

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2012

GCSE German (5GN04) Paper 01

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Administration

The administration this series was of a high standard. Mark sheets and attendance registers were correctly completed in most cases. Centres should ensure that they are using the correct CA4 front sheet when they submit candidate work. This is available from the Edexcel website on the section for GCSE German at Administrative Support in the ICE document: <http://www.edexcel.com/migrationdocuments/GCSE%20New%20GCSE/GCSE-Administrative-Support-Guide-2012-ICE-upd.pdf>

Centres should also ensure that the two tasks of work within each candidate's folder are submitted in the same order as they appear on the CA4 front sheet.

Compliance with the specification

Each candidate should submit two tasks, ideally of about 200 words each. The two tasks should be on different topics, or if they come from the same topic area they should have a different focus.

During the writing up of each task, the candidate may have access to the stimulus task, a dictionary and the notes sheet. On this, there may be up to five pictures and up to 30 words. Ideally, the words should be individual words or perhaps short phrases. Full sentences are best avoided. Codes, such as the initial letter of each word in a centre, are not allowed. If the candidate has not used the notes sheet, this should be indicated by the centre, either with a note at the beginning of the whole submission or by including the empty notes sheet indicating that it has not been used. No serious rubric offences were reported during this session.

Stimulus tasks

The most common topics were:

- Media and technology
- Healthy living
- School
- Work experience
- A film review

It is crucial when setting a task that the centre considers the level of ability within the cohort. Not all tasks are suitable for all levels. Some candidates may well require more structure in the stimulus; for candidates aiming for A/A* grades the task should include an opportunity for stretch and challenge.

Most centres follow the pattern of an instruction followed by a list of bullet points. It is best to include the rubric "You may include the following ..." which allows the candidate to omit a bullet point without penalty. With a more prescriptive rubric such as "You must mention the following ...," candidates will be penalised if they fail to refer to all the bullet points.

Communication and content

Above all, examiners look for the fluency of the German within the unit. Adverbs and adverbial phrases help an essay to move along. Tasks which

are broken up into short sections, such as interviews or holiday diaries, can sometimes fall short of the mark since the opportunity to demonstrate fluency and linking is not given.

It was noted by examiners that in many centres, the controlled assessment in writing tends to become nothing more than writing up of everything within the chapter of a text book. Whilst this does produce work which is on the face of it quite sound, it does not show that candidates have used learned language to produce more original and individual work. Where the work of a whole centre is all very similar, the marks for Communication and Content will tend to be placed in the 10-12 category, rather than reach the top mark band. This means that the best candidates need to be trained in how to manipulate what they have learned. Narrow writing frames, which may well be suitable for some candidates, should be avoided for those aiming for the top grades.

Nevertheless, many pleasing pieces of work were seen during this session.

Knowledge and application of language

To attain the top band for this mark category, examiners look for evidence of attempts at the following:

- Variety of syntax (short and long sentences, inversion, coordination, subordination, TMP)
- Subordination with a range of conjunctions, including sentences where the subordinating clause comes first
- Variety of verb forms, ideally at least two tenses or times frames but also modal verbs
- Infinitive clauses most usually with *um/zu*, but perhaps also after verbs such as *beschließen* or *hoffen*
- Interesting and relevant vocabulary
- A sound sense of case and gender

However, it is crucial that these structures are used naturally within the essay. Repeated structures such as subject + verb + adjective + *weil* clause lose value if used too often.

Lower scoring candidates tend to rely too much on basic sentence forms with *Es gibt...*, *Es ist ...*, *Es hat ...*, rather than looking for ways to vary the style.

However, at the very top end of the ability range, some excellent German is produced, as can be seen in this extract from one essay on Travel and Tourism:

Als ich in Deutschland war, habe ich viel Deutsch gelernt. Das war keine Zeitverschwendung, denn ich werde jetzt bessere Noten bekommen. Der beste Aspekt meines Aufenthalts war mein Ausflug nach München. Es war atemberaubend. Ich hätte gern mehr Sehenswürdigkeiten besichtigt, aber ich hatte keine Zeit. Das Essen in Deutschland ist sehr lecker. Ich habe mich in Bratwurst verliebt!

Accuracy

The mark for accuracy depends not only on what is correct but on the level of German used. Marks of 4 or 5 can only be awarded if enough complex structures are used.

Some candidates produce very accurate work, and there were fewer instances this session of wrong agreements of subject and verb.

Errors tend to appear when a candidate is unable to remember what has been prepared rather than because of a lack of understanding of structure.

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