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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback  
Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCE  
In German (9GN0)  
Paper 3: Speaking

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## 9GN03 Speaking

In the A Level Speaking examination, candidates are assessed on their ability to demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding of the cultural context by giving ideas, examples and information on one of the themes and on a chosen subject of interest they have researched linked to the social and cultural context of the language studied
- analysis of aspects of the cultural context by presenting and justifying valid arguments, viewpoints and conclusions, illustrated with relevant examples and evidence
- the ability to interact and hold a natural, spontaneous and fluent discourse
- skill in manipulating and pronouncing language accurately
- response to written language in speech.

These aspects are assessed via two distinct tasks conducted entirely in German, which are carried out in consecutive order in one session.

### Task 1 (discussion on a theme)

Content for this task is based on any one of the twelve sub-themes from one of the four overall themes listed on pages 8–9 of the specification.

Candidates choose one out of two sub-themes to discuss. Stimulus cards are a springboard to the discussion, which the teacher-examiner broadens onto other sub-themes of the wider theme.

### Task 2 (presentation and discussion on candidate's independent research project)

This task is in two parts. Content for this task is based on the subject of interest that candidates have chosen for their independent research project. This may be based on any of the four themes of study listed on pages 8–9 of the specification or on a subject of interest of the candidate's choosing. However, it must relate to the cultural and social context of a German speaking community.

The key factors to consider in order to attain the highest marks are:

- A focus on Germany for task 1 discussions based on themes 1,3 and 4.
- A focus on the German Speaking World for task 1 discussions on theme 2 and for the entire task 2. Credit for AO4 is only awarded when the conversation is focussed on the correct geographical areas.
- The level of knowledge and understanding of the Germany and the German speaking world is assessed once in each section by the AO4 mark grid and is worth a total of 24 marks.
- There is no requirement for the candidate to take a definite standpoint on any issues discussed, although the candidate may make their own standpoint clear as part of the discussions.
- There are prescribed topic areas for task 1 and prescribed questions, which the teacher examiner must ask at the start of this task.

- Interaction, including the ability to partake in a spontaneous, naturally developed discussion, is assessed discretely by the AO1 mark grid, twice during the course of the examination, worth a total of 12 marks.
- The ability to respond in speech to written German is assessed in task 2 part 1 by the AO2 grid. The presentation given in this part of the test must clearly reference specific, named sources. These sources must have been originally produced in German and the original German versions must be cited on the RP3 form.
- The examination is, in total, 16-18 minutes long.

## **Congratulations**

On behalf of all examiners and Pearson, as Principal Examiner, I would personally like to congratulate all candidates and teachers for their hard work, determination and adaptability in reaching a point where they were able to enter and complete the examination.

It should not be forgotten, that these candidates experienced significant disruption in their education from the age of 14 and have worked hard to overcome this disruption.

## **Task 1**

The cards proved to be an effective way to stimulate discussion and all candidates accessed task 1 at a level appropriate to their ability.

The answers given to the two prescribed questions inform the overall mark for AO4 for task 1 and are considered along with any subsequent knowledge and understanding, which is offered by the candidate in the discussion which follows.

Candidates and teachers should remember that there are no discrete marks awarded for these two questions and that there are no expected answers. Therefore, the following tips may help candidates feel more confident about attempting this part of the examination:

- As there are no discrete marks for these first two questions, there is little to gain from talking at great length in response to these two questions. It is better to move on, as examiners are also looking to credit knowledge and understanding of the subtheme, demonstrated by one or two follow up questions, which the teacher is free to devise. The examiners are also looking to credit knowledge and understanding of different subtheme from the same theme of the card. The teacher is free to choose which sub-theme and also free to devise their own questions here.
- Candidates, who find the wording or ideas on their chosen card tricky can be greatly reassured by a teacher/examiner who recognises this and quickly moves the discussion on to more familiar areas. It is imperative that teachers practise speaking about the topics with their candidates, so that they have an in-depth understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and can support their candidates in this way. Visiting examiners are also trained to move on as quickly as

possible and try to find areas which help the candidates to respond to the best of their ability.

