



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In German (4GN1)

Paper 03: Speaking

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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 young people 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 again 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.

It was clear that many candidates had prepared a detailed response to Question 1 on task A. Sometimes these responses were over one minute long. As a result, a fair number of candidates ran out of time for the task overall, meaning that the response to question 5 was beyond the three minutes allowed and could not be credited.

Learning large amounts of material off by heart does not lead to the best outcome in any section of the assessment as this impacts severely on the marks for Interaction and spontaneity.

In general, many candidates were very well prepared for all parts of the assessment and examiners recognise the hard work that goes into achieving such positive outcomes both by teacher/examiners and by the candidates themselves.

### **Task A**

For the majority of centres, the picture task was completed well. Candidates spoke about their families, their holidays and their free-time activities, particularly sports and TV/cinema. There was again a welcome increase in the number of candidates choosing to talk about a picture which related to the environment (Topic D).

Examiners heard many examples of candidates being encouraged to use comments such as, Ich habe dieses Foto/Bild gewählt, weil... leading to credit for a past tense, a separable verb and a weil clause all within the same sentence. Equally, phrases such as Ich würde sagen, dass... and als ich jünger war were often employed by the most successful candidates.

There were some very creative and authentic responses which really impressed. These tended to be ones which included less frequent vocabulary (e.g meine Küche ist besonders gut ausgestattet or es war preiswert), included wenn clauses, obwohl constructions, accurate use of relative

pronouns, irregular comparatives and in general a range of opinions. Particularly successful responses stated and contrasted varying opinions *manche sagen, dass...aber ich glaube....*

The best answers were creative and included “uncommon language” and complex structures. Complex structures are equally important as tenses.

Pronunciation seemed more of an issue this year, particularly in task A. Examiners heard instances where candidates had presumably used translators or AI to generate stock responses, which were learnt off by heart without a real understanding of what was being said. This resulted in unusual intonation and a rapid pace. The most frequently mispronounced word across many centres was ‘trägt’. *Meine Gesund* (instead of *Gesundheit*) was also a very common error.

It was disappointing that some centres again asked more than the designated five questions, leaving the examiner having to select which were the ‘right’ questions. However, there were far fewer centres doing this for which examiners were grateful. Also, Question 4 is an opinion question. Many centres used it as a further tense question and this response was not credited unless it contained an opinion.

Question 1 There were some excellent and detailed responses here. In general though, candidates would be better advised to not spend too much time on this response. Some development is required, but in some cases the responses were far too long.

Question 2 Whilst candidates were able to describe the people on the pictures and their actions, the responses to Question 2 again 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. Teacher/ examiners rather labour this point, but one example of a tense would be sufficient, although two would be better. Two examples of the same tense, e.g. the perfect would be fine. Examiners will also accept the notion of the future as a tense, e.g. *Später gehen die Leute ins Restaurant*. 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 This is an opinion question – not a further opportunity for the candidate to be asked a tense question. Candidates should be advised to develop their answer using ‘*weil*’ or ‘*denn*’.

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. Others used a list of prepared questions, and this is not a good idea. If a candidate does not respond spontaneously to questions, they will not be able to access the full range of marks available for Interaction and spontaneity.

The use of uncommon language is important. Candidates used some excellent unusual vocabulary. Examples were: *das war Sklavenarbeit !, ein Gemeinschaftsgefühl, wiederverwendbare Sachen, stattdessen, mein CO2 Fussabdruck, Schlachtfelder, Kriegsgräbe, Ostereiersuche.*

A few candidates were again not given the opportunity to extend their answers, 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. Some centres had a very narrow range of questions for Tasks B and C and so the candidates were all asked very similar questions. This is poor practice.

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. **It is not the case that Task B and Task C should be six - seven minutes in total. Each task should be a maximum of three and a half minutes long and a minimum of three minutes.**

## General

Several recordings were submitted in a video format, which is not acceptable. Please ensure that files submitted on LWT for marking are in an audio format. We also strongly advise that the recording device is placed close to both speakers, to avoid poor acoustics.

## Advice for Future Sessions

### 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.
- Centres must not use cartoons instead of photos for part A.
- 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 ? Ist das alles ? Sonst noch etwas ?*
- 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.
- 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.
- Teacher/examiners should not correct candidates' grammar. If the candidate repeats it back, they cannot be credited for it. It can also be confusing to the candidate.
- 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.

- Allow the candidate time to develop their response or justify their statement; avoid jumping in with a follow-up question.
- If employing a German speaker who is not a teacher, ensure they are familiar with the requirements of the specification. A general conversation including personal questions does not lead to a good outcome.

## **Administration**

Centres should test how well the 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.

In general, however, the administration from centres was excellent.

## **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

