

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCE German (6GN01) Paper 1A

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The test is divided into two sections.

SECTION A

This requires candidates to respond to four Edexcel-set questions on a stimulus related to the candidates chosen general topic area. The teacher examiner will first ask two questions about the general content of the stimulus and will then follow on with two other questions that invite candidates to express their opinions on, or give reactions to, the stimulus.

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 candidate.

The general topic areas 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 candidates have 15 minutes to prepare with the stimulus card provided. They may make notes of up to one side of A4 in this time, which they may refer to during the examination.

It is expected that the candidate will keep the notes throughout the exam and they, together with the card, will be collected at the end.

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. For questions 3 and 4 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 candidate is expected to **discuss and develop** as part of a wider conversation the general topic area. They must also show a clear understanding of the topic chosen. The subtopics of each area are stated in the specification.

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.

Specific Comments on the Stimulus Cards

Youth Culture & Concerns (1A/1B) Several candidates were unable to answer Q2 although responded accurately to Q1 and most had no issues with Q3. However, the word 'beliebter' was not always properly understood. Youth Culture & Concerns (2) Q3 & Q4 were easily answered and very many developed or expanded on their responses by citing how they enjoyed 'Big Brother' and 'The X Factor'.

Youth Culture & Concerns (2A & 2B) Q1 & Q2 were not always answered well or correctly, the word "meistens" was not well understood. With Q2 most candidates were unable to make a link between Thomas working at his PC after work and becoming addicted to computer shopping leading, to a lapse of memory over his purchases online. Q3 & Q4 were answered very well and allowed for the more able candidates to develop and embellish their responses with references to personal experiences.

Lifestyle Health & Fitness (1A/1B) Some candidates were misled in Q1 with many only citing part of the answer read from the text. It seemed that some candidates did not understand "wieso". Q3 & Q4 allowed the more able candidates and the majority to perform well by drawing on personal experiences. Q4 on Stimulus 1B was poorly answered by some candidates.

Lifestyle, Health & Fitness (2A/2B) Q1 was often not properly understood. This card allowed the more able candidates an opportunity to comment extensively on cancer risks. The responses for stimulus 2A seemed to be well delivered and well thought through by most candidates, although there is evidence of disinterest in legislation.

The World Around Us (1A/1B) Few centres seemed to have explored or used this stimulus card. The more able candidates were able to deliver excellent and well-informed responses making references to personal holiday experiences. Q4 was only well handled by the more able candidates. For Q3 & Q4 on stimulus Card 1B there seemed only to be a very vague understanding of mass tourism posing environmental problems and how best to resolve this issue.

The World Around Us (2A/2B) This was well answered by those candidates who had chosen this topic, some candidates revealing excellent research into alternative energy sources and that Germany has taken the decision since the environmental catastrophe in Japan, to "mothball" most of their nuclear power stations. This section allowed many candidates to give some statistical information to support their understanding of the topic area.

Education & Employment (1A/1B) Most candidates responded well to this card although some were unable to comment on the consequences of unemployment. The questions on card 1B required candidate to have had some work experience.

Education & Employment (2A/2B) Those candidates who chose this topic performed very well with many able to deliver good research into the developments of the German education system, with the introduction of the 'Turbo Abitur' and the problems and concerns this initiative has caused.

Once again this year the most popular topic was Lifestyle, Health and Fitness, followed by Youth Culture and Concerns, then The World Around Us and finally Education and Employment.

The first two questions from the stimulus card require quite brief answers which will relate directly to the text. It will be possible to lift the answers directly from the text and this is indeed acceptable. There is no need for the candidate to expand the answers at this point. However, the examiner **must** ask the questions **exactly** as they are worded on the examiner's version of the stimulus. No additions such as 'meinen Sie' are allowed. The only change permitted is to change 'Sie' to 'du' if the examiner and candidate prefer this. Any change to the wording of the questions will result in this question not being considered as part of the assessment.

The third and fourth questions do require further expansion and development and will usually require personal ideas and opinions. However, this expansion must be directly relevant to the question. As an example, if a question asks about a balanced diet, there is no need to ask about sport and exercise as this has no direct relevance.

Many candidates completed this section in less than the four minutes suggested in the specification. This is perfectly acceptable. However, it is important that the full test lasts at least eight minutes. If the test is too short, it will be liable to a penalty.

Similarly there is no need in continuing the test beyond ten minutes and examiners will usually not listen beyond this point. Teacher Examiners should remember that a written examination has a fixed time when candidates must stop and it is the same thing for an oral test.

Candidates can often be put at their ease by beginning the test by simply asking if everything is OK and explaining in German exactly what is about to happen. Good examining requires a good balance between keeping the candidate at their ease by encouragement, whilst at the same time asking probing questions which stretch the ability of each candidate. Certainly no candidate should have grammatical errors corrected, nor should an examiner disagree in an aggressive fashion with the candidate.

