



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International A Level

In German (WGN03)

Unit 3: Understanding and spoken response

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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 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, **ensuring that Section A concludes at exactly 5 minutes.**

Assessment Criteria

This unit evaluates spoken communication skills, critical analysis, and listening comprehension. The test is positively marked out of 40 by Edexcel examiners.

- AO1 Spontaneity and Development (20 marks): Assesses how naturally the candidate engages in conversation, their ability to maintain discourse, and how well they develop their ideas throughout both sections.
- AO2 Reading and Research (5 marks): Evaluates the candidate's reading and research into the topic and ability to reference at least two German texts or sources in preparation for the debate in Section A, citing them explicitly.
- AO3 Quality of Language (10 marks): Includes accuracy (5 marks) and range of vocabulary (5 marks). Pronunciation, intonation and accuracy as well as the range of grammatical structures and lexis contribute to these marks.
- AO4 Critical Analysis (5 marks): Judges the candidate's ability to connect ideas, provide a thorough evaluation of key issues, and develop well-reasoned arguments.

Pearson Edexcel provides examiner guidance on their website, outlining expectations for spontaneity, discourse, development, and other key assessment criteria. Schools are strongly encouraged to review this document for reference.

Candidate Performance – Section A

Section A is designed as a debate rather than a discussion or presentation. The teacher/examiner is required to take the opposing stance to the candidate, actively challenging their arguments. This format ensures that candidates engage in the language of debate, as stipulated in the specification. Unlike a presentation, the goal is not for candidates to merely showcase their knowledge but to demonstrate their ability to argue and respond critically. When selecting debate topics, centres should guide candidates toward issues with ample written German sources.

Structure and Timing

- The candidate's initial stance should be outlined in one or two sentences and must not exceed one minute. However, it is not mandatory for candidates to take the full minute—they may begin the debate immediately.
- Strict time management is essential, as Section A must not exceed five minutes. Overrunning this section reduces the time available for Section B, potentially affecting the candidate's overall score.

Reading and Research Requirements

Candidates must provide evidence of reading German texts in preparation for the debate. To achieve higher marks for Reading and Research, candidates must explicitly refer to at least two sources by name. While audiovisual sources and statistics may be mentioned, the Reading and Research marks require reference to written sources. Acceptable sources include newspaper articles, academic texts, and other written materials in German. Candidates should name the texts they have read to demonstrate their research. Personal opinions and factual knowledge alone do not meet the highest assessment criteria.

Most candidates began with a brief presentation before moving into the debate, but a number of teacher examiners did not conduct this part correctly and candidates were not engaged in a proper debate and rather asked about their knowledge. Many presentations were within the one minute time limit and often provided a good introduction to the debate. Furthermore, most teachers were well prepared with arguments for their stance which helped the candidate to engage in a well-structured debate. Although there were some commonly chosen topics like Abtreibung, Sterbehilfe and die Legalisierung von Cannabis, a wide range of individual topics were chosen this series that often showed a clear personal interest to the candidate. These topics frequently resulted in successful debates.

Some debates were less successful because candidates relied only on their own opinions without citing any sources or factual knowledge like statistics as supporting evidence. This impacted the marks for Reading and Research negatively. Overall the majority of candidates did refer to **at least one source** enabling them to access almost full marks for Reading and Research. A minority included at least two sources and more and achieved full marks. However, some candidates lost out on marks as the source mentioned was too vague. ('Studien zeigen,...') To avoid losing marks unnecessarily, a thorough preparation of section A is crucial.

Candidate Performance – Section B

In Section B candidates should be engaged in a discussion on at least **two unpredictable topics**. While only two topics are required, discussing several topics too superficially is not recommended. It is preferable to explore two topics in greater depth rather than covering multiple areas at a

surface level. Centres should ensure that the unpredictable topics selected for discussion in Section B are **conceptually challenging enough for A2 level**. A2 candidates must demonstrate their ability to handle abstract concepts. If uncertain, centres should select topics from the A2 General Topic Areas (GTAs):

- Technology in the German-speaking world
- Society in the German-speaking world
- Ethics in the German-speaking world

These will provide sufficient opportunities for candidates to demonstrate sophisticated argumentation, including the use of abstract concepts, advanced vocabulary, and complex structures. Personal questions should be avoided, as they are not conceptually challenging. If a candidate uses personal experience to illustrate a point, they should be encouraged to generalise their response. For example, instead of asking *"What do you personally do to help the environment?"* (which is more suited to AS or GCSE), a more appropriate question would be: *"What are the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear power for a country?"*

Additionally, discussions must focus on the **German-speaking world**. For example, if discussing an issue such as environmental policy, there should be specific references to Germany, Austria, or Switzerland (e.g., *"In der Schweiz gibt es..."*).

Overall, section B provided some challenges for centres when conducting the examination. At times, the choice of topic did not allow candidates to show their language skills and the ability to handle abstract concepts at A2 levels. Talking about school uniform or other sub topics from the GTA Youth Matters are more suitable for AS level and in these cases prevented candidates from the highest mark band.

This series *Künstliche Intelligenz (KI)* was a popular theme and unfortunately the discussion was often held in a general way and did not provide a link to the German speaking world.

