

Examiners' Report January 2013

GCSE German 5GN04 01

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Introduction

The candidates are required to submit two pieces of work, with each ideally containing approximately 200 words of written German. Each task must be produced in one session of up to 60 minutes under controlled conditions.

The two pieces have to differ in content and purpose. They also have to differ from the Speaking Controlled Assessment. The specification allows weaker candidates to be set two shorter tasks to replace one longer one.

Tasks could be based on one or two of the themes outlined in the specification, or they could be based on a centre-devised theme.

Tasks

Again during this examination series, examiners noted that the following topics were most commonly used:

- Holidays
- Healthy lifestyle
- School and work experience
- Media – Film and television
- Internet use
- Interview with a celebrity

The majority of candidates entered in the January series managed to write a coherent account and to produce two pieces of written work of sufficient length.

There is some evidence to suggest that not all understand what they are writing. Sentences are reproduced as a jumble of words, for example, or words are split up in the wrong way.

However, at the top end of the scale there were some spirited and interesting pieces of work.

What enables candidates to access the whole mark range?

The best work is a carefully constructed piece of writing which shows that the candidate can manipulate the language that has been taught during the course, rather than simply during the immediately preceding module. This involves thinking carefully about the content so that the ideas are well linked and the sentences varied.

For example, if writing a piece about a holiday, at a basic level a candidate might write:

Wir sind nach Spanien gefahren. Das war letztes Jahr. Wir sind geflogen. Wir haben in einem luxuriösen Hotel gewohnt. Das Wetter war sonnig. Wir sind jeden Tag geschwommen.

A more fluent response would read along the lines of:

Letztes Jahr sind wir nach Spanien geflogen, um zwei Wochen Urlaub zu nehmen. Glücklicherweise haben wir in einem luxuriösen Hotel gewohnt. Weil das Wetter sonnig war, konnten wir jeden Tag schwimmen.

Each sentence is varied and flows naturally on to the next. The second version includes some of the good structures required for high marks (inversion, an infinitive clause, perfect tense, modal verb, subordination, subordinate clause first in the sentence, good adverbs).

It is advisable to give candidates the skills to think about linking their writing carefully and varying their sentence structures. In this way they can avoid regurgitating the language of a text book.

Much depends, of course, on the task that has been set. If the centre sets a task that simply guides candidates towards a text book then the result is likely to be no more than pedestrian and every candidate's work may be very similar.

For example, when setting a task about school, it is tempting to give a set of bullet points that direct candidates to every detail they have learned such as:

You could mention the following:

- *A brief description of your school*
- *The school day*
- *What subjects you like and dislike and why*
- *Your school uniform*
- *School rules*
- *Yesterday at school*
- *Your plans for next year*

A freer approach to the topic could be gained by setting a more open-ended and imaginative task such as:

You could mention the following:

- *A brief description of your school*
- *What you like and dislike about your school*
- *Why yesterday was the worst day you have had this year*
- *What you would do to change your school*

For more able candidates, the second approach may well lead to a more original essay. Of course, the first set of bullet points might well be suitable for less able candidates, who might need more structure.

What prevents candidates from doing well?

- Work that is divided up into too many short sections may not give candidates the opportunity to show the vital linking of sentences to gain high marks. This can be true of an interview or a diary.
- Each essay should contain at least two time frames or tenses. Failure to do so will limit the mark for Knowledge and application of language.
- Serious ambiguity in an essay can place the mark for Communication and content in the 7–9 bracket, although the rest of the essay may be quite comprehensible.
- Lack of variety in sentence structure is common. Candidates should think about making each sentence different. A combination of simple and complex sentences gives a more natural flow to the essay than does an endless stream of complex sentences with subordinate clause after subordinate clause.

Administration

Written tasks should be accompanied by the CA4 notes sheet when it has been used, or by an indication that it has not been used. Centres should also enclose the task sheet/s.

Teachers should read the *Administrative Support Guide* to check that all procedures are carried out correctly. This document is available from the Edexcel website.

The majority of centres comply with the administrative requirements of the submission. However, the following points should be noted:

- Candidates' work should be presented in the same order as they appear on the attendance register rather than in teaching group order.
- Examiners prefer each candidate's work not to be sent in a plastic slip case. If the work for each candidate is stapled together, it is much easier to access.
- The most recent version of the CM4 (*Candidate Mark Sheet*) should be used. This is available on the Edexcel website.
- Both the teacher and the candidate must sign the CM4 to authenticate work.

Finally, the examining team would like to thank centres for their careful preparation of candidates and for the clear administration of their submissions.

Grade boundaries

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>

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