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In German
Unit WGN01_01

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Paper 1: Spoken Expression and Response (WGN01_01)

International AS Level in German WGN01 January 2023

This is an 8–10-minute assessment in two sections that total 40 marks with 15 minutes preparation time.

In advance of the examination, the student chooses two of the four specified general topic areas (GTA) to prepare.

The GTAs are:

- Youth matters
- Lifestyle, health and fitness
- Environment and travel
- Education and employment.

A randomisation grid informs the teacher, which of the two chosen areas will be tested. The student is told this immediately before the preparation time begins.

Section A requires students to respond to four set questions on a stimulus related to one of the student's chosen general topic areas (GTA).

Section B requires the teacher/examiner to engage the student in a discussion that, although still relating to the same GTA and its linked subtopics, moves away from the main focus of the stimulus.

Stimulus cards are provided for each area. These form the assessment for section A. Before starting the examination, the candidates have 15 minutes to prepare with the stimulus card provided. They may make notes of up to one side of A4 sheet of paper in this time, which they may refer to during the examination.

In Section A, the candidate is asked four questions relating to the stimulus card. These questions are mandatory and may be repeated, but for the purpose of fair assessment across all centres, they must not be re-phrased. The first two questions relate specifically to information in the stimulus material, the second two relate to aspects of the sub-topic, upon which the stimulus text is based.

For Question 1, it is expected that the candidate will manipulate the wording of the text in order to arrive at a complete answer to the question. Lifting information from the stimulus text will not provide sufficient information to answer the question completely. This question targets information in the first paragraph of the stimulus text. There are three possible elements to the answer to question 1 in the first paragraph and candidates should try to include as many of these elements as they are able.

For Question 2, it is expected that the candidate will find the answer in the second paragraph. It will be necessary to manipulate the language found in the stimulus text to arrive at a complete answer.

For Questions 3 and 4, the candidate is expected to give answers that are full and detailed and that draw on research that candidates have undertaken on their selected GTA in preparation for the examination.

The candidate's understanding of this stimulus-specific topic area is marked out of four. The four marks are not directly allocated as one mark per question. The statement in the mark grid, which best matches the entire performance of section A, will dictate the mark awarded.

In Section B, the teacher examiner must initiate a discussion about the general topic area chosen by the randomisation grid. The teacher examiner must move away from the sub-topic of the Stimulus Card to more general discussion of the topic area and its linked subtopics. The sub-topics of each area are stated in the specification. The students must attempt to show a clear understanding of the chosen topic and use the research they completed in advance of the examination in order to do this, ideally citing sources they have used in their research.

The candidate's knowledge and understanding of the General topic area is marked out of a total of ten. The marks of five for Quality of language (Accuracy), five for Quality of Language (Range of lexis) and sixteen for Response apply to the test as a whole.

It is important that the full test lasts at least eight minutes. If the test is too short, examiners follow the guidance stated in the "Unit 1 Further Marking Guidance" which is available to centres via the Edexcel website. The examiners will stop assessing tests beyond ten minutes, and will base their judgements on the performance offered up to that time limit.

Choice of General Topic Area (GTA)

As in previous examination sessions, the most popular combination of topic areas chosen by candidates was once again Youth Matters combined with Lifestyle, health and fitness. Whereas in the previous examination session, there had been a pleasing increase noted in the number of candidates who had selected the topic areas of Environment and travel, and Education and employment, this trend was reversed in this session. There is potentially a greater variety of specialised vocabulary that can be used in tests of these two GTAs. Therefore, candidates who select these topic areas tend to score highly for Quality of language (Range of lexis) and teachers/examiners often use more ambitious questioning.

In general, choosing these two GTAs also allows candidates to demonstrate very good or excellent knowledge of their selected General topic area. There are some good candidates who use equally sophisticated lexical items when talking about the topic areas of Youth matters and Lifestyle, health and fitness. It is notable, however, that weaker students tend to employ rather pedestrian vocabulary, often drawing on their IGCSE knowledge when tackling these topic areas. Candidates offering anecdotal evidence, or talking about personal preferences in response to examiner questions can also be features of tests based on these two topic areas, with candidates having limited access to the higher mark bands as a result.

Application on the Marking Criteria

Understanding Stimulus Specific AO2

To arrive at a mark, examiners primarily consider the mark band descriptions, rather than the number of “correct” answers. A response attains full marks when the student correctly identifies all three elements to Question 1. To respond to Question 2, the candidate has to manipulate the language in the stimulus text sufficiently, rather than answering from their general knowledge or personal experience. This linguistic exercise may require candidates to manipulate pronouns, verbs and tenses. They may also need to summarise information from the paragraphs and exclude irrelevant details to demonstrate that they fully understand the stimulus text and the question.

