

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
in German (4GN0/03)
Pearson Edexcel Certificate
in German (KGN0/03)

Paper 3: Speaking

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Publications Code UG041657

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International GCSE/Edexcel Certificate German Paper 3 Speaking Examiners' Report

General Comments

The number of candidates entering for this qualification remains healthy, which is very pleasing considering the unfortunate decline in the teaching of German over the last few years.

Although the vast majority of centres used the correct mark sheets to accompany the oral tests, a few were still using the old form which has long since been withdrawn. The contents of the exam have changed significantly and this old form is not fit for purpose. All mark sheets need to be signed by the candidate and the teacher. Occasionally this didn't happen and a signature had to be requested by the Pearson Edexcel examiner. This can lead to a delay in the marking of the tests.

Candidates are expected to participate in 3 conversations on 3 different topic areas, one for Section A and two for Section B. These three topic areas should be chosen from the five areas detailed in the specification and each topic area may only be covered **once**. If a topic area is repeated, the second one will receive no marks.

All tests were submitted either on a CD or on a USB memory stick. No cassettes were received this year. In most cases there were no problems, although a number of the recordings were rather faint or had quite a lot of noise in the background. It is accepted that some of this is unavoidable, such as traffic noise, but it would certainly be helpful if the microphone were to be placed closer to the candidate than the examiner. In a few cases markers discovered that the CD/USB stick was blank or that some of the recordings would not play. It would be useful if centres could check the recordings before sending them away as this can cause a significant delay in the marking process.

Most CDs and memory sticks were correctly labelled with permanent marker, but some still arrived with no markings and no protective case. Just as in a written examination, the timing of the test is very important.

The specification states the following:
The presentation should be up to one minute.
The discussion on the picture should be up to three minutes.
Each of the conversations should be up to three minutes.

In a written examination, candidates would not be given a few extra minutes beyond the set time. This applies in just the same way with an oral examination. For that reason, markers will stop listening and marking after the 1 minute / 3 minutes have elapsed.

Of course tests which are too short are unlikely to contain the full range of structures, vocabulary and ideas expected. Examiners should try to ensure

that the discussion and the conversations are all between 2 minutes 40 seconds and 3 minutes in length.

It is not appropriate to time the two conversations together. The two conversations should be of similar length, not one of about 4 minutes and one of 2. This would result in one containing 1 minute of material which would not count in the assessment, and the second would not contain enough material.

Most examiners did time the tests correctly. However, discussions on the picture of less than 1 minute were noticed, and one candidate was grilled in one of the conversations for just under 10 minutes! This is of course very unfair on the candidate.

Please note that the timing of each section begins when the **candidate** begins to speak.

Examiners should not use the suggested questions as a prescribed list. These questions are there to give the examiner some ideas. Questions should follow on from what the candidate has previously said to produce an actual conversation. Sometimes markers have the impression that examiners are not listening to the candidate's answers.

Candidates should **never** have prior knowledge of any of the questions in the test and should not know which of the two topics will be tested in Section B.

Although the vast majority of examiners had clearly prepared carefully, some examiners again this year gave the impression of not being well prepared for the tests. This applies often in centres where German is not taught and someone has been brought in to conduct tests, often for native speakers. A lot of the issues already highlighted in the report applied, and there were often some difficult silences whilst the examiner tried to think of another question. In a number of cases the examiner appeared not to know the candidate and also to have seen the picture for the first time as the examination began.

Examiners should avoid closed questions that elicit one word answers from students and they should also refrain from asking several questions at once. I.e. Can you tell me about your town, what you like to do there and what you did last weekend? This confuses students. Examiners should also refrain from providing vocabulary for students, correcting them or answering for them. On some occasions, the examiner was not familiar with the format of the examination and conducted the test incorrectly. Good examiners sympathetically re-phrased questions for students and varied the type of question that they were asking. They also interrupted students if they started to recite a pre-learned monologue. It is important for candidates to use a range of tenses and good examiners elicited past, present and future tenses in both sections of the exam.

Section A

In the first part of the examination the candidates choose a **single** picture which they then introduce as a presentation, without interruption from the examiner. This is followed by a discussion based on the picture lasting up to 3 minutes. The picture chosen must be linked to one of the 5 topic areas in the specification, and this topic area may **not** be chosen again in Section B. The first important choice the candidate makes is to select a picture. It is very important that the picture is quite busy and offers plenty of scope for discussion. Good examples would be a busy street scene or a beach for Topic Area A, or a busy school playground for Topic Area B. Less appropriate might be a picture of a brother or sister on a plain background for Topic Area C or a picture of a mobile phone for Topic Area D.

