

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

GCSE

GCSE German (5GN04)

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Paper 4 - Controlled Assessment in Writing

General

Several centres took the opportunity to enter candidates for this first exam series of the new specification. There was some evidence that work was submitted from candidates in Years 9 and 10. A wide range of work was seen by examiners.

Administration

It is important that work for each candidate is presented in the correct order. This should be as follows:

- the mark sheet which must be completed accurately by the centre
- the candidate authentication sheet signed by both teacher and pupil
- the note form for writing for the first unit even if the candidate has taken no notes into the final stage of the assessment
- the first unit of work
- the note form for writing for the second unit even if the candidate has taken no notes into the final stage of the assessment
- the second unit of work

All necessary forms are available to download from the GCSE German 2009 page of the Edexcel website.

It is best to present work in a manner which allows the examiner to read it as a booklet. Plastic envelopes are not helpful. Each candidate's work should be securely fastened.

Stimulus

Only one copy of each stimulus need be sent with the centre's work if all candidates have completed the same tasks. This is best presented on top of the work submitted.

Most centres this year provided stimulus tasks which were based on the Edexcel Sample Assessment Materials. These include a list of bullet points guiding candidates towards certain areas of the topic which can be covered. It should be noted that the instruction given to candidates can affect the overall mark. For example, if the stimulus states "*You could mention ...*", then the candidates may choose which bullet points to respond to. However, if the instruction is "*You must mention ...*", then candidates must cover all bullet points and will be penalised if they omit one or more bullet points in their response.

Topic areas

Popular topics included health and fitness, holidays, interviews with a famous personality, a film review, the role of media in the candidate's life and school or work experience. Whilst candidates may present work from one topic area for writing and speaking, it is important to stress that the focus of each task must be different. For example, a candidate may not write a description of a past holiday for writing controlled assessment and give a presentation and have a discussion about the past holiday in the speaking assessment.

Word count

It is expected that candidates will produce about 200 words for each unit to be able to access the full mark range. Short pieces of work tend to be self-penalising. Good work of less than 100 words will not score more than 6 for Communication and Content. There is no maximum word count, although only the strongest candidates managed in excess of 200 words in the one hour allowed for each task. Candidates should be warned to avoid lists of English words, for example when describing their favourite television programmes.

Quality of work

The majority of candidates managed to write comprehensible essays of the required length. Where work was short, this was from very weak candidates who often struggled to produce a complete sentence in German. Barriers to fluent and effective communication are:

- over use of *ist/war, hat/hatte* and *es gibt/es gab*
- lists of school subjects, foodstuffs, television programmes
- repetition of descriptions, for example of family members' appearance
- misuse of the dictionary which is allowed during the final one hour stage of the assessment
- use of English
- lack of any punctuation
- lack of opinion

Those candidates who access the top mark band for Communication and Content have learned to manipulate learned language successfully so that they are able to produce genuinely original language. Many essays in the next band (10-12 marks) are solid, but rely too heavily on phrases from a text book. In addition, such essays often lacked good linking words and time indicators which helped the essay to flow smoothly.

Knowledge and Application of Language

Examiners reported that the majority of candidates tend to use simple syntax rather than showing evidence of the more complex structures required for the top mark bands. These include:

- a range of tenses and/or verb forms including modals.
- a secure sense of word order including inversion, coordination and subordination, with more than just the token *weil* clause
- infinitive clauses usually with *um/zu* but perhaps also after verbs such as *vorhaben* or *beschließen*
- a sound, though not necessarily perfect, command of case and gender
- a good range of vocabulary including interesting adverbs and adverbial phrases

Accuracy

This was variable. Often candidates had not taken time to check their work for errors of word order or verb agreements. Too many use the infinitive with *ich* and fail to produce an accurate perfect tense in the whole essay. Many spelling errors were reported, particularly with confusion of *ei* and *ie*.

In conclusion, it is evident that many centres prepare candidates well. However, candidates must be encouraged to use the conditions of controlled assessment to better advantage by doing the following:

- following the stimulus task carefully
- using preparation time to craft a well-sequenced essay rather than writing random sentences
- ensuring that they include evidence of a range of good structures
- checking their work carefully during the final writing-up session

Grade Boundaries

Raw Mark boundaries

Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
60	49	43	37	32	26	20	15	10

Uniform Mark Scale boundaries

Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
90	81	72	63	54	45	36	27	18

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