The candidate should then proceed to offer fully developed, justified answers to Questions 3 and 4. Such answers will consider more than one implication and use examples to illustrate the candidate’s answers.

Quality of Language – Accuracy

To access three or more marks, students need to show accuracy in basic principles, such as subject/verb agreements, tense formation and word order. At three marks, communication may be impeded at times, either due to pronunciation issues, or grammatical errors. To access full marks, communication must be clear at all times, and the student will demonstrate the ability to pronounce German well enough to be understood without undue difficulty. There may be minor errors in case agreements and complex structure, as well as the occasional major error, but these will be outweighed by a generally accurate response.

Quality of Language – Range of Lexis

To assess the performance in this area, the grammar list in the specification is considered, and examiners listen for a wide range of specified structures in order to award the higher marks. In addition to this, the GTA is important, as examiners are standardised to listen for and reward a range of topic-specific lexis.

Spontaneity and Development

Candidates are assessed on the ability to communicate spontaneously in speech. Spontaneous use of language occurs when students use their knowledge of structures, lexis and the GTA and apply it appropriately in response to questions. The discussion should develop naturally, and should build on the answers to previous questions. It should not be a list of pre-determined questions devised in advance of the examination.

A well-developed discussion is one where the candidate expands on an idea, justifying, illustrating and clarifying their points, and where the teacher/examiner responds to points made by the candidate. The teacher/examiner might, for example, ask, “Wie meinen Sie das?”, “Warum?” or “Können Sie ein Beispiel geben?”. When giving examples, candidates should draw on their research and not on anecdotal evidence or personal experience as doing so will not enable them to demonstrate good understanding of the GTA and will impact the marks that can be awarded.

Knowledge and Understanding – General Topic Area

It is expected that candidates will undertake preparatory work on their two selected topic areas in advance of the examination. They must show evidence of knowledge and understanding beyond what is considered general knowledge and awareness in order to satisfy the criteria for the highest marks in this section. Good or excellent knowledge and understanding can be demonstrated by referring to independent research which has taken place in preparation for the examination. This could take the form of candidates mentioning a statistical piece of research or referring to a named source they have used, for example a printed or online news article.

Knowledge which results entirely from the student’s personal experience is not sufficient to satisfy the terms “many ideas” or a “wealth of ideas” as stated in the mark grid. Many candidates – even linguistically very able ones – rely on anecdotal or general knowledge to illustrate their ideas, and they can only be credited in the “some relevant ideas” band of this mark grid.

Specific Comments on Stimulus Card Tasks

Youth matters Cards 1A/B

Question 1 prompted candidates to reflect on the validity of social media role models, and whether personally known or older role models are best.

Although the questions could be considered to be slightly more abstract and demanding than the comparable questions in previous sessions, candidates handled them well and there were some highly individual, interesting candidate responses.

Youth matters Cards 2A/B

The stimulus text was based on the concepts of sustainable and equitably-produced fashion. Whilst the text was understood well, not all candidates identified 3 items of information from the first paragraph in response to question 1. Many candidates who attempted this card appeared to believe that one item is sufficient. Question 2, however, was competently answered in the majority of cases. Questions 3 and 4 on cards 2A and 2B invited candidates to explore the wider importance of fashion, generated some interesting and individual candidate responses. These often included good justifications and development but occasionally drew on personal experiences. Perhaps as a consequence of probing a more abstract concept, Question 4A which asked candidates to justify whether the contemporary fashion industry is too powerful, was more successful than Question 3A that asked for a justified candidate opinion on the age groups that most value fashion.

Lifestyle, health and fitness Cards 1A/B

The stimulus text referred to the theme of hospitality and included details of a dinner party hosted at home. In general, the text was understood well by candidates of all abilities, with the majority offering the required 3 items of information in response to Question 1. Questions 3 and 4 on the A and B cards all successfully challenged candidates to think more widely about culinary culture. Question 4A that asked candidates to consider how culinary culture in their country is evolving produced some particularly interesting candidate responses.

Lifestyle, health and fitness Cards 2A/B

This card recounted the experiences of a fictional family moving from an urban to a rural home. Candidates responded with a high degree of success to each of their four questions. Questions 3 and 4 on cards A and B were equally successful in prompting candidates to think about the wider aspects of urban life. In a subsample of tests, however, candidates drew on personal life experiences rather than

General topic area knowledge in order to answer Questions 3 and 4 which restricted their marks for this criterion.

