Some teacher examiners still persist in asking the same questions, in exactly the same order, of candidates choosing the same topic in a centre. This does not tend to produce a genuine conversation. Teacher examiners should aim to develop a wide variety of questions on the topic, and ensure that they react to what each individual candidate says, not just plough through a list of questions.

It is also important that the questions asked allow the candidate to show progression from GCSE. Personal questions such as 'Treibst du persönlich viel Sport?' are often not very productive, producing long lists of sports or even days of the week. An alternative would be 'Treibt man genug Sport in der Schule?' which would allow the candidate to formulate an opinion. Equally, some examiners reported some rather intrusive and personal questions being asked of candidates, for example: 'hast du schon einmal Drogen genommen?'; 'wieso trinkst du am Wochenende?'; 'kennst du persönlich Drogenabhängige?' Such questions may intimidate the candidate and are best avoided.

Response

The Response mark is critical to overall performance in this examination, accounting for 20 of the 50 marks. Candidates do need to attempt to keep going, try not to hesitate unduly and attempt a reply to each question. As far as possible, they should develop their replies so that they expand and develop on the question asked.

Candidates' responses varied considerably, as might be expected. Weaker candidates were able only to respond in a limited way and often needed prompting or questions repeated or rephrased. More able candidates were able to develop the conversation with opinions, reasons, examples, juxtapositions and/or comparisons.

Marks for response sometimes depended on the way the examination was conducted. Teacher examiners should bear in mind the need to enable the candidate to demonstrate his or her own fluency in spoken German.

As mentioned above, examiners should not permit the recital of long passages of pre-learned material - it is the best policy to interrupt the candidate and ask a follow-up question. Candidates should never be encouraged to respond to a pre-arranged series of prompts. The Response mark includes the spontaneity of the candidate and that the mark will be depressed where there is evidence of recitation.

Understanding

As mentioned above, there was some variety of performance in Section A (SSU) and the full range of marks were awarded. The majority of candidates seemed to understand that a fuller response was required in questions 3 and 4, although a number lacked the ideas/language to respond in a detailed way.

Good, well-prepared candidates who did not perform particularly well in the unpredictable Part A were able to gain good marks for understanding in Part B, the General Topic Area. As mentioned above, candidates do best when they have thoroughly prepared and researched all the sub-topics mentioned in the specification. Examiners should be aware of the need to cover a variety of sub-topics in Part B so that candidates can show the range of their understanding and knowledge. This includes moving away from the merely anecdotal (for example, how often they do sport) to analysis of aspects of the topic area (for example, why exercise is important). Section B **must** move away from the specific topic of the stimulus card and explore the other subtopics. Tests which fail to do will lead to candidates being limited on the number of marks they can achieve.

Conduct of the Examination

The majority of teacher examiners conducted the examination well. There were, however, a number issues which arose:

- Timing was accurate overall, with most tests between 8 and 10 minutes. Most examiners realised that continuing section A for 4 minutes was unrealistic: many candidates gave full and accurate answers in about 2 minutes. This is not a problem, as section B is the more taxing part of the exam, and is a better discriminator. Please note that very short tests are subject to penalties.
- Recording quality: cassette tapes continue to be the most popular recording choice, although CDs are increasingly popular. Whatever mode of recording is chosen, it is vital that the recordings are clear, with both teacher examiner and candidate audible. A few centres had to be advised to request special consideration for candidates who could not be reliably assessed due to the extremely poor quality of the recording.
- Oral forms: it is greatly frustrating to examiners to have to fill out forms for the centre. Each candidate must complete the OR1 form, which must be submitted with the recordings.
- Some examiners tried to rephrase the questions in section A, or asked supplementary questions in this section, which is not permissible. As stated above, the questions may only be changed by the use of 'Du' and must otherwise be asked in the format and order on the examiner version of the stimulus card.
- Teacher examiners must ensure they move away from the stimulus-specific sub-topic in Section B. They should also note that questions which are irrelevant to

the topic will be disregarded, for example, asking 'haben Sie einen Nebenjob?' to a candidate who had chosen 'The World Around Us'.

Advice and Guidance

- **Topic:** Candidates should choose a General Topic Area which interests them. Further guidance can be found on the Edexcel website. Candidates need to have the opportunity to think in depth about the topic area chosen, and the many related sub-topics. Success comes from good preparation, detailed knowledge and the ability to express and justify opinions.
- **Conduct:** Examiners should pay careful attention to the guidelines as given in the Specification, especially for the random sequence of stimulus cards, and for overall timing. The Unit 1 exam lasts 8-10 minutes. Short tests cannot access the highest marks, and long tests are not listened to after 10 minutes. Any pre-learned material must be interrupted.
- **Oral Form:** Please note that there is a form to be filled in for each candidate, and should be submitted with the recording. Centres are advised to take note of any comments made on the Oral Form, as in many cases, this is the only feedback.
- **Recording:** Good sound quality is essential. If using cassettes, please use new cassettes. 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. Recordings must **never** be paused or stopped, except in an emergency, which must be fully explained in writing to Edexcel. 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. 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. Please label the cassette as well as the box and ensure that the cassettes are rewound to the beginning before posting them off.
- **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 is also available from 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. All information relating to the oral tests is available on www.edexcel.com.
- **Administration:** Centres should take care to enclose the correct paperwork with the recordings: i.e. the oral forms, 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.

Grade Boundaries

Raw Mark boundaries

Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
50	40	35	31	27	23	19

Uniform Mark Scale boundaries

Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
60	48	42	36	30	24	18

Please note that although the modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across MFL specifications are comparable at specification level.

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