- Candidates and teachers should have an awareness of how the subthemes are grouped into themes, so that they understand the implications of their chosen card for the ensuing discussion.
- Teachers can provide very helpful interruptions and can steer the conversation skillfully. This needs practice, however, and the candidates need to understand why the teacher may need to intervene and be reassured that this can sometimes be in their best interests.

In many cases, it was clear that candidates made sensible choices of their stimulus card and the teachers had a good awareness of which sub-theme would best serve the candidates for the further discussion. There were also many supportive teachers, who could see that time would be better spent moving on from the stimulus card. Their candidates then went on to score highly for AO4, even though they may have struggled with the first two questions.

Many candidates were clearly used to responding to their teacher and listening carefully to them. Examiners reported that they could often hear candidates who obviously trusted their teachers to help them fulfill their potential.

There are some areas, in which teachers and candidates could develop their practice for future series. In some cases, teachers allowed their candidates to struggle for too long with a stimulus card question, instead of moving on and gaining credit elsewhere. Sometimes, teachers moved on to new topics in the later stages of the tasks and it was clear that the candidate was much better informed on the new topic, but there was no time left to explore it. Some candidates were clearly not used to spontaneous questions from their teachers. This meant that any attempts to help the candidates move on from difficult areas created confusion or panic. Some candidates and teachers did not understand that the role of the teacher is to support and skilfully find ways to allow the candidates to excel. This meant that some exams seemed unnecessarily hostile.

Before providing feedback on the individual cards, it may help teachers and candidates to recap the key principles behind the design of the questions. Each card has two statements, which are comments on an aspect of the topic. The candidates can choose which of the statements they would like to discuss.

This first question always seeks the candidate's opinion on what they have just read. No specialist knowledge is required here, simply a personal response to the statement.

The second question asks for some factual information about the subtheme.

This design has the following implications for candidates and their preparation time:

- Look at the two statements first – which one evokes the strongest personal reaction? You will also be asked for this first.
- Think about how the statements make you feel? Valid personal responses include shock, surprise, confusion, emotions, or explaining that you don't understand an aspect of the statement. Other personal reactions focus on the wording – look at any adjectives or adverbs – is the statement realistic? Fair? True? Moral? Reflective of Germany/ the German speaking world?
- Look at the second questions on for each of the statements . For which of the two factual questions do you think you could mention a valid relevant example?
- Make a balanced decision of which statement to choose, based on the answers to the questions above.
- Finally, whilst we listen carefully to what candidates say, to help us understand what sort of topics and questions would be fair for future exam papers, there is always a chance that you don't feel confident about either of the statements. In this case, use your communication strategies to give your best possible answer and move on quickly to the discussion of another subtheme, where you can control the conversation much better.

The stimulus cards seemed to resonate with the vast majority of the candidates. It was heartening to hear candidates' genuine interest in German-speaking countries.

In most cases, candidates had sufficient knowledge to discuss the questions. Their range of relevant vocabulary was generally impressive.

## **Task 2**

Candidates are free to choose the topic of their Individual research project, which forms the basis of task 2.

There were countless excellent ideas for topics. Candidates had given this project a great deal of thought and spoke passionately about their findings.

It is always a pleasure to observe how the candidates are in touch with the key issues, and as a result, the popularity of certain issues moves with the times. This year, trans rights and LGBTQ+ and gender related themes were very prevalent and there was great interest in topics that related to energy supply. The AfD, historical topics, meat consumption and biographical topics remained popular choices too.

Some interesting titles that led to interesting discussions were: -

- Welche Faktoren haben zum Erfolg der AfD beigetragen?
- Die Entwicklung der modernen deutschen Sprache.
- Ob Sitzenbleiben noch zeitgemäß ist.?
- Deutsche Unternehmen in der Nazizeit.

...and many more besides.

Please feel free to make use of our "Ask the Expert" service in the planning stages of the IRP, for help and guidance on the choice of suitable topics.

### Application of the Mark Grids

Sections 1 and 2 assess AO1, interaction, AO3, Range and accuracy of Language and AO4, knowledge and Understanding of Germany and, where appropriate, the German speaking world. The mark grids were applied in the same way in both tasks. Below is a summary of how the candidates' performances were placed into the mark bands in this session.

