

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2010

IGCSE

IGCSE German (4375) Paper 3

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Paper 3: Speaking

A large proportion of candidates entered for this Specification in this summer's session took the optional speaking component. Examiners were pleased to listen to some very proficient speaking tests sympathetically conducted which evidenced a pleasing standard of candidate performance.

Candidates are expected to engage in 3 conversations on 3 different topic areas. That is to say, on 3 of the topic areas from the 5 topic areas detailed in the specification. It is not appropriate for the Interviewer to select 2 different subtopics from the same topic area. Each conversation must be based therefore on a totally different topic area. In cases where centres did not observe this rule, rubric infringement was noted and candidates were disadvantaged. Thus, if 2 conversations were on the same topic area, both were assessed but only the better scoring conversation counted towards the final mark for the component.

A few centres chose topics for their candidates to converse on which are not listed in the specification. Since all candidates must be assessed according to the same criteria, it is not possible for centres to choose topics other than those identified in the specification.

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. Whilst there were some excellent examples which reflected the interests of the candidates and gave rise to some very lively discussions, there were, sadly, some less inspiring samples which failed to facilitate adequate discussion material.

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 exceeded 4 minutes were self-penalising and examiners were instructed to listen to 4 minutes only: thus any excess material was 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 was asked for in the discussion which had 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.

A few centres based all 3 conversations on a picture which is clearly not in keeping with the rules for this paper.

Centres are reminded of the need to send the candidate's picture to the examiner, along with the oral cover sheet and the recording.

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. Candidates themselves may not choose the topics for conversations 2 & 3 - these topics should be chosen by the Interviewer. The transition between the conversation topics should be made plain to help both the candidate recognise that the conversation is moving on and the examiner identify the two discrete topic areas being discussed.

There were some especially pleasing conversations about *Environmental issues, mobile phones and the internet* from Topic Area D: The modern world, and *Sports and exercise* (fitness and health) from Area E: Social activities, fitness and health. Where candidates were willing 'put their own stamp' on the conversations some highly effective communication took place.

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 were instructed to listen to only 3 minutes per topic. In general, longer conversations were self-penalising as candidates began to struggle to find things to say and incidence of error increased.

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?*

General

Centres' attention is drawn to page 12 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 all 3 conversations. Interviewers did 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.

Interviewers are to be commended on their sympathetic and encouraging conduct of the speaking tests. 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 was generally good, although several centres forgot to enclose the candidate oral cover sheet which doubles up as the mark sheet. This is to be found as an appendix in the Specification. As previously mentioned, a few centres forgot to send the candidates' pictures to the examiner.

The quality of the recordings remains very variable. In some instances candidates were virtually inaudible due to either extraneous noise or poor quality recording hardware. Reference should be made to pages 37 and 39 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 the latter, orals recorded in audio file or mp3 formats are acceptable. Examiners would appreciate it if centres could identify on the cover sheet which track on which CD represents the relevant candidate's oral.

Grade Boundaries

Raw Mark boundaries

| Max Mark | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| 60 | 51 | 45 | 39 | 33 | 26 | 19 | 13 | 7 |

Overall Mark boundaries

| Max Mark | A* | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 100 | 80 | 72 | 64 | 56 | 46 | 37 | 28 | 19 |

Please note that although the modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across MFL specifications are comparable at specification level.

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