

# Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCE  
in German (6GN03) Paper 1A / 1B

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Summer 2016

Publications Code 6GN03\_1A\_1606\_ER

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## **Format of the Test**

The oral assessment is made up of two sections.

Section A includes:

- An optional introduction of the chosen topic lasting up to one minute.
- A debate on the chosen issue in which the teacher/examiner and candidate maintain opposing standpoints.
- Section A should last for a maximum of 5 minutes in total.

Section B is an unpredictable discussion of at least two further issues, and should last for between 6 and 8 minutes.

The test should conclude within 11-13 minutes, but Section A must finish after 5 minutes.

## **Assessment Principles**

This unit requires candidates to demonstrate the effectiveness of their German-language skills by presenting and taking a clear stance on any issue of their choice. They will be expected to interact effectively with the teacher/examiner, defend their views and sustain discussion as the teacher/examiner moves the conversation away from their chosen issue.

Candidates will be expected to use the language of debate and argument to discuss the issue and will also be assessed for understanding as well as communication and quality of spoken language.

The assessment is externally marked by Pearson/Edexcel examiners. The total mark for this assessment is 50.

## **Marking Criteria**

'Response' is marked out of 20 and assesses performance in relation to spontaneity, discourse, range of lexis and structures used by the candidate and the ability to respond using abstract ideas and concepts.

'Quality of Language' is marked out of 7 and assesses the strength of pronunciation, intonation and grammatical accuracy of the language which is attempted.

'Reading and Research' accounts for up to 7 marks and assesses evidence of investigation into the chosen issue and awareness of the topics discussed in Section B.

'Comprehension and Development' is awarded up to 16 marks. Here, Examiners assess how well the candidate comprehends the range of questions that are asked and the quality and logic of the development of answers.

Centres should be aware that the marking guidance that is applied to the assessment process by Pearson Examiners is included in this report, and is published on the Pearson website. This explains and defines the standards for spontaneity, discourse, development and other key assessment principles.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/german-2008.html>

## **1. Candidate Performance**

### **Section A - General Comments**

The most popular issues for debate in 2016 were, *Abtreibung, Tierversuche, Todesstrafe, Flüchtlinge, Einwanderung, Legalisierung von Drogen, Die EU / Brexit*.

There are obvious pros and cons which can be researched and expanded upon and so these issues are popular as they work well.

There were many topics which were less frequently chosen, but developed into very successful debates. This year, these included, *Stammzellenforschung, Sozialismus, die Werbung, Impfungen, Organspende, and Pazifismus*.

It should be noted that the more unusually chosen issues do require research on the part of the teacher/examiner in order to sufficiently challenge the candidate for the full duration of the debate. Thorough preparation on the part of the teacher/examiner is essential to make any debate work.

Timings in Section A were observed by many Centres, but frequently the timings were not adhered to. Allowing the candidate to talk past 1 minute in the introduction, as well as some debates lasting far past 5 minutes in total were not uncommon issues. It should be noted that our Examiners will not listen past 13 minutes, so debates which last past 5 minutes will begin to erode the time available for Section B. This is therefore of no advantage to the candidate.

### **Section B - General Comments**

Most teacher/examiners chose suitable follow on topics for Section B, which allowed for a wide range of questions, an opportunity for sophisticated development, responses which showed use of abstract concepts and also a wide range of lexis and structures.

Some teacher/examiner, however, engaged candidates in conversation about future plans, hobbies, personal interests and other such, GCSE style topics. In these cases, it was unlikely that the candidate provided sufficient evidence to access the higher bands of the assessment grids.

Other teacher/examiners appeared to be asking a lot of questions about issues which are part of the AS Specification. The topics from the AS specification are, of course, suitable for use in this examination, however, there needs to be evidence of progression from AS. Re-producing AS Level work in this exam will not demonstrate this.

As a rule, if, as a teacher/examiner, one asks questions in this examination, that one has also asked in an AS Level examination, then the evidence of progression may well be limited. This is one reason why apparently fluent and spontaneous performances are not awarded as many marks as one might expect.

Finally, in some cases, due to timing issues in Section A, the amount of material actually heard by our Examiners was limited in Section B, as Examiners are required to stop listening after 13 minutes.

## **2. Comments on Marking Criteria**

### **A. Response**

#### **Spontaneity**

Many performances were clearly spontaneous, which is one of the elements assessed under the response section. Some performances were clearly not spontaneous, and when this was the case, candidates were unlikely to access the higher marks for response, as this element had not been satisfied. The marking guidance offers further information on what is considered as spontaneous.

#### **Discourse**

Discourse is also assessed as part of response. Examiners seek evidence that both the candidate and teacher/examiner are interacting with each other, beyond a simple 'one question per issue' format. When this approach was taken, it was difficult to find evidence that the 'discourse' element of the response grid had been addressed, and so marks were unlikely to be in the highest band.

#### **Range of Lexis and Structures**

Examiners look for evidence of topic specific lexis as well as comparing what they hear to the specified list of grammatical structures. Progression from GCSE and AS level is required here, therefore, the most able performances would feature active use of a wide range of these elements.

