



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In German (4GN1) Paper 03

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General Overview

The speaking assessment (4GN1_03) for the International GCSE German specification (2017) is worth 25% of the qualification. It is conducted in exam centres and assessed externally by Pearson.

The maximum mark in this speaking test is out of 40 and the total assessment time is between 8 and 10 minutes. This assessment consists of three tasks:

Task A – a picture-based discussion

Tasks B and C - two conversations on two different topic areas.

Content Overview

Candidates are assessed on their ability to convey their understanding of spoken German through three speaking tasks. Candidates must be able to:

- Describe the contents of a picture.
- Describe possible past or future events related to the people in the picture.
- Respond to questions about the picture and its related topic.
- Take part in a spontaneous conversation on two further topics.

Assessment Overview

- Task A requires candidates to answer five questions about a picture. It should be between two to three minutes in length. This task is worth 12 marks.
- Tasks B and C are worth 28 marks in total. These are conversations on two different topic areas, determined by the randomisation grid supplied by Pearson. Each task should be a minimum of three minutes long, with the maximum time allowed for each task being three minutes and thirty seconds.

The three topic areas of the three different tasks must be chosen from the five following topic areas:

- a. Home and Abroad
- b. Education and Employment
- c. Personal life and Relationships
- d. The world around us
- e. Social activities and fitness

Each topic area may only be addressed once.

The sub-topics A3 Services, C3 Role models, C5 Childhood, D2 weather and climate and E4 accidents, injuries, common ailments, and health are not assessed in the speaking test.

Pearson provides a randomisation grid and the majority of centres again adhered to it this year. If a topic area is repeated then, unfortunately, no marks can be awarded for the repeated topic.

Although there were few centres that tested the same topic area twice, there were occurrences of digression within the topic areas. These responses could not be credited.

The timing of the various tasks is extremely important. Timing of **Task A** should start when the candidate begins their response to the first question – not when the teacher/examiner asks the question. The maximum time allowed is three minutes. Any responses after that cannot be credited.

Task B and **task C** must each be between three minutes to three minutes and thirty seconds. An overly long task B does not compensate for a short task C and vice versa. If either task B or task C is shorter than three minutes this will have an adverse effect on the marks that can be awarded.

Before the beginning of the first conversation, the teacher/examiner should announce the first topic area to be covered and then they should announce the second topic area at the changeover to the second conversation.

Details of the Requirements for Task A

In the first part of the examination the candidate selects a picture on which they answer five questions.

The picture must contain people, objects and interaction and must be linked to one of the five topic areas in the specification.

This part of the test lasts between 2 and 3 minutes. Timing starts when the candidate begins to answer the first question.

Where Task A is too long:

- If the teacher/examiner is speaking at three minutes, the examiner stops assessing the conversation at that point.
- If the candidate is speaking at three minutes, the examiner stops assessing the conversation at the end of the sentence / the next sense break.

It is most important that centres observe the timings as otherwise they could be limiting the marks their candidates can achieve.

Centres are reminded that they may not practise Task A with their candidates using the picture which will be employed in the actual assessment. They may practise using other pictures on the same topic, but they may not rehearse with the picture the candidate has chosen to use in the examination. It is not intended that candidates have prepared answers for the five questions; a lack of spontaneity in Task A will affect the mark awarded for Communication and Content.

The candidate gives the teacher/examiner a copy of the picture in advance of the assessment. The teacher/examiner must prepare five questions to ask each candidate about their chosen picture but must not share these questions with the candidate before the test.

The candidate **may not** take any notes into the examination but may bring in a copy of the picture they have chosen to use.

The question types for Task A are prescribed and this requires thorough preparation from the teacher/examiner in order to achieve the best marks available for candidates. The pattern of these five questions must follow the examples in the specification and should consist of the following:

Question type 1: A description of what you can see in the picture

Question type 2: Specific factual information about the picture

For example, select a person or persons in the picture and state what they are doing.

Question type 3: Past or future hypothesis

This question must ask the candidate to imagine a possible past or potential future event **relating to the picture**. This is the opportunity to support the candidate in using additional tenses and time frames.

Question type 4: Opinions about the picture

This question elicits the candidate's opinions on the picture and the topic.

Question type 5: Evaluation

The teacher/examiner should elicit an evaluation from the candidate. This question will move away from the content of the picture and exploit the wider topic area.

As an example, if the candidate chooses a picture of a group of youngsters playing in a football match (Topic E, sub-topic 2: Hobbies, interests, sports and exercise) the five questions could be:

Question 1 Kannst du das Bild beschreiben?

Question 2 Beschreib die Person auf der rechten Seite.

Question 3 Was, glaubst du, haben die Spieler vor dem Spiel gemacht?