#### AO1 – Interaction - Tasks 1 and 2

The interaction between the candidate and the teacher examiner is awarded up to 6 marks in this section.

A mark of 0 was awarded in cases when there was a complete lack of spontaneity, but this was very rare. Particularly because the candidate has to respond to previously unknown questions at the start of this task.

1-2 marks were awarded for candidates who were heavily dependent on prompting by the teacher examiner. Such candidates may have been unable to complete the points that they were trying to make.

Examiners reported that performances awarded marks in this band were relatively uncommon.

3-4 marks were awarded to candidates who demonstrated some spontaneity. The development of the discussion, and the introduction of new ideas, examples and opinions was likely to be prompted by the teacher, rather than the candidate, at times when a mark in this band was awarded. A mark of 3 may indicate a lack of spontaneity at times, or the occasional need for a prompt or assistance by the teacher to complete the idea that the candidate was trying to express.

eg

The teacher examiner constantly having to ask questions, such as "Zum Beispiel?", "Und was halten Sie davon?", "Und warum ist das wichtig?"

Candidates were awarded marks in the 5-6 band if they demonstrated an ability to lead the discussion by adding examples, opinions and justifications or introducing contrasting points of view, without the constant need to be prompted. As part of a natural discussion, the teacher examiner may seek further information, but the development of the discussion will not be dependent

on this in cases when 5 or 6 marks are awarded. At this mark band, responses will be entirely spontaneous, and it is likely that fewer aspects of the subtheme will be discussed, but in greater depth.

### **Asking Questions**

This is one aspect of interaction and it is likely to be evident in all performances, regardless of the marks awarded. Asking a question does not automatically place the performance in any one of the three mark bands.

In the 0-2 mark range, questions may have been asked as part of an entirely unspontaneous performance. They may also have been asked because the candidate was unable to respond in any other way.

In the 3-4 mark range, the candidate may have asked questions at unnatural times. Also, the candidate may have interrupted their own development, as they prioritised asking a question over giving a more developed answer. Often in such cases, the teacher examiner was prompted to change the subject after responding to the candidate, and this proved a barrier to the development of the discussion. In both this and the lower band, it was also often clear that the candidates felt uneasy or uncomfortable with question formation.

At the 5-6 mark range, candidates only asked questions when necessary, to clarify what the teacher had said, for example. They were confident in seeking clarification. They also did not seek the opinion or agreement of the teacher examiner until after they had given a full and detailed answer of their own. Or, the teacher may have given an opinion as part of the natural discussion, which the candidate had understood and so there was no need to ask for this.

Candidates would be much more likely to raise performance in this assessment objective by practising ways to develop arguments, rather than asking questions of their own. **Initiating communication** is what is rewarded, and asking a question in only one, very straightforward way of evidencing this.

#### Supporting Candidates in AO1

- Encourage candidates to take the initiative to develop points. They may use strategies mastered in other subjects or qualifications, for example the point, evidence, evaluation strategy used by many in English examinations.
- Encourage candidates to seek clarification, if needed, **before** answering.
- Practice phrases which allow the candidate time to change their mind or re-articulate their ideas, eg. "just a moment", "actually, now I think about it." Just as candidates may cross out and re-write answers in a written exam, they should develop the skills to do this orally too.
- Encourage candidates to give their best possible answer, before asking for agreement or checking for understanding.
- Ask follow up questions on what the candidate has said, before changing the focus of the discussion.
- Explain to candidates that asking a question does not automatically raise their mark.

- Allow candidates to practise asking questions, so that they feel and sound at ease when they do.

AO2 – Responding to Written German in Speech - Task 2 part 1 only.

This mark grid assesses the candidate's ability to give a spoken response to **written** German.

The mark grid has a range of 0-12 marks and likely performance of candidates awarded marks in each band is detailed below;

Marks cannot be awarded to candidates who do not present evidence that they are responding to written German. For example, the presentation may have been a general introduction, which did not mention any of the sources. Candidates who spoke only about sources, which were not written in German, also cannot be awarded marks in this section. Similarly, candidates who only made reference to non-written sources, such as documentaries or online videos did not provide the evidence required to score under this assessment objective.