#### **Abstract Concepts**

Evidence of an ability to respond using beliefs, morals, political views beyond the realm of the more concrete topics which form the basis of AS and GCSE work is required at this level. The highest performing candidates provided frequent examples of the ability to do this.

## **B. Quality of Language**

This accounts for 7 of the 50 possible marks. As long as communication is clear, it is most likely that a mark of 4 will be awarded. A mark of 7 does not constitute faultless language. It should be noted, that 7 out of 50 marks is a relatively small proportion. This will explain why many grammatically perfect performances do not achieve full marks overall, as they must also satisfy the criteria in the response, comprehension and development and reading and research grids.

The term "variable" in the mark grid implies that the language must be accurate on at least some significant occasions.

Examiners noted that quality of language was generally very good this session, and instances where communication completely broke down due to a lack of accuracy were few and far between.

## **C. Reading and Research**

7 marks are allocated for evidence of Reading and Research. This applies to both the chosen issue and to the unpredictable areas. Candidates are more able to show their knowledge in the prepared part of the test, and indeed, many had researched their topic in detail, providing statistics, examples, and referring to websites and TV programmes. It is of course more difficult to draw on prior knowledge in the unpredictable areas, given that the candidate must not know what is going to be discussed.

However, since many topics will have been covered in the GCE curriculum, candidates were still able to cite examples to illustrate a point which they wished to make. In general, it is expected that candidates show they read and take an interest in current affairs, and that they can take a stance on common moral and ethical issues in order to score highly here, as this is a large part of the course content. In Section B, specific examples are not required. The ability to explain a view point shows the level of awareness required for the highest marks in this section. Many candidates did indeed show a good general knowledge.

## **D. Comprehension and Development**

This area, marked out of 16, is aimed at assessing understanding and the ability to deal with questioning. In order to respond, one has to have understood the question: in other words, comprehension skills are tested. This does have implications for the way in which questions are formulated and asked, in that there should be a wide variety of complex and challenging questions in order to provide evidence of the candidate's ability.

Good questioning would use a full range of question phrases, for example, *wie / warum / inwiefern / wozu / woher / worauf ist es zurückzuführen*.

It may be considered that the longer the question, the more complex it becomes, but this is not necessarily the case. Teacher/examiners should avoid talking for more of the 11-13 minutes than the candidate.

The actual number of questions is also important. Some excellent linguists could not be awarded full marks, as the entire Section B consisted of only 3 or 4 questions. This approach should be avoided.

Development pre-supposes that the candidate has fully understood the question, and is then able to produce a detailed response, giving not a single-sentence reply, but several sentences, developing a line of debate.

The ability to present two opposing points of view and the reasons for these, along with an evaluation would demonstrate excellent development.

### **Further Reference**

Please also refer to the Examiner Report from 2015 for examples of discourse (response) and development.

### **3. Guidance on Choice of Issue.**

Candidates do have an entirely free choice of issue and should be encouraged to select an issue, which they find personally interesting. The following should, however, be kept in mind when deciding if an issue is suitable for the exam:

- Can the issue be researched? An issue which is based purely within the personal sphere of the candidate will not be suitable. In preparation for the test, the candidate is expected to do in-depth research into the chosen issue, and demonstrate reading. The evidence of this, contributes to the marks awarded in the "reading and research" section of the mark scheme. For example, a debate with the title "German schools are better than British schools," which is based entirely on the anecdotal evidence of the candidate's experiences in both countries, is not appropriate at this level.
- Can both sides of the issue be sensibly argued? There are many issues, about which two opposing views could be taken, but are the views realistic? For example, "I am against smoking". This means that the teacher/examiner will have to argue for this. Whilst this could be technically possible, it is likely to be difficult, and teacher/examiners should 'veto' such topics.

The following bullet points outline good practice in guiding candidates to choose a suitable issue:

- When candidates chose the issue, ask them to propose sources of research which will enable them to prepare effectively. If they cannot do this, the teacher should advise against the issue.
- Is it possible to argue both sides of the issue, comfortably? There is a certain degree of role-play involved in this debate, and teacher/examiners often will have to argue for a point of view which is alien to them. However, there are some issues which would be

highly inappropriate and likely to offend, and these issues should be avoided.

### Further Reference

Please also refer to Examiner Report 2015 for further information on chosen issues and effective preparation.

### Advice and Guidance

- 1. Issue:** Candidates must choose a genuinely controversial issue, and argue consistently for or against it. The teacher/examiner should take and maintain the opposing view, but aim to end on a conciliatory note.
- 2. Timing:** The presentation may take a maximum time of 1 minute. Anything longer should be interrupted. Overall the presentation and discussion of the chosen issue should last 5 minutes. If it is longer, this erodes the time available for the unpredictable areas, namely 6-8 minutes, for a total time of 11-13 minutes.

Please note that the timing of the test begins **when the candidate begins to speak**, not from the initial introduction of name, candidate number etc.