All four questions should always be asked, even if a candidate has partially answered the next question in their previous answer. There were a very few instances of examiners missing out questions, intentionally or not.

Candidates must **never** see the cards in advance of the examination and the table provided in the instructions to examiners giving the order in which the cards should be chosen **must** be used.

SECTION B

The second part requires the teacher examiner to engage the candidate in a discussion that, although still relating to the same general topic area and its linked subtopics, moves away from the main focus of the stimulus.

It is a good idea to make a clear distinction between the two parts of the test. A phrase such as: *Gut, also wir sind jetzt mit der Karte fertig. Wir sprechen jetzt über andere Themen*, shows a clear movement between the two parts of the test.

The questions posed in this part of the test must show that the candidate has an understanding of the topic chosen. Therefore personal and anecdotal questions are not appropriate.

The following types of questions should be avoided:

Was für Mode findest du schön?

Isst du persönlich gesund?

Wie findest du deine Schule?

Wo machst du gern Urlaub?

These are very GCSE in their style and will not allow the candidates to show any understanding of the topic which they have studied.

Another type of question to avoid is the so called closed question or others giving a choice of two possible answers. Here are a couple of examples:

Ist die Mode wichtig für dich?

This question could simply be answered with 'ja' or 'nein' as it is a personal question, it should always be avoided. It can be improved like this:

Wie wichtig ist die Mode für junge Menschen?

This question requires the candidate to give some opinions and cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. The question word '*Inwiefern..*' would also be very good.

Inwiefern ist die Mode wichtig für junge Menschen?

Was ist dir wichtiger, Freunde oder Familie?

Another poor question, firstly personal and secondly could be answered by just lifting one of the two choices. A alternative would be:

Wie wichtig ist es, gute Freunde zu haben?

A further important aspect of this part of the test is that it **must** be a **spontaneous** discussion. Therefore the candidate should not be allowed to respond with a pre learnt monologue. The feeling may be that the candidate should speak as much as possible and, although development of answers is important, an answer, no matter how lengthy, which is just simply the regurgitation of a large piece of language, will not score highly. Under no circumstances should the candidate know the questions in advance, something which would encourage pre learnt monologues.

Examiners are urged to interrupt candidates in order to elicit clarification of points made as well as to add their own thoughts. In this way the oral becomes a discussion rather than a one sided monologue. Phrases such as '*Was meinst du damit?*' or '*Warum ist der Fall?*' are to be encouraged.

In order to access the very high marks for understanding of the general topic area, the candidates will need to back up points made, possibly with statistics or examples. For instance, if the topic of Lifestyle, Health and Fitness were chosen, candidates could be expected to know something about the numbers of young people who are overweight, to what extent it has got worse, and possibly what the government is doing about it. This goes beyond simply stating that too many young people are overweight. This chosen topic should have been studied in detail and therefore just stating personal, anecdotal information will not suffice.

Centres with a large number of candidates must not use a list of questions which are asked to all candidates, possibly in a slightly different order. The best orals develop naturally from the spontaneous response of the candidates.

Examiners should be aware of the need to cover a variety of sub-topics in section B so that candidates can show the range of their understanding and knowledge. They must also move away from the original stimulus in section A.

Conduct of the Examination

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

- Timing was accurate overall, with most tests between 8 and 10 minutes. Please note that very short tests are subject to severe penalties, longer tests are not marked beyond 10 minutes.
- Recording quality: there are no longer as many centres using cassettes. CDs are now far more popular and they give far better quality recordings. The orals from some centres on cassettes had a poor recording quality. Centres are however requested to make sure that CDs have been properly formatted before submission. USB sticks are becoming more popular too, but these carry the slight danger of transferring of a virus. It is requested that only new USB sticks are used and a check made for viruses. Whatever mode of recording is chosen, it is vital that the recordings are clear, with both teacher examiner and candidate audible.
- Oral forms: each candidate must complete the **new** OR1 form, which **must** be signed by the candidate and the examiner and submitted with the recordings.
- Examiners must **never** rephrase the questions in section A, or ask supplementary questions in this section.

Handbook of Instructions to Centres: teacher examiners should be thoroughly acquainted with this publication, as observing correct procedures are vital. An Oral Training Guide is 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.

The team of markers at Edexcel would like to thank you for the help given by the majority of centres which made the marking an easier process than may have been the case.

Grade Boundaries

Much work has taken place on the comparability of the oral units for French, German and Spanish. The senior examiners have worked closely together to ensure their application of the common oral marking criteria is consistently applied across these three languages. This has been in response to queries from centres about the results at unit level on the oral examinations.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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