1-3 marks were awarded to candidates who did mention written sources, but did not make the focus on the authors points clear. This may have been a passing reference to sources, followed by some general background information. Also, candidates who only made reference to one source in this task were awarded a mark in this band. There were also candidates who talked about more than one source, but the additional sources were not suitable for the reasons mentioned above. If the second source was referred to beyond the 2 minute time limit, the examiners did not consider it when awarding the marks.

4-6 marks requires that the candidate refers to at least two written sources. The summary may have been unbalanced, focussing on one source for the majority of the two minutes. In other instances, the summary may have been balanced evenly across two appropriate sources, but there may have been a lack of personal response to the **author's** ideas. Or, the summary may have been unclear to the point that it was difficult to distinguish which information came from which source.

7-8 marks were awarded to presentations, which mentioned two appropriate sources. The majority of the ideas presented by the candidate will also have also been clearly linked to their original source, although this will not always have been clear. Furthermore, there will have been a personal response to each source and some, but not all of this response will have been justified.

10-12 marks were awarded to presentations that gave a summary of two appropriate sources, in which the originating source was always clear to the examiner. The personal responses will have been consistently justified.

The full range of marks were awarded for AO2. Examiners noted that candidates of all abilities were able to access full marks for this assessment objective. It should be noted, that quality of language is not assessed in task 2 part 1 and appropriate, understandable presentations will be awarded

marks, as long as they are providing evidence that they are a response to written German. The presentation must be the candidate's own work.

It was impressive to note that candidates are becoming very aware of reliability and quality of written sources. A lot of personal reactions referred to this and was well justified. Candidates are clearly very able to consider these issues, which can only be positive in a world in which they are bombarded by written information. Even better that they are able to think about this in a second language.

### Supporting Candidates in AO2

- Practise the summary presentation task as frequently as possible throughout the course. For example, if the topic of recycling has recently been covered in class, ask the candidates to take two of the texts used and create a presentation based on those. Adhere to the two minute time limit strictly when practising, so that they know how much they can cover in that time. **(You must not practise using the actual written sources, which the candidate wishes to use in the examination.)**
- Explain what needs to be covered in the presentation – at least two German written sources, points from each clearly presented, a personal response which is justified.
- Encourage candidates to be sensible about the length of their written sources. If they are too long, the summary will be difficult within the time constraints.

### AO3 – Tasks 1 and 2 - Accuracy and Range of Language

The mark grid used to assess the quality of language covers four main features:

- Accuracy – conjugation, agreements, word order, tense formation.
- Range – lexis appropriate to the topic of discussion and structures, as listed in Appendix 3 of the specification.
- Pronunciation.
- Intonation.

The examiners consider all of these points and, when the candidate's performance falls into different marks bands for each of the characteristics, they arrive at a best fit mark.

For example, if the accuracy and range are worthy of the top mark band, but the pronunciation is weaker, the mark may be awarded at the bottom end of the top band, or the top of the box below, based on the merits of the performance.

All four elements are given equal weighting.

Therefore, a candidate who attempts to use a wide range of lexis and structures, with good pronunciation and intonation, but who also makes mistakes with adjective endings and word order, may be awarded a similar mark to an accurate candidate, who operates within a more limited range of

structures and lexis, even though the two performances may sound very different. Non-native speakers must have access to the full marks available here, and the examiners are standardised with this fundamental principal in mind.

Candidates awarded a mark of 1-3 are likely to have been frequently unable to express ideas, due to limited range of lexis and structures at their disposal. It is likely that the examiner, due to accuracy, pronunciation or intonation difficulties, did not readily understand many of their ideas.

Candidates awarded marks in the 4-6 band are unlikely to have impeded communication due to pronunciation and intonation, but there will have been occasions when communication broke down.

In the 7-9 band, the candidates will have given the impression that they were not reliant on the same lexis and structures to express themselves. They will have had topic specific lexis and will have been usually able to make themselves understood. Pronunciation and intonation will not be a barrier to communication in this band.

It is likely that there will be errors in the performances of candidates in the 10-12 band, but they will not have hindered communication. Examples of such errors are incorrect genders, case endings, lapses in prepositions. They will have demonstrated use of key terms across a range of topics, and have made a clear attempt to avoid mother-tongue interference in pronunciation and intonation.

