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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In German
Unit WGN03_01

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Paper 3: Understanding and Spoken Response (WGN03_01)

Format of the Test

There are two sections.

Section A includes an optional introduction of the chosen topic lasting up to one minute followed by a debate on the chosen issue in which the interviewer and candidate maintain opposing standpoints and candidates use the language of debate. Section A should last for a maximum of 5 minutes in total.

Section B is a discussion of at least two further unpredictable issues taken from the General Topic Areas (GTAs) given in the specification and should last for between 6 and 8 minutes.

The test should conclude within 11-13 minutes, but section A must finish at 5 minutes.

Assessment Principles

This unit assesses communication in spoken language and critical analysis. It also covers understanding, which is in essence, a test of listening skills.

It is marked positively out of 40, by Edexcel examiners.

Spontaneity and development are marked out of 20 and assesses performance in relation to spontaneity, discourse and development during both sections of the test.

Quality of language is assessed out of ten marks with five marks available for Accuracy and five marks for Range of lexis. Pronunciation, intonation, the structures employed, lexis and grammatical accuracy are all taken into consideration when awarding these marks.

Reading and research accounts for up to five marks and assesses evidence of the candidate having read German texts and sources in preparation for the debate. Candidates should refer to at least two such sources, giving the names of the sources. These marks are awarded purely for Section A.

Critical analysis is awarded up to five marks. Here, examiners assess how well the candidate is able to link ideas and whether they give a full evaluation of the key issues.

Centres should be aware that Pearson Edexcel publish the guidance to examiners on the website. This explains and defines the standards for spontaneity, discourse, development and other key assessment principles.

Candidates' Performances

It was clear that most candidates had been well prepared by centres and many candidates spoke with passion about their chosen issues in Section A. Centres are reminded that this part of the assessment is intended to be a debate, rather than just a discussion or presentation. This means that both parties take opposing views with the candidate being given every opportunity to use the language of debate. If Section A is not a debate this impacts on the marks that can be awarded for Spontaneity and development and Critical analysis. Such candidates will not be able to access the top mark band in both categories. Unfortunately, there were quite a few assessments where this was the case.

Relatively few candidates gave the names of the websites they had consulted in preparation for Section A, and centres are urged to tell candidates to do so. When selecting the issue for debate centres should guide candidates towards topics for which there are plentiful written German sources available. Personal opinions are not sufficient for candidates to access the higher bands of the Reading and research mark grid. Statistics and facts are also considered as evidence of research, however a mark of 5 cannot be awarded unless the candidate names a minimum of two written German sources.

There was a much wider range of issues selected by candidates than in previous sessions. It is hoped that candidates will select an issue that they feel strongly about, but they must have facts, figures and written sources to back their opinions. One candidate argued in favour of home schooling but, unfortunately, it was based purely on their opinion with nothing to back this up and scant evidence of reading and research.

Examples of issues chosen were:

Für die Abschaffung der Massentierhaltung in der Schweiz

Es gibt keine Zukunft für Wasserstoffautos

Für Gendern im deutschen Sprachgebrauch

Für Tierversuche für medizinische Zwecke

In Section B most centres discussed two further unpredictable topics, which is the minimum, and this is perfectly acceptable. Unfortunately, there were a few cases where candidates were only asked about one further topic which had a severe impact on the marks which could be awarded.

The vast majority of the assessments were well conducted, and centres are thanked for the hard work which the teacher/examiners put in preparing for the assessments.

Section A

When the candidate initially outlines his/her stance there is no need for it to be more than one or two sentences and it should not extend beyond the one minute allowed. Some candidates still tend to deliver pre-learned material at length when outlining their stance and provide detail which could have been used in the actual debate.

A close eye needs to be kept on the timing of this section of the examination as it should not exceed five minutes, starting from when the candidate begins to outline their stance on the chosen issue. If Section A is longer than five minutes, it erodes the time available for the discussion of the unpredictable topics in Section B which may well impact on the marks awarded.

It may be helpful to centres to consider Section A somewhat in the nature of a role play. It is not intended that the candidate should speak without interruption for extended periods of time, as this then becomes a presentation. The candidate and teacher/examiner should respond to what the other says.

It is particularly important that when selecting the issue for debate candidates should bear in mind that they will need to refer to a minimum of two written German sources on the issue. Referencing an American or British website is not helpful, as the examiner has no way of knowing what language the candidate read the website in.

Section B

When selecting the unpredictable topics for discussion in Section B centres need to ensure that the topics and questions are challenging enough for A2 level. The topics from the AS specification are, of course, suitable for use in this examination, however, there needs to be evidence of progression from AS. Reproducing AS Level work leads to a poor outcome. A2 requires students to show an ability to handle abstract concepts, so asking a candidate what they personally do to help the environment is not challenging enough. Any topic where the candidate might be tempted to draw on detailed personal experience is best avoided.

At least two unpredictable areas should be discussed in Section B. In the case of a few candidates the teacher/examiner unfortunately did not progress the discussion on to other areas and remained with aspects of the initial issue throughout the entire assessment. In line with the marking principles, this has an impact on the marks which can be awarded for Spontaneity and development and for Critical analysis. The same applies if only one unpredictable area is discussed in Section B. However, it is

perfectly acceptable for only two unpredictable areas to be discussed. It is better to discuss two topics and in depth, than a number of areas which are covered superficially.

