

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2009

IGCSE

IGCSE German (4375) Paper 3

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Paper 3: Speaking

The entry for the November session was very small, but all centres might find these comments useful if they are preparing their candidates for the speaking test in the summer.

Section A: Presentation and discussion based on a single picture.

For this part of the Speaking test candidates must select a picture. It is very important that candidates choose this picture wisely since it should allow adequate exploitation to enable candidates to demonstrate their speaking proficiency. Centres are reminded that they should send the candidate's chosen picture with the recording of the oral and the oral form to the Edexcel Examiner.

Candidates should start this section by giving a presentation for up to a **maximum of one minute** on their picture. They then take part in a conversation, which should last **no longer than 3 minutes**, based on their chosen picture. This **total of 4 minutes** represents an adequate length of time for candidates to give a personal interpretation of the picture, express opinions and discuss issues arising from the picture. In general, conversations which exceed 4 minutes are self-penalising and Examiners listen to 4 minutes only: thus any excess material is not assessed. Centres are therefore advised to respect these time limits in the best interests of their candidates. It is more reassuring for the candidate if the conversation is brought to a fairly natural close rather than ending abruptly almost in mid-flow.

On occasions information is asked for in the discussion which has already been given in the presentation. This should be avoided wherever possible since candidates cannot be credited twice for the same information and language. It is not in the spirit of the examination for the Interviewer to ask exactly the same questions of each candidate: such an approach takes away any element of unpredictability. Questions may be repeated or rephrased to enable candidates give a suitable answer. Interviewers should be careful not to ask what are essentially repetitive questions i.e. variations on the same question several times. Thus it is more profitable to ask a candidate to describe only **one** person in the picture rather than all of them. This would then allow time for a wider range of questions to be posed e.g.

*Was hat diese Person eben gemacht?
Warum sitzen diese Leute im Wohnzimmer?
Was wird bald geschehen?*

Interviewers should ensure their candidates have the opportunity to fulfil the requirements of the assessment criteria, namely express and justify opinions, give extended responses to a wide range of question types, and use an appropriately wide variety of structures and lexis, including a full range of tenses. Such performances would allow candidates access to the full range of marks.

Section B: Two conversations

In this section, candidates are required to take part in conversations with the Interviewer on **two separate conversation topics chosen by the Interviewer.**

Centres are advised to read p39 of the specification which states explicitly that candidates may not know in advance of the test which topics they are going to be asked questions on in Conversations 2 & 3. The transition between the conversation topics should be made plain to help the candidate recognise that the conversation is moving on.

In Section B, Interviewers should again adhere to the timings laid down in the Specification, namely a maximum of 3 minutes for each conversation topic to make a total of 6 minutes for this section. In section B Examiners listen to only 3 minutes per topic. In general, longer conversations are self-penalising as candidates begin to struggle to find things to say and incidence of error increases.

Whilst Interviewers are free to develop any area within the chosen conversation topics, care should be taken to avoid any overlap with the material covered in Section A and with the other topic in section B of the test. Interviewers are reminded that the questions in the Specimen papers are **suggestions** only and that they should be mindful of the need to respond naturally to a candidate's previous answer to facilitate a more natural flow to the conversation.

It is preferable to ask candidates, particularly the more able, open-ended questions rather than closed ones. Thus *Beschreiben Sie, wo Sie wohnen!* or *beschreib dein Haus* are infinitely better than *Wohnst du in einem Haus oder in einer Wohnung?*

Centres' attention is drawn to p12 of the Specification where it is stated that 'in order to achieve grade C and above, candidates will be expected to express opinions and use past, present and future tenses.' This should be demonstrated in each of the two conversations of section B. Interviewers do not always give candidates the opportunity to use a wide range of verb forms, use past, present and future tenses or express opinions. Candidates cannot access the full range of marks if they do not fulfil these criteria. Centres' attention is drawn equally to the Grade Descriptions on page 14 of the Specification. These detail typical performances at the key grade boundaries.

General

Interviewers conduct the speaking tests in a sympathetic and encouraging manner. However, it should be noted that closed questions rarely encourage candidate participation. Those candidates wishing to access the higher bands in the assessment grids must show evidence of the ability to expand and take the initiative in the conversation and open-ended questions are therefore more relevant.

Centre administration for the Speaking Tests and the quality of the recordings remain variable. Teacher-Examiners should check that they have sent all the necessary paperwork to the Edexcel Examiner. In some instances candidates are virtually inaudible due to either extraneous noise or poor quality recording hardware. Reference should be made to p37 & p39 of the Specification which outline the requirement for a quiet environment and audible recording. Examiners are happy to receive candidates' speaking tests on either cassette or CD. For this latter, orals recorded in audio file or mp3 formats are acceptable.

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