Environment and travel Cards 1A/B

Although this topic area was selected on fewer occasions than the topic areas of Youth matters or Lifestyle, Health and Fitness, the stimulus card about an Austrian 'ice palace' tourist attraction was successful for those candidates who attempted it. Questions 1 and 2 were answered correctly by the vast majority of candidates. With regard to the subsequent questions, Question 4A that asked candidates to suggest ways in which environmental protection and tourism can be combined, was more successful than Question 3A that asked candidates to what extent alpine tourism is important. It appears that many candidate do not realise that a question with "inwiefern" requires consideration of both sides of an argument.

Environment and travel Cards 2A/B

This stimulus card introduced the concept of a packaging-free supermarket. Perhaps because of its topic-specific vocabulary that required candidates to read the stimulus text very carefully, Questions 1 and 2 produced accurate responses from most candidates. Questions that turned out a little more problematic than envisaged were Question 3B that asked candidates to consider the extent to which online shopping is detrimental to the environment, and Question 4A that invited candidates to reflect on the extent to which large supermarkets have a positive impact. As noted previously, it appears that many candidate do not realise that a question worded in this way needs a consideration of more than one factor.

Education and employment Cards 1A/B

For these stimulus cards, candidates considered merits of online study as opposed to face-to-face tuition. The stimulus text was understood well, with a high success rate of Questions 1 and 2. Candidate responses to Questions 3A, 4A, 3B and 4 B were in the main developed well; candidates of all linguistic abilities produced extended answers, perhaps in reflection of a topic that is naturally pertinent to them.

Education and employment Cards 2A/B

This card referred to the challenges of work experience placements. The stimulus text was accessible to candidates of all linguistic abilities. Candidates also engaged well with Questions 4A, 4A, 3B and 4B by considering the values of work experience, personal contacts and self-employment, and by producing some interesting, nuanced answers.

Summary

For subsequent series, the following points should be noted.

- During their preparation period, teacher examiners should not allow candidates access to the questions they will ask.
- Rephrasing questions for section A will render a candidate's response void, as it may give an unfair advantage. It is, however, acceptable to change 'Sie' to 'du'.
- Question 1 on the stimulus card refers to the first paragraph only and will have three possible elements for the answer, which must be communicated by the student in his or her own words, in order to be considered a full answer. Question 2 will relate to the second paragraph, and the student must manipulate the language from the text in order to answer the question. Questions 3 and 4 must be developed in order to be considered as complete answers.
- Pronunciation is an important aspect of the accuracy mark, and centres should encourage their students to develop their pronunciation skills, in order not to impede communication.
- Knowledge and understanding (GTA) must show evidence of research into the topics chosen, ideally citing at least one source. General knowledge, or personal experiences alone, will not demonstrate "many" ideas or a "wealth" of ideas, which are required for marks of 7 or higher.
- The question words on the stimulus card are important – for example "inwiefern" must have an answer which addresses this particular question word, i.e. both sides of the argument. A comparison question must show an ability to compare in the answer.
- Topic-specific lexis and the specified grammar contents are important considerations when awarding marks for Quality of Language (Range of lexis).
- Very able candidates should be discouraged from giving overly long answers in response to the four questions in Section A as this will limit the time available for the discussion in Section B and will have an impact on the overall marks that can be awarded for Understanding (General topic area).
- Section B should be a discussion. It is not good practice for the teacher examiner to pose a question, for the candidate to reply – sometimes at length – and for the teacher examiner to ask another question on a different sub-topic. Fewer topics being covered in Section B usually leads to a more natural and in-depth discussion that will allow candidates to access the higher mark bands for Spontaneity and for Understanding (General topic area).
- The questions asked in Section B should relate to the same General Topic Area as the stimulus card that has been covered, as otherwise the mark that can be awarded to Understanding (General topic area) will be adversely affected.

- Questions should be challenging enough for candidates to demonstrate that they have moved on from IGCSE level;. Asking about the candidate’s personal preferences, interests or life experiences, for example, does not achieve this aim, nor does inviting candidates to offer long lists of vocabulary items or long pre-learnt sequences of speech.
- Even in the case of large centres, it is helpful if examiners do not work from a “list” and refrain from asking identical questions to candidates of different linguistic abilities. Instead, examiners should comment on individual candidate responses and challenge candidates’ answers as this will offer candidates the opportunity to access the higher mark bands for Spontaneity and for Understanding (General topic area).

The examiners marking on this unit would like to thank centres for the effort they put in to ensure the assessments run smoothly for their candidates and to allow them to reach their full potential. The hard work that goes into preparing candidates for examinations is also appreciated and we seek to reward this whenever possible.