The topics discussed in Section B should be unpredictable. It is therefore not good practice for a centre to ask all candidates about the same topics. Candidates are likely to compare notes when coming out of the examination and this would lead to the candidates who are assessed later having an advantage.

Teacher/examiners must select topics for discussion which are taken from the list of General Topics Areas (GTA) given in the specification.

The IA2 General Topic Areas are Technology in the German-speaking world, Society in the German-speaking world and Ethics in the German-speaking world. If candidates are asked questions on these IA2 specific General Topic Areas which do not place the issues in the context of the German-speaking world, these candidates will be unable to access the full range of marks for Critical analysis. It is not sufficient for the teacher/examiner to refer to the German-speaking world in the question, if it is never mentioned again in the ensuing discussion. The candidate should refer to the German-speaking world in their response. Examples might be "Also, hier bei uns in der Schweiz..." or "In Deutschland ist es der Fall...".

Spontaneity and Development

Spontaneity

Lack of spontaneity was much less of an issue in this session than it has been previously.

Discourse

Discourse is also assessed as part of Spontaneity and development. Examiners seek evidence that both the candidate and examiner are interacting with each other, beyond a simple "one question per issue" format. When this approach is taken, it is difficult to find evidence that the discourse element of the grid has been addressed, and so marks are unlikely to be in the highest band.

Fluent discourse refers to a natural conversation within the context of an assessment. It describes the exchange of opinion and information on an issue between the candidate and teacher/examiner. This means that each participant addresses the points made by the other. The teacher/examiner might, for example ask, "Why do you say that?", "What evidence is there to support that?", "I agree with you to some extent, but...".

In some cases a lack of discourse prevented candidates from being able to access the highest mark band for Spontaneity and development. The teacher/examiner has a crucial role to play here. Candidates must not be allowed to 'present', and the teacher/examiner should respond to what the candidate has said so that a naturally developed conversation can occur. Poor examining would be if the candidate were asked a question and were then allowed to talk on it for about two minutes, after which they were asked another question.

Development

Development pre-supposes that the candidate has fully understood the question, and is then able to produce a detailed response, giving more than a single sentence reply, expanding on an idea and point of view. The ability to present two opposing points of view and the reasons for these, along with an evaluation demonstrates excellent development and examiners heard some fine examples of this.

Quality of Language (Range of Lexis)

Examiners look for evidence of topic specific lexis as well as comparing what they hear to the specified list of grammatical structures. Progression from GCSE and AS level is required here; therefore, the most successful performances would feature active use of a wide range of these elements.

Quality of Language (Accuracy)

This accounts for five of the 40 possible marks. A mark of five does not constitute faultless language. Non-native speakers must have access to the full marks available here, and the examiners are standardised with this fundamental principal in mind. It should be noted that five out of 40 marks is a relatively small proportion. This will explain why many grammatically perfect performances do not achieve full marks overall, as they must also satisfy the criteria in other mark grids.

Reading and Research

Five marks are allocated for evidence of Reading and research. This applies purely to Section A where candidates must cite written German sources as evidence of their reading and research.

Critical Analysis

Evidence of an ability to respond using beliefs, morals and political views beyond the realm of the more concrete topics which form the basis of AS and GCSE work is required at this level. Candidates should attempt to link ideas and to show an ability to evaluate, rather than simply providing facts. They should, where possible, provide evidence for their views and demonstrate an ability to see both sides of an argument. The most successful candidates provided frequent examples of the ability to do this.

Advice for Future Examination Sessions

Section A should not exceed five minutes, which includes the optional one-minute introduction by the candidate. The purpose of this one minute is for the candidate to briefly outline their stance and to 'settle' them into the examination. It is not intended for the candidate to give detailed background information. It is perfectly acceptable for the candidate not to use this time outlining the issue. The examiner has a copy of the OR3 form and is aware what the issue for the debate is.

Centres should bear in mind that the two main things being assessed in Section A are the candidate's ability to use the language of debate and the depth of reading and research they have carried out.

In Section B the issues discussed should only come from the list of General Topic Areas.

There should be a discussion of at least two topics, which are quite distinct from the issue debated in Section A. However, two topics are quite sufficient, as this will probably lead to greater depth. The topics selected should be appropriate to A2 level and therefore challenging in their content.

All candidates in a centre should not be examined on the same unpredictable topics.

If the issue being discussed in Section B is part of the GTA Society in the German-speaking world, for example 'Gleichberechtigung für Frauen', the discussion must be based on a German-speaking country

If the issue being discussed in Section B is part of the GTA Technology in the German-speaking world, for example 'Genforschung', there must be reference to a country where German is spoken.

If the issue being discussed in Section B is part of the GTA Ethics in the German-speaking world, for example 'Sterbehilfe', there must be reference to a country where German is spoken.

Where this is not the case, the candidate loses one mark for Critical analysis, in line with the marking principles.

The timing for the assessment overall is 11-13 minutes. It is perfectly acceptable for the assessment to be closer to 11 minutes than 13. There is no merit in assessments exceeding 13 minutes, as the examiner stops listening at the 13-minute point.

Centres are reminded that the minimum timing is 11 minutes. In this session very few assessments fell short of that. However, in fairness to all candidates, where this is the case, it has a quite considerable impact on the marks which can be awarded.

Summary

The examiners marking on the 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.

Grade Boundaries

Much work has taken place on the comparability of the speaking units for French, German and Spanish. The senior examiners continue to work closely together to ensure their application of the common marking guidelines is consistently applied across the three languages.