Question 4 Was magst du lieber? Mannschaftssport oder Individualsportarten?

Question 5 Warum, denkst du, sollte man regelmäßig Sport treiben?

On occasion a teacher/examiner may think that a candidate is capable of a more developed response. In that case they may wish to ask a further question. However, centres are reminded that the **only additional questions** that may be asked are:

- Why (not)? *Warum ? Warum nicht ?*
- Anything else? *Ist das alles ?*
- Is that all? *Sonst noch etwas ?*

There must be no other supplementary questions and teacher/examiners must not deviate from these prompts. If in Task A an additional question is asked which is not one of these, the candidate's response to that question is ignored when assessing the performance.

Teacher/examiners are allowed to repeat the question and, if need be, to rephrase it, but not to ask a completely different question. An example of this might be:

“Was machen die Kinder am Strand?” could be rephrased to “Was machen die Kinder auf dem Sand?”. However, if a completely different question is asked such as, “Was tragen die Kinder?” the response to this would not be credited.

Candidate performance

Many teacher/examiners conducted their speaking examinations with excellent skill- meticulously sticking to timings and the specification questions and so allowing their candidates of all abilities to achieve their full potential. These were a delight to mark! In general teacher/examiners were extremely encouraging, especially with the less successful candidates and they ensured they allowed the candidates time to phrase a response.

Centres with large cohorts did very well ensuring that the range of questions asked over the same topic was varied so there were not many cases of similar questions being asked of all candidates.

Unfortunately, in the case of some centres the recordings took place in a venue where there was a lot of background noise. It would be advisable for centres to consider running the examinations in a room where there is no echoing and background noise as this can make it difficult to hear the candidates' responses. Similarly, in some centres, the microphone was nearer to the teacher/examiner than the candidate and this made some responses hard to hear.

Task A

For the majority of centres, the picture task was completed well, and candidates had a varied bank of phrases they could use in order to access the highest marks possible within their ability range.

Candidates spoke about their families, their schools, their homes, their holidays and their free-time activities, particularly sports and TV/cinema. There was a welcome increase in the number of candidates choosing to talk about a picture which related to the environment (Topic D). Less popular subject areas included food and drink; work, careers and volunteering; the media; travel and transport; shopping and money matters.

Candidates were very good at asking for questions to be repeated when they either lost their train of thought or were not certain what the question meant.

Many candidates had an extremely well-prepared and sophisticated description of their photograph ready in response to the first question. However, there is a possible problem here: if candidates are allowed to speak at too great a length in response to Question 1 they sometimes, unfortunately, run out of time and the responses to the last question/s cannot be credited as the three minutes have elapsed.

Some candidates spoke well but lost many of the marks on Task A because they failed to demonstrate the use of any tense other than the present.

It was frustrating for examiners that some centres asked more than the designated five questions, leaving the examiner having to select which were the 'right' questions.

Question 1 There were some excellent and detailed responses here. In Task A tenses are important and many centres had encouraged candidates to use phrases such as “Ich habe dieses Foto gewählt, weil...” or “Ich werde jetzt mein Foto beschreiben.”

Question 2 Whilst candidates were able to describe the people on the pictures and their actions, the responses to Question 2 tended to be the briefest. Please note that the mark scheme requires the candidate to regularly give opinions and justifications in order to access the 5-6 and 7-8 bands for Communication & content. Candidates should be encouraged to use this question for adding personal opinions.

Question 3 Only **one** tense from past or future needs to be elicited here. There were some very successful tenses, developed phrases and uncommon vocabulary used. Candidates who are unsuccessful in answering in a tense other than the present at some point in Task A are restricted to one mark for Linguistic knowledge and accuracy.

Question 4 There were some very good opinions here; many were also justified. Candidates should be advised to develop their answers, as some missed the opportunity to justify and develop their answers sufficiently to access the highest band for Communication & content.

Question 5 This was mostly well answered, and candidates were able to respond at length on the wider topic area.

Tasks B and C

Some teacher/examiners were very adept at encouraging the candidate to produce spontaneous speech. If a candidate does not respond spontaneously to questions, they may not be able to access the full range of marks available for Interaction and spontaneity. It is recommended that teacher/examiners do not use a list of pre-prepared questions but, instead, react to and build on what the candidate says. In this way a spontaneous and developed conversation can take place.

Most candidates were offered the opportunity to achieve their potential but in some cases the questioning was too difficult for candidates. Where candidates were aware that they should include

interesting language, they were generally very successful with some unusual vocabulary being used. Some candidates even peppered their responses with idioms.