- 3. Conduct:** Teacher/examiners should look closely at the mark grid to see what is being assessed, as this has implications for the conduct, not least on the style of questioning, which can no longer be minimal. Otherwise there is no evidence of the candidate's comprehension abilities. Teacher/examiners may like to consider preparing a hierarchy of questions, ranging from the very simple, to the more challenging. A range is essential.
- 4. Oral chosen issue form (OR3):** This should be filled in correctly, with the stance clearly stated, in German. It should also be signed and dated by both the candidate and teacher/examiner.

*Please note that a new version of the OR3 form is available to download from the Pearson website, and should be used for all future oral assessments.*

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/german-2008.html>

- 5. Recording:** Good sound quality is essential. The microphone should be nearer to the candidate than the teacher/examiner. Mobile phones must NOT be brought into the examination room and there should be no background noise or interruptions.

AS and A2 oral tests must be recorded separately. Please also check that every candidate has been recorded, that it is audible and at the correct speed.

Please check the Pearson website for details of acceptable formats for recording candidates' assessments. Only digital formats are required as cassettes are no longer accepted. Please ensure that CD recordings can be read on any machine and are not merely computer-compatible.

A label with the candidates' names and numbers should be included with the CD. With a large number of candidates, centres may find that a USB stick is the best option. This is returned to the centre and can be reused.

## Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response

### Marking guidance for oral examiners

#### Tests that are too short

The timing of the test begins the moment the candidate starts the presentation.

A test is too short if it is less than 10 minutes 30 seconds (including a 30 second tolerance).

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark across the following assessment grids:

- 'Response'
- 'Comprehension and Development'

e.g.

5–8	Limited incidence of spontaneous discourse; limited range of lexis and structures; very little evidence of abstract language.
9–12	Satisfactory incidence of spontaneous discourse; range of lexis and structures adequate with some ability to handle language of abstract concepts.
13–16	Frequent examples of spontaneous discourse; good range of lexis and structures; good use of abstract concepts.

If a candidate would have scored 12 for Response, they should be given 8, if they would have scored 9, they should be given 5. A similar adjustment would be made to the mark for Comprehension and Development. This adjustment should not be applied to marks for Quality of language or Reading and Research.

#### Tests that are too long

Once the 13 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence/sense group.

#### Tests that do not have a debatable or defensible issue

e.g. *where the candidate does not present or defend a definite stance, or the teacher-examiner fails to give the candidate an opportunity to justify their opinions.*

- Candidates will be limited to scoring a maximum of 4 for 'Reading and Research'.
- This may affect the marks given for 'Comprehension and Development'.

#### Tests that do not move away from initial issue/topic

e.g. *further unpredictable areas of discussion are not covered and/or a monologue.*

- Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see the grids.

Response	
Only <b>one</b> unpredictable area discussed	No more than 12 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 8 marks

Reading and research	
Only <b>one</b> unpredictable area discussed	No more than 4 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 3 marks

Comprehension and development	
Only <b>one</b> unpredictable area discussed	No more than 10 marks
No unpredictable areas discussed	No more than 7 marks

#### Spontaneity/Response

A performance which is, in the marker's view, *largely* recited, and demonstrates *very little* spontaneity as well as impaired intonation may suggest pre-learning. If the examiner believes that a test has been pre-learnt then the mark for **Response** will be limited to 8, irrespective of use of lexis/structure/abstract language.

A pre-learnt test may also affect the mark given for **Comprehension and Development** if it does not permit a natural and logical interaction.

It is important that the PE and team leaders can see clearly the justification for marks awarded and examiners should note briefly on the OR3 form the reason for any caps which are applied in marking an oral test.

Spontaneous use of language arises from manipulating the reservoir of structures and lexis they have acquired in preparing for the examination in response to the unpredictable nature of the discussion as it unfolds. The unpredictability is created by the teacher/examiner picking up on a remark and probing for greater clarity or further explanation or opinion.

### **Discourse**

Discourse is a discussion where the candidate demonstrates the ability to interact on an issue. This means developing the line of argument and exploring it in more depth.

Discourse describes the exchange of opinion and information on an issue between the candidate and the teacher/examiner. In practice, this means that each participant addresses the points made by the other. The candidate and the Teacher/Examiner should respond appropriately to each other's input, whether that be a question, a comment, a remark. To reach the full range of the marking criteria there will be frequent examples of such discourse.

### **Challenge**

Evidence of challenging questions is required to demonstrate that candidates have engaged in discussion and debate at an appropriate intellectual level for A2.

In the first part, there must be evidence that the teacher/examiner has confronted the points of view presented by the candidate. In the second part, there must be evidence of opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their full understanding of the issues.

### **Development**

Development means appropriately expanding on an idea and point of view. This can be in the form of justification, illustration, exemplification, clarification, comparison of the candidates' ideas and views.

**If a score of '0' is awarded for any of the assessment grids, the recording should be referred to your Team Leader.**

## **Grade Boundaries**

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>