The full range of mark bands was used in assessing the candidates in this session. The requirement to show knowledge and understanding of the German speaking world seems to have encouraged many candidates to broaden their vocabulary in order to present their findings, especially in relation to the IRP. The examiners frequently credited passives, relative clauses, conditional perfects, subordination and varied discourse markers. Whilst a few candidates seemed unable to cope at this level, most were able to discuss the topics and projects for the full duration of the test.

#### Supporting Candidates in A03

- Encourage candidates to gather a range of topic-specific vocabulary for each aspect of each sub theme.
- Work on synonyms, to avoid repetition.
- Explore ways to make basic opinions more linguistically sophisticated.  
eg "it is good", becomes "it is positive", better still "it is extremely positive", even better still "It is an extremely positive development", or even "It is viewed as an extremely positive development by many Germans." The sentiment is the same, but the linguistic range is instantly lifted. The final version would provide evidence of a better range of language.

A04 – Tasks 1 and 2 – Knowledge and Understanding of German Speaking Culture and Society.

AO4 is worth 24 of the 72 marks in the speaking assessment. The mark grid assesses:

- Relevance to the German speaking world and to the **question asked**.
- The ability to support an idea with examples.
- The ability to analyse the evidence presented and justify conclusions.

The best fit mark is awarded. Therefore, a list of facts about the German speaking world will be considered as examples, but if they are not relevant, or not used to draw a conclusion, this list alone will not satisfy the highest bands of the mark grid. Similarly, opinions and conclusions on the German speaking world alone, will not satisfy the full criteria, if they are not supported by relevant examples.

This session, examiners awarded the full range of marks in this grid.

A mark awarded in the 1-3 band would indicate a performance that made limited reference to specific examples, relying on description. Opinions offered are likely to have been basic, such as positives and negatives. For example, they may say, that recycling is good for the environment because it reduces carbon emissions. Whilst true, it is general, and not focussed on German society.

Candidates were awarded a mark in the 4-6 band, if there was evidence of some specific examples from the German speaking world, which were relevant to the topics being discussed. The use of exemplification will, however, have been inconsistent. Sometimes irrelevant facts will have been given, or there will have been ideas that were unsubstantiated. For example, the candidate may have said that recycling is effective in Germany and the Germans are pioneers in recycling, but this was not substantiated.

A performance in the 7-9 band will have used examples which were consistently rooted in German society and culture and analysed the significance of this factual information. Some of the examples given will have demonstrated a more in-depth knowledge, and may have gone beyond the standard, well known response. For example, a description of the "Pfandsystem" with relevant personal reactions.

In task 2, a mark of 8-9 was often awarded for candidates, who demonstrated that they had excellent factual knowledge of their chosen topic, but did not provide much evidence of evaluation or analysis.

Candidates were awarded a mark in the 10-12 band if they frequently demonstrated an ability to give more perceptive examples, which showed a deeper understanding. For example, use of the "Pfandsystem" idea is evidence of Germany being environmentally friendly, accompanied by some up to date examples of the negative environmental impact of washing and transporting bottles, or information on the proportion of multiple-use bottles which are actually re-used as intended. The conclusion would then follow based on the balance of evidence provided by the candidate, and this conclusion would be logical in light of the evidence.

The idea of the "Pfandsystem" is used above to illustrate the difference in quality of AO4 at various points in the mark grid. There were, of course, many different examples of candidates presenting an ability to be perceptive, and to analyse these perceptions.