Furthermore, some centres used a list of questions and this does not facilitate **fluent discourse**. It is important that teacher/examiner and candidate listen and reply to each other and create a discourse that allows spontaneity and development. Again, this type of examination conduct prevented some candidates from being able to access the highest mark band for AO1 (Spontaneity and Development) although it seemed that the candidates would have had the ability to do so had there been better discourse.

In a few cases, teacher/examiners failed to introduce a second topic, remaining on aspects of the initial issue for the entire discussion. This limits the marks available for Spontaneity and Development as well as for Critical Analysis.

Candidate Performance in Reference to Assessment Criteria

AO1 Spontaneity and Development

As outlined before, a lack of spontaneity and fluent discourse had a significant impact on candidate marks in some centres during this summer examination session.

To access a score of 11 or higher in **Spontaneity and Development**, candidates must give **many** examples of spontaneous responses. The term “*many*” implies that spontaneity should be a defining characteristic of the assessment. Candidates who recite pre-learned material throughout any part of the test cannot achieve high marks. At best, they may fall within the 6– 10 mark band. Centres should discourage memorisation, as it does **not** lead to high scores. It is pleasing to note that there were not many candidates this summer series who recited their knowledge and were in this category.

However, discourse is a key component of **Spontaneity and Development** and was a serious an issue. Examiners expect genuine interaction between the candidate and teacher/examiner, rather than a simple question–answer format. **Fluent discourse** is a requirement for the top band and some candidates’ marks was thus limited to 15. Teacher/examiners should respond directly to what the candidate says to encourage them to move beyond prepared material. Asking questions such as “*Wieso?*”, “*Wie meinen Sie das?*” or “*Können Sie ein Beispiel dafür geben?*” fosters a more natural, spontaneous discussion.

Most candidates demonstrated good **development** in this session, with evidence of thorough preparation. For strong development, a candidate must fully understand the question and give a detailed response, expanding on their ideas and they should present and evaluate **opposing viewpoints** with reasoning.

AO3 Quality of Language

Range of Lexis

Examiners assess the **breadth of vocabulary** used, as well as the **grammatical structures** employed and the performance this series was again very strong. Many candidates demonstrated progression from GCSE and AS level, using complex sentence structures, multiple tenses, and a sophisticated lexical range appropriate to A2 level in particular when challenging topics have been chosen as they often lead to richer vocabulary usage. For example, a debate on assisted suicide is likely to encourage more advanced vocabulary than a discussion on school uniforms.

Accuracy

Most candidates showed a strong performance in this assessment criterion worth 5 out of 40 marks. It worth noting that a perfectly **grammatical performance** is not required to achieve a score of 5. Examiners are trained to ensure non-native speakers can access full marks. **Pronunciation**

also plays a crucial part in this criterion and again it is ensured that non-native speakers can access full marks.

AO2 Reading and Research

5 marks are awarded for **Reading and Research**, which applies only to **Section A**. As mentioned, candidates must cite **at least two written German sources** by name to access the highest band. There were a number of students citing no sources or only mentioning their source *vaguely* (*Studien zeigen,...*) which limited their marks. Some candidates used one source and some two or more, thus accessing full 5 marks. In addition to naming sources candidates also need to demonstrate their Reading and Research providing **information and factual knowledge** from their research, moving away from personal opinions.

AO4 Critical Analysis

The strongest candidates in this session consistently supported their arguments with evidence and counterarguments. Many candidates were able to explain key issues fully with some justified links and coherency. Candidates should be encouraged to **move beyond factual recall** and demonstrate the ability to discuss **beliefs, morals, and political perspectives**. They should evaluate **both sides** of an issue, provide **evidence** for their opinions, and **link ideas logically**. Again, centres can help this by selecting **abstract and challenging** topics that require deeper analysis.

Advice for Future Examination Sessions

General Conduct of the Assessment

- The total exam time is 11-13 minutes. Examiners stop listening at the 13-minute mark, so there is no benefit to exceeding the limit.
- Section A must not exceed 5 minutes. Overlong assessments negatively impact Section B.
- If candidates present their topic at the beginning of section A, the presentation should take no more than 1 minute.
- Teacher examiners should prepare their counter arguments in the debate carefully.
- Teacher examiners should select (at least) **two** appropriately challenging A2 topics in advance and avoid a question and answer model.
- Teacher examiner should respond to the candidates answers and consider points made by the candidates to ensure a fluent discourse.

Section A (Debate)

- The format is a debate, where the candidate and the interviewer take opposing positions on a chosen issue.
- Candidates must reference at least **two** German-language written sources. They should further demonstrate their research with information and factual knowledge and not rely on opinions only.

- A suitable topic for A2 level should be chosen.

Section B (Unpredictable Discussion)

- Candidates should engage in a **fluent discourse** where both speakers engage with each other and a question-answer model should be avoided.
- Candidates should not memorise and recite responses.
- Topics should be conceptually and linguistically appropriate for A2 level.
- Topics from the A2 syllabus need to provide a link to the German speaking world and candidates should provide **examples from a German-speaking country** when answering e.g., KI an deutschen Schule, in Schweizer Firmen.
- Candidates should avoid relying on personal experience and instead provide generalized arguments and evidence.

Thank you

Examiners express appreciation for the dedication and hard work of centres in preparing candidates for the assessment. Their efforts ensure a smooth examination process and help candidates reach their full potential.

Grade Boundaries

Pearson Edexcel continues to ensure fair and consistent marking across French, German, and Spanish speaking assessments through rigorous examiner standardization.

