



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2024

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level in
German (WGN03) Paper 01

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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. In this part of the assessment candidates must show evidence of Reading and research.

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 is 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 10 marks with 5 marks available for Accuracy and 5 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 5 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 5 marks. Here, examiners assess how well the candidate can link ideas and whether they give a full evaluation of the key issues.

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. Centres are strongly advised to refer to this document

Candidates' Performances

Section A

This part of the assessment is intended to be a debate, rather than just a discussion or presentation. The teacher/examiner must take the opposing view to that of the candidate, and they should seek to challenge what the candidate says. This will enable the candidate to use the language of debate, as required by the specification. The purpose of Section A is not simply for the candidate to show all they know about the topic, as would be the case with a presentation.

This session examiners noted an increase in the number of candidates who gave presentations with the teacher/examiner acting as facilitator by asking such questions as, "Und was wissen Sie noch?" or even remaining completely silent whilst the candidate spoke for many minutes. In such cases the candidates were not able to use the language of debate. This had a severe impact on the marks that could be awarded for Spontaneity and development and for Critical analysis in line with the marking principles.

When selecting the issue for debate centres should guide candidates towards topics for which there are plentiful **written German sources** available. It is essential that candidates refer to at least two such sources by name as evidence of Reading and research. Personal opinions are not sufficient for candidates to access the higher bands of the Reading and research mark grid.

When the candidate initially outlines their 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. There is no requirement that candidates do spend a minute outlining their view. It is quite acceptable to start straight away with the 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 can impact on the marks awarded.

There was a much wider range of issues selected in this session, given that the January entry is smaller than the summer one. As always, discussions about capital punishment, animal experiments and assisted suicide were popular with candidates. There was a substantial increase in the number of candidates choosing to debate the advantages/disadvantages of artificial intelligence. Some candidates chose to take a stance against social media, usually suggesting age restrictions, and this was often a successful debate. Where it was not successful it was because the candidate relied on their opinions and did not provide sources or statistics as evidence of Reading and research.

In Section A it is essential that candidates provide evidence of having read German texts in preparation for the debate. They may, in addition, mention audio visual sources, or provide statistics, but the Reading and research marks refer to AO2 (Understand and respond to written language) and so there must be evidence that a candidate has done this. **Candidates should mention the text/s they have read by name.**

There were again some assessments in this examining session where candidates did not refer to any written sources at all. Examiners will accept statistics and facts as evidence of Reading and research, but in order to access the top two mark bands candidates must name their sources. It was pleasing, however, that most candidates in this session did give sources and so were able to achieve the highest available mark for Reading and research.

Section B

Most centres chose suitable follow-on topics for Section B, which allowed for a wide range of questions, an opportunity for sophisticated development, such as the use of abstract concepts and for candidates to use a wide range of lexis and structures.

However, a few centres again chose topics which were more suited to AS level. When selecting the unpredictable topics for discussion in Section B centres need to ensure that the topics and questions are conceptually challenging enough for A2 level. A2 requires students to show an ability to handle abstract concepts. If in doubt, centres should choose topics from the A2 general topic areas. These are: Technology in the German-speaking world, Society in the German-speaking world and Ethics in the German-speaking world. Centres are reminded that discussions about these topics must be based on the German-speaking world; for example, there should be reference to the situation in Switzerland.

At least two unpredictable areas should be discussed in Section B. In the case of a very 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. Having said that, it is perfectly acceptable for only two unpredictable areas to be discussed. It is better to discuss two topics and in depth, than several areas which are covered superficially.

Personal questions should be avoided as they are not challenging enough and if a candidate attempts to draw on personal experience to illustrate a point, they should be steered towards making more general points. It is, for example, not a good idea to ask a candidate what they personally do to help the environment. This question is more suited to AS level, or even GCSE. Candidates can, of course,

be asked about the environment but a more suitable question might be, "What are the advantages/disadvantages of nuclear power for a country?".

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 not 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, dass...".

Spontaneity and development

There were a few centres in this examination session where a lack of spontaneity and/or a lack of fluent discourse unfortunately had a quite considerable impact on the marks that could be awarded.

Spontaneity

In the discussions teacher/examiners should respond to what the candidate says. This will provide candidates with an opportunity to move away from any prepared material. Questions such as "Wieso?", "Wie meinen Sie das?" or "Können Sie ein Beispiel dafür geben?" encourage a spontaneous discussion. To access a mark of 11 or above candidates must demonstrate many examples of spontaneous responses to questions. 'Many' implies that spontaneity is a clear characteristic of the test.

Examiners cannot award many marks to a candidate who recites pre-learned material in any part of the assessment. At best such a candidate may be able to access the 6-10 band for Spontaneity and development. Centres are therefore advised to prevent any candidate from doing this, as it is not a strategy which leads to a good outcome in terms of marks awarded.

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 had 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. Discourse 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...".

What is required in Section B is a conversation. It is not a conversation if the teacher/examiner asks a question, allows the candidate to answer, possibly at length, and then moves on to another completely unrelated question, asking a total of perhaps three questions. In such cases there is no 'fluent discourse' as required by the top mark band for Spontaneity and development.

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 would demonstrate excellent development. In general, there was very good development from candidates in this session, with candidates at all levels obviously having been well prepared by centres and encouraged to give extended replies.

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 feature use of a wide range of complex structures, a range of tenses and sophisticated lexis as appropriate to A2 level. Where the teacher/examiner selects a suitably challenging topic for discussion this usually leads to more sophisticated lexis being used by the candidate. A discussion about assisted suicide, for example, is likely to lead to better lexis than one about school uniform.

Quality of Language (Accuracy)

This accounts for 5 of the 40 possible marks. A mark of 5 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 5 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

5 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 those 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. The centre can greatly assist candidates with this by choosing topics for discussion which are abstract and challenging.

Advice for Future Examination Sessions

Section A is a debate. It is not a discussion or a presentation.

For Section A candidates must provide evidence of having read written German source materials. They should mention target language newspaper/magazine articles and/or other written materials **by name**. They should refer to a minimum of two such sources.

Section A should not exceed 5 minutes. There were many assessments which were longer than this.

The topics selected in Section B should be appropriate to A2 level and therefore conceptually and linguistically challenging. Candidates should be steered away from relying on personal experience and anecdotal evidence.

Reciting pre-learned material does not lead to the best outcome for a candidate.

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.

If the issue being discussed in Section B is part of the GTA Society in the German-speaking world, for example 'Equality', there must be reference to a country where German is spoken by the candidate. It is a good idea for the teacher/examiner to flag this up in the question, or to ask the candidate to give an example from 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 'Technological innovations', there must be reference to a country where German is spoken by the candidate. It is a good idea for the teacher/examiner to flag this up in the question, or to ask the candidate to give an example from a German-speaking country.

If the issue being discussed in Section B is part of the GTA Ethics in the German-speaking world, for example 'Genetic modification', there must be reference to a country where German is spoken by the candidate. It is a good idea for the teacher/examiner to flag this up in the question, or to ask the candidate to give an example from a German-speaking country.

Additional Note about the Conduct of the Assessment

An assessment should be conducted by one teacher/examiner. It is not acceptable for two teacher/examiners to be in the room with the candidate and to both ask questions. This leads to an overwhelming experience for the candidate and places the candidate at a disadvantage. Sections A and B of the assessment should be conducted by the same teacher/examiner. Of course, centres are free to use a range of teacher/examiners to conduct the assessments, but it should be on a one-to-one basis.

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.

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