A few candidates were not given the opportunity to extend their answers or use a variety of tenses, which impacted on their overall marks. The quality of examining really does affect the candidate response and consequent performance. There was some excellent practice with teacher/examiners eliciting opinions and justifications and a variety of language including tenses. Such teacher/examiners asked open questions. It was obvious that many centres had 'trained' candidates to routinely reply giving as much justification as possible. The use of 'weil', 'denn' and similar is very important for candidates to access the top mark bands for Communication and content.

In Tasks B and C, some candidates used vocabulary in a very repetitive way, mentioning the same activities repeatedly when asked what they liked to do, what they had done recently and what they planned to do in the future. More successful candidates were able to discuss a range of activities and give more distinctively personalised responses.

Occasionally, a candidate with a very good command of the language scored less well than expected in terms of Communication and content because they gave brief answers rather than speaking at length with opinions and fully developed justification. Able candidates should be encouraged to expand upon their answers.

Many centres seem not to be aware that the timing for these two tasks is three to three and a half minutes each and many of the tasks stopped short of the three-minute mark. This, unfortunately, had an impact on the marks that could be awarded.

Advice for Future Sessions

Please time each task separately.

Task A

- Ensure that a suitable picture is chosen with people, objects and interaction. This should be a range of topics across the centre and no two candidates should have the same picture.
- Prepare the five questions in advance to ensure that the specification is being followed correctly.
- Do not ask more than five questions, even if the candidate response is short, as these will not be credited.
- Encourage the candidate to develop their answers, by using only the allowed prompts - *Warum ? Warum nicht ? ^[L]_[SEP] Ist das alles ? ^[L]_[SEP] Sonst noch etwas ? ^[L]_[SEP]*
- Ensure that all five questions are answered within the three-minute time limit; possibly this will entail cutting a candidate short in Question 1 if they describe the picture in too much detail.
- Ask one tense only for Question 3.
- Ensure all questions are within the chosen topic area.
- Do not correct a candidate's language during the test as it uses up time and unsettles the candidate.

Tasks B and C

- Be sure in advance of the examination which conversation topics are to be discussed according to the randomisation grid. This should not be discussed with candidates.
- Observe the timings carefully to maximise opportunities for candidates to access the full range of marks.
- Be clear and announce when the topic changes from task B to C to help both candidate and examiner.
- Ensure that Tasks B and C are balanced in terms of linguistic knowledge. Ask questions in both conversations which prompt the candidate to use present and past and/or future time frames. There was an increase in candidates successfully using the conditional this year.
- Listen to the candidate. Follow up with an appropriate question or ask them to expand on what they have said rather than sticking rigidly to a set of questions.
- Encourage spontaneous speech by the candidate.
- Encourage the candidate to develop answers, elicit opinions and reasons for their opinions.
- Ask open questions, encouraging the candidates to answer using an extended phrase or sentence. An example of an open question is "Warum treibst du Sport?" rather than the

closed question of “Magst du Sport?”

- Keep teacher/examiner input to a minimum so that the candidate speaks as much as possible. The candidates do **not** have to ask a question.
- If a candidate does not understand a word in a question, the teacher/examiner should move on, not labour the point or ask additional questions with this word.

Administration

Most centres followed the guidance for the administration of these tests. On occasion, the requirements were not followed, and centres had to be contacted to upload documents and/or replacement recordings.

Centres should test how well sound is recording in advance. In some cases, the teacher/examiner’s voice was recorded very clearly while the candidate was further away from the microphone and difficult to hear. Candidates and teacher/examiners should also consider the extraneous noises which are picked up on the recording. Answers can be difficult to hear because of papers being shuffled, or a desk tapped close to the microphone.

Recording and uploading of tests

- Make sure that both the candidate and the teacher/examiner can be heard clearly; where only one microphone is used, make sure that this is placed closer to the candidate.
- The room used should be quiet so that no extraneous noise is heard during the test.
- Introduce the candidate’s name and number clearly at the beginning of the test.
- Do not stop or pause the recording at any time during the test.
- Tasks A, B and C should be conducted in that order.
- Check that the whole test has been recorded clearly.
- Ensure that **three** files are uploaded individually for **each** candidate, not as one document for all candidates: MP3 recording, picture and candidate cover sheet.
- Audio files should be in the correct format. MP3 is preferable, but files as outlined in the ‘guidance for oral recordings’ are also acceptable.
- Audio files should be labelled, for example, 12345_7890_Smith_J for ease of examining.
- Cross check that the candidate numbers coincide across all uploaded files for each candidate.
- Ensure that the teacher/examiners and candidates have signed the candidate cover sheet before uploading.

Further information can be found on the Pearson website and teacher/examiners should make sure they are familiar with the following documents (all available on the Pearson website):

- Specification: International GCSE German (first teaching 2017)
- International GCSE German: Getting Started Guide

International GCSE German: Oral Examination Training Guide