#### Supporting Candidates in AO4

- Encourage candidates to gather up-to date facts and examples from German language media, which demonstrate current thinking on the topics in the specification.
- For the historical theme, encourage candidates to gain an understanding of the key dates and turning points, influential people and politics at that time.
- For the media-based topics particularly, ensure that candidates can give evidence of how these universal issues manifest themselves in the German speaking world. For example, the main broadcasters and viewing figures. The main newspapers and circulation figures. The main providers of on-line entertainment and on-line magazines, newspapers, podcasts, radio. A key consideration here – if it is available outside of Germany, or translated into a language other than German, it is not the best example. So, catch-up TV-apps / sites, which are restricted to German speaking countries. Magazines and websites which are not translated into English. Websites that end in .de , .ch or .at
- Encourage candidates to adopt a "point, evidence, evaluation" approach, to ensure that they maintain a balance between factual and analytical ideas.
- Make use of the indicative content provided on the Edexcel website for this exam paper. Be aware that this is not a "mark scheme" or a "correct answer" but it provides a wealth of versatile examples, along with sources, which could be helpful as teaching resources.
- For the IRP, encourage candidates to formulate their project title or statement of opinion. This helps to keep focus on the analytical aspect of AO4. For example "Nicht alles in der DDR war schlecht." or "Inwiefern gibt es eine Verbindung zwischen Armut und Rechtsradikalismus in Deutschland?"
- Explain to candidates the importance of their key findings on the IRP form. These should not be facts, but rather, ideas or questions that the candidate's research has raised. For example, beginning each bullet point with phrases such as "The role of...", "The importance of...", "The pros and cons of...", "The meaning of...", "The reasons for...", "The different reactions to..."
- When conducting the examination, use the key findings to structure the discussion. Only move on to another key finding when the candidate appears to have no more to add.
- Teachers **must** make a concerted effort to ask questions which lead the candidate to focus their answer on the relevant geographical area in task one.
- Teachers must also ensure that they focus their questions for task 2 on the key findings, which the candidate has written on **the RP3 form**. Examiners noted a number of performances, in which it was clear that the teacher examiner was following his/her own agenda in

task 2 part 2 and this is not supportive of the student's best interests.

## Conduct and administration

### Timing

The timing of section 1 is recommended to be 6-7 minutes. Examiners will listen to all that is said, even if it exceeds the time recommendation. However, examiners stop listening at 18 minutes. Therefore, if task 1 exceeds 7 minutes, it will limit the amount of evidence for assessment that examiners hear for the task 2 marks. Far fewer teacher examiners disregarded the timings in this session, which helped support their candidates to reach their full potential.

The two minute time limit to the presentation in task 2 part 1 was enforced by all examiners. If only one source was summarised before this time limit, the information on the second source was disregarded. Teachers should, therefore, take note of the mark grid for AO2, which requires at least two written sources to be awarded a mark of 3 or higher, and a balance between sources to be awarded a mark higher than 6. There is little to gain from allowing the candidate to continue past two minutes in this section. It is advisable to warn candidates that they will be interrupted if they do so. It should be made clear, that by interrupting them at two minutes, the teacher examiner is actually helping them score marks and stopping them from wasting their assessment time.

### Forms

Centres should submit the RP3 form, one for each candidate, which details the title and key findings of the research project. It should be noted that this form is two-sided and that the key findings should be written in English. If candidates chose to type and print this form, they **must not** extend the key findings boxes to fit in more information. Key findings should be in bullet point form. Centres are no longer required to submit an OR4AL form for each candidate. However, this message was communicated relatively late in the year, so there was some confusion over this matter. Finally, centres must submit one CS3 form per centre, which all candidates sign and date. All teachers involved in teaching the candidates for the A Level German course must also sign and date this form.

### Recording

Use the best quality recording equipment that is available. It is also helpful to the candidates to time the exams around the routines of the centre. For example, avoiding the times that the bell rings, or lesson change overs. Teacher examiners tend to speak louder than candidates, so place the microphone closer to the candidate. Avoid writing during the examination, examiners noted the distracting effect that this seems to have on candidates. Often, examinations are conducted in offices with phones and computers.

Ensure that these are switched off or unplugged, to avoid any unwanted distractions.

Final comments

Key Points for Teacher examiners:

- Check all paper work is present and complete before submitting work.
- Explain the timing recommendations and restrictions to your candidates, and explain to them why it is sometimes in their best interests for you to interrupt them if they speak for too long.
- Discuss the support strategies for each assessment objective in this report with your candidates, and refer to them regularly throughout the course.
- Refer to the guidance on the teacher's role in supervising preparation for the IRP.
- Ensure that candidates are aware of the full title of each sub theme, so that they can make an informed choice of stimulus card on the day of the examination.
- Ensure that candidates know which subthemes belong to each main theme, so that they have an idea of how the task one discussion will develop after the prescribed questions.

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

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

