



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017
Pearson Edexcel GCSE
GCSE German (5GN04)
Paper 4: Writing in German.

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GCSE German
Unit 4: Writing
Examiners Report

In this final year of the specification, examiners were pleased to report that administration from centres was almost universally good. Work was submitted by the deadline and there were very few cases of the centre's submission being unclear in its overall presentation. Most candidates made good use of the CA4 notes sheet. This made the marking process run smoothly.

Tasks

It is clear that centres prefer to stick to a relatively limited range of tasks. The most common topics were:

- Holidays
- School
- Media
- Health

Very few tasks were creative, but some interesting work was produced based on 'Big Brother' or the description of the life of a fictional character or a person admired by the candidate.

Where tasks were open-ended, students were often empowered to be more creative in their responses and to show that they could manipulate learned language to convey an original message. However, many over-prescriptive tasks led to writing which was not original and which became formulaic. Such pieces rarely were able to be awarded marks higher than the 10-12 band for Communication and Content since they were best described as pedestrian. Film reviews were popular again this year, but only the best candidates were able to produce coherent accounts and to give clear opinions. Often weaker candidates struggled to convey a clear message.

Communication and Content

The usual rules about word counts applied. However, examiners noted that the vast majority of candidates were able to write two essays of about 200 words each. Some candidates who wrote in excess of 300 per unit often put themselves at a disadvantage since the accuracy faltered as the essay progressed.

The biggest barrier to communication is often ambiguity in the writing. When centres look at their scripts after results are published they should bear this in mind when evaluating the mark awarded for this category. Many mistakes occurred where students had obviously learned something, but did not understand what they were writing and either missed out words or phrases, or put punctuation in completely the wrong place. Similarly, ambiguity occurred where candidates had learned phrases on a topic and put them together randomly so that, for example, the hotel was

good - then bad; or the hotel was at the beach in Scotland but also in Paris with a view of the Eiffel tower.

As always, variety is the key to successful communication. In assessing the quality of Communication and Content examiners look for evidence of both simple and complex sentences, with good linking used throughout. In addition, candidates should express and justify opinions regularly.

A wide range of phrases was used to express opinions, including:

- *Ich glaube, ...*
- *Ich bin der Meinung, dass ...*
- *Meiner Meinung nach ...*
- *Zusätzlich finde ich, dass ...*
- *Ich muss zugeben, dass ...*
- *Ich bin mir sicher, dass ...*
- *Ich bin überrascht, dass ...*
- *Es ist erstaunlich, dass ...*
- *Es wäre unglaublich, wenn ...*
- *Ich stimme zu.*
- *Man könnte denken, ...*

This year, examiners also reported an increase in the number of idioms used, such as:

- *Wo sich die Füchse gute Nacht sagen.*
- *Da kannst du Gift drauf nehmen.*
- *Meine Lehrer haben nicht mehr alle Tassen im Schrank.*
- *Ohne Fleiß, keinen Preis.*

When used well, these added a retain flair to the essay.

Knowledge and Application of Language

This category credits attempted use of language structures irrespective of accuracy. Examiners look for evidence of the following:

- Variety of syntax (verb second, inversion, TMP, subordinate clauses first in the sentence)
- Variety of tense, although only two tenses or time frames are required to access the top band
- Variety of other verb forms including modal verbs and infinitive clauses
- Variety of subordination
- Variety of vocabulary
- Variety of adverbial phrases
- A good sound of case and gender

Work included a wide range of vocabulary, varied structures and some impressive idiomatic language. Knowledge and range of tenses were good on the whole, even amongst weaker candidates. More able candidates used cases and adjectival endings correctly. There was some impressive use of genitives, personal pronouns, dative verbs, comparative and superlative and even the passive.

Candidates were clearly aware of the need for a variety of syntactical structures in their writing. Although examiners notes good use of infinitive clause, particularly with *um/zu*, a significant number of candidates were unable to provide evidence of subordination with nothing more than a *weil* clause. Relative clauses when used properly were good, but all too often these were beyond the reach of all but the most able.

However, a variety of sentence stems gave an opportunity to show knowledge of the rule of inversion. These included: *während des Fluges, stattdessen, jedoch, trotzdem, besonders, ab und zu, normalerweise, außerdem, glücklicherweise, im Großen und Ganzen*.

Accuracy

The mark for Accuracy is closely linked to the previous mark for Knowledge and Application of Language. A completely accurate piece of work will only be awarded 5 marks if it has shown a good enough range of complex structures. Otherwise the mark is capped at 3.

Whilst examiners reported that writing was generally accurate with the majority of candidates scoring 3 or more for this category, the following errors were noted:

- errors with the perfect tense included incorrectly formed past participles (e.g. *gegehen*), past participles not sent to the end of the clause, no auxiliary verb used at all or confusion of *haben* and *sein*.
- verbs conjugated incorrectly, eg *ich bin gehen* instead of *ich gehe*
- lack of inversion when necessary
- *wurde* instead of *würde*
- incorrectly formed future tense i.e. *will (wollen)* as auxiliary with a past participle or *ich wolle* instead of *ich will*
- confusion of *bekommen* and *werden*

Looking forward

When preparing candidates for the new specification, centres should bear in mind that in the terminal writing paper no one area of the specification is favoured over another. All topic areas may be assessed at both foundation and higher level.

