



Pearson

# **Examiners' Report**

## Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE  
In German (6GN03) Paper 1A & 1B

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## **Format of the Test**

There are 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 interviewer and student 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 at 5 minutes.

## **Assessment Principles**

This unit assesses communication in spoken language. It also covers understanding, which is in essence, a test of listening skills.

It is marked positively out of 50, by Edexcel examiners, although the examination itself may be conducted by a visiting examiner, or by a teacher examiner.

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

Quality of Language is assessed out of 7 marks on 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 student comprehends the range of questions that are asked and the quality and logic of the development of answers.

Centres should be aware that Pearson Edexcel publish the guidance to examiners on the website. This explains and defines the standards for spontaneity, discourse, development and other key assessment principles.

## **Students' Performances**

### **Section A General Comments**

The most popular issues for debate in 2017 were once again Abtreibung, Tierversuche, Todesstrafe, Legalisierung von Drogen. There are obvious

pros and cons, which can be researched and expanded upon and so these issues are popular as they work well. The topics Flüchtlinge, Einwanderung, Die EU / Brexit were more popular than last year, which continues a growing trend.

There were many topics which were less frequently chosen, but developed into very successful debates. This year, these included „Fleischkonsum“ Waffen in den USA sollten stärker regementiert werden, das Leben in der DDR war nicht so schlecht, ich bin für Solarflugzeuge, and ich bin gegen gleiche Preise für die Geschlechter im Profitennis“. In most cases the teacher/examiners research was sufficient to challenge the student for the full duration of the debate. There were, however, some occasions when the debates stopped short of the timing, as it was clear that the teacher / examiner had run out of ways to challenge the student. This was more likely the case when the students dealt promptly and fluently with the challenges.

Debates lasting far past 5 minutes in total were much less common this year. It should be noted, that examiners do not listen past 13 minutes, so debates which last past 5 minutes erodes the time available for section B.

## **Section B General**

Most centres chose suitable follow on topics for section B, which allowed for a wide range of questions, an opportunity for sophisticated development, such as the use of abstract concepts and also a wide range of lexis and structures.

Some teacher examiners, however, engaged students in conversation about GCSE style topics. In these cases, it was unlikely that the student provided sufficient evidence to access the higher bands of the assessment grids.

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 the topics tend to be more concrete. A2 requires students to show an ability to handle abstract concepts. If a teacher examiner asks questions in this examination, that were 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, as they do not satisfy the highest criteria for response, and/or comprehension and development.

## **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, students were unlikely to access the higher marks for response, as this element had not been satisfied. The marking guidance on the Pearson website offers further information on what is considered as spontaneous.

## **Discourse**

Discourse is also assessed as part of response. Examiners seek evidence that both the student and 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 students provided frequent examples of the ability to do this.

## **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. Native speakers will often, but not necessarily, score 7 marks here. Non-native speakers must have access to the full marks available here, and the examiners are standardised with this fundamental principal in mind. 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.

Instances where communication completely broke down due to a lack of accuracy were few and far between in this session.

## **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. Students 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 student does not know what is going to be discussed.

However, since many topics will have been covered in the GCE curriculum, students were still able to cite examples to illustrate a point which they wished to make.

### **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, listening 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 student's ability.

Good questioning used a full range of question phrases.

Nearly all teacher examiners avoided talking for more of the 11-13 minutes than the student.

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. One would expect a traditional A Level listening examination to have a good number and range of questions, so this test must also reflect this.

Development pre-supposes that the student 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.

### **Summary**

As this was the last full entry for this examination in advance of the new A Level specification, guidance for future examinations is not present in this report.

On the whole, it was felt by examiners marking this unit, that most students were able and equipped to cope well with this examination, and the ability profile of the students seemed higher than in previous years.

Examiners presume that this is a result of the excellent guidance offered by centres, which are now very familiar with the examination and mark grids.

The examiners marking on the unit appreciate the efforts of centres to make the exams run smoothly for their students, and to allow them to reach their full potential. The hard work that goes into preparing students for examinations is also appreciated and the examiners seek to reward this

whenever possible.

We look forward to working with current Edexcel centres on the new specification and to welcoming new centres to the Edexcel WCQ A Level in German.

### **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>