There were some very good pictures this year with lots of possible discussions but there were also some, where discussion was very difficult, such as an empty field and a cat!

A wide range of interesting pictures was noted covering all five Topic Areas. There was no surprise that pictures featuring people, objects and interaction resulted in more successful conversations than pictures with very little of interest. Close up pictures of a person, simple landscapes or a picture of a cat are difficult to exploit. Some centres chose a very similar picture for all candidates and this is against the spirit of the examination. Some pictures had very little to do with the chosen Topic Area. For example, a holiday picture of New York with a few joggers in the background is not ideally suited to Topic Area E if the candidate and examiner talk about New York. A picture of a family where one person is holding a mobile phone is better suited to Topic Area C rather than D depending on the questions asked. Examiners also need to be careful that they don't stray into different Topic Areas when asking questions.

Examiners have the responsibility of assuring that the correct technique is applied to the conduct of the examination.

The candidate must not be allowed to speak for longer than 1 minute for the presentation. This may be shorter but not significantly so. The candidate is allowed to learn this presentation but it should be the candidate's own work and not corrected in advance by a teacher.

The discussion must be organised into a three stage development of questioning as follows:

- a) Questions based directly on the picture.
- b) Questions based indirectly on the picture.
- c) Questions about the general Topic Area.

Let us imagine a picture of a beach scene. Questions may be something like the following:

- a) Was macht diese Frau hier?

Beschreibe diesen Jungen!

- Was siehst du hier im Hintergrund links?
b) Was wird wohl dieser Mann gleich machen?

- Was hat das Mädchen hier heute früh gemacht?
Wohin geht diese Familie rechts?
c) Warst du auch hier am Strand?

Was machst du gern am Strand?
Wohin fährst du dieses Jahr?

A significant number of examiners only asked questions on the general Topic Area. Please note that this does not fulfil the requirements of this part of the test and consequently it would not be possible to access the full mark scheme.

A small number of candidates did no presentation, and a number were asked no questions at all after the presentation. This resulted in a much reduced mark.

All 5 Topic Areas were well represented in the pictures, although the impression is that Topic Area A was probably the most popular.

Centres are reminded that the candidates' pictures should be sent to the marker along with the oral mark sheets and the recordings. Where this is not possible a note describing the picture should be included.

Section B

In this section the candidates are required to take part in 2 conversations of **equal length** on 2 further Topic Areas from the specification chosen by the examiner. They must be different from the Topic Area chosen in Section A and must **not** be known by the candidate in advance.

The examiner should announce the start of the Topic Area and again before the second conversation.

Section B was generally successful and there were some outstanding examples of spontaneous and fluent German. The rapport between student and examiner was very important in this section of the examination and less able pupils who were examined by their class teacher tended to perform better than pupils of similar ability who were examined by an examiner who did not know them (often a native speaker invited specially to conduct the orals). Asking open questions of the appropriate level, following up candidates' answers and re-phrasing sympathetically were examples of good practice. A number of examiners appeared to time Section B as a whole and this led to a number of B2 conversations being too short. They should, instead, time each section separately. Failure to use a range of tenses and insufficient length of either conversation were the main causes of lost marks for the most able pupils.

Generally, candidates in Section B were able to talk about the sub-topics. However, some would almost certainly have achieved higher marks if

questions had been more focused. Some examiners asked two or three questions at once, which confused candidates, while other examiners talked too much about themselves. In some cases, this part of the test sounded more like an interrogation, with questions not related to each other and no rephrasing of the question, if candidates didn't understand. In a number of cases, candidates were not given opportunities to use different tenses.

Some examiners seemed to think that they needed to cover every sub-topic, which meant that candidate replies weren't followed up and remained superficial.

Very few recordings in Section B were too long, but a significant number were too short, in some cases shorter than two minutes, which meant that candidates did not score highly.

Those candidates who used the perfect tense were generally able to do so accurately, although the range of verbs was quite limited in most cases, gegessen, getrunken, gespielt, gefahren, gegangen. Those candidates using the conditional were able to use it appropriately and accurately.

Although it may appear that the report contains a lot of criticisms, it ought to be made clear at the end of the report that the vast majority of examiners and candidates performed very well and that overall the examination this year has been very successful.

All markers would like to express their thanks for the hard work undertaken by both candidates and examiners. Only a few administrative issues were noted this year which made the whole marking process run much more smoothly.

Grade Boundaries

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