GCSE Examiners' Report (Legacy)

German

GCSE (Legacy)

Summer 2026

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Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.[1]

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

[1] ***Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.***

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Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
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Executive Summary

In this, the final series for the Legacy GCSE qualification in German, Principal Examiners were pleased with the performance of candidates overall. As in previous series, it is clear that candidates are more confident in the productive assessments and attainment is high. Candidates are now confident in using complex structures to demonstrate their language skills, while being able to resist extended responses and introducing unnecessary errors.

Rubric infrigements in the receptive skills are fewer now, however Principal Examiners in these units continue to note that candidates cope well with the more sub-theme specific vocabulary but struggle with more basic vocabulary such as colours, days of the week and numbers, which can occur organically at any point. This will be a key point of improvement in preparation for the new QFF GCSE.

Overall, candidates and centres should be proud of their performance this year.

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UNIT 1: SPEAKING

Overview of the Unit

The speaking exam consists of three parts: the role play, the photo card and the conversation. The candidates are prescribed a Set from 1-6 which includes the role play, the photocard and a choice of conversation topics. Across the three tasks, all three themes are addressed. For the role play, candidates should try to attempt “complete response”, although marks are still available for varying degrees of ambiguity and inaccuracy. The photo card is marked according to communication and interaction and linguistic knowledge and accuracy. Similarly, the conversation takes a holistic view of the communication and interaction and linguistic knowledge and accuracy from the two parts of the conversation but also marks each candidate’s pronunciation and intonation.

Most centres had made an accurate assessment of each candidate’s ability and entered them for the correct tier. However, we saw a small increase in the number of centres being too ambitious in their judgement of candidates ability, meaning that some candidates struggled to score many marks at higher, whereas they would have been closer to / or indeed comfortably within the top band on foundation.

Overall candidates performed well and performance was similar to that of previous years.

Appropriate venue: Most centres conducted the tests in areas which were clearly well away from the usual hustle and bustle of a school day. There were still too many occasions, however, when noise from passing students made it difficult to hear what was being said. In the worst cases teacher-examiners had to ask people passing to be quiet. This must be avoided at all costs. Teacher-examiners should also ask if it is possible to suspend the use of the school bell for the duration of the assessments as this too can cause it difficult to hear responses.

Administration: The Unit 1 speaking assessments were virtually all completed and uploaded onto the system within the required time frame. The uploading of the administrative documents required was excellent, and set allocations were all uploaded on time. Thank you as this has been a frustration in the past.

Uploading of files: Again, this was done very well. Whilst difficult to check that an examination has recorded successfully to the end it is recommended that centres check for any suspiciously small sound files which could indicate a recording that has been cut short. Also, for future series, at the end of each examination, it is strongly recommended that teacher examiners listen back to the recording until they are certain that the candidate’s voice has been picked up clearly.

Timings: Virtually all centres adhered to the prescribed timings. The two parts of the conversation were also generally well balanced and very few candidates went over the overall 9-minute (Foundation) and 12-minute (higher) limit.

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Comments on individual questions/sections

The Role Play
The majority of candidates were able to fulfil the requirements of the role play activity at Foundation and Higher Tier. Again, it was pleasing to hear so many candidates able to both ask a question and answer the unseen question. There were again fewer incidences of candidates self-penalising by extending their response unnecessarily, although there were still instances of this, particularly at higher. Centres are asked to keep this in mind as we move to the new GCSE as the criteria for the role play are similar in that long responses will not be required.

The Photo Card
Again, there was a good deal of relevant and detailed information expressed when describing the photos, which enabled a good number of candidates to attain the higher bands at higher and foundation. Whilst candidates were again able to provide answers to unseen questions on this part of the exam, it should be stressed that for the best marks, candidates need to provide justification to their opinions and should always endeavour to explain their ideas. There were more instances this time of teacher examiners asking extra questions which were not relevant to the task and which gained no extra marks for the candidates.

The Conversation
The majority of candidates provided once more natural responses to the conversation. Clearly, candidates are being well prepared for the examination but not simply learning long chunks of language which causes candidates to lose marks for interaction and spontaneity. It would be good to see this continue into the new GCSE.

Pronunciation and intonation remained generally good across all centres and very few candidates fell into the lower bands. Again, this bodes well for the read aloud in future examination series

Most candidates were able to develop their answers to questions and the candidates who performed best were those who could express and justify opinions and views, using complex structures.

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UNIT 2: LISTENING

Overview of the Unit

Unit 2 is a listening comprehension assessment of approximately 35 minutes at Foundation Tier and 45 minutes at Higher Tier.

At both tiers there is a mixture of question types, box ticking, gap filling and answering briefly in German and English / Welsh.

Candidates completed tasks related to themes and sub-themes at both levels. There were very few un-attempted questions or sections to questions. There were several exemplary scripts in this series, particularly at Higher Tier.

Teachers and candidates are to be congratulated for their hard work in preparing for the Examination.

It was really encouraging to note that the number of students sitting German GCSE had increased this year.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Foundation Tier Summary

Foundation Tier candidates generally performed well in non-verbal tasks such as the multiple-choice or match up questions. One of the main issues at this level is that many candidates are not secure in their knowledge of even the most basic vocabulary. Numbers, for example, continue to be an issue for some candidates and Questions 1(a), 2 (a), 3 (b) and 7(b) were therefore problematic for them. Similarly, not all candidates knew the days of the week well enough to choose the correct response in Question 7(a). One would have expected Foundation Tier candidates to know the vocabulary for colours in German, but it was surprising to note in Question 6 (e) that very few knew that grau is grey. The same could be said of vocabulary for free time and hobbies, as even Reiten was not known by many in Question 1(c), despite its similarity to the English.

Some more difficult vocabulary proved challenging to a high percentage of Foundation Tier candidates. Wanderwege, milde Klima and Schweizer were generally not known. In Question 5 (d) few candidates understood that a passport was required to cross the bridge between the two countries, so clearly did not understand the word Pass. Several candidates also seemed unaware that some words have different meanings in different contexts. In Section 2 of Question 8 it was surprising how many confused Eis as ice cream, despite the mention of the polar regions.

Many candidates were able to provide accurate short responses in English or Welsh when required. However, many candidates continue to find inference-based questions particularly difficult. Candidates must understand that they will not necessarily hear the exact word or phrase in the recording that they will then see in the rubric on the question paper. As an example, most candidates found Question 4 particularly challenging. Only a few were able to complete the task set successfully. This was undoubtedly because they could not make the

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connection between Jede Woche spiele ich Golf and sportlich, Es gibt zu viel Lärm and laut or weil ich viel zu tun habe and keine Zeit. This was also seen regularly in Question 7(e) where candidates failed to spot that schon wieder inferred that the friends went to the pizzeria often.

Many candidates still do not pay close attention to the rubric of a question. This leads to incomplete responses and marks are subsequently lost. For example, in Questions 6(a) and 6(b) where the rubric clearly states What exactly is …? and when exactly were…? candidates failed to give complete answers. In Question 6 (a) the required response was school uniforms in Germany and in Question 6 (b) it was the beginning of January. Whilst short answers in English or Welsh are encouraged, candidates must ensure that they answer all questions set in full. In addition, candidates should take particular note of how many details are required to answer a question. When two or three details are required, then two or three marks are available, as in seen in Questions 5(a) and in both sections of Question 8.

Higher Tier Summary

Higher Tier candidates performed well in non-verbal multiple-choice tasks, but as before many continue to find inference-based questions challenging. As at Foundation Tier, a high percentage struggled with Question 1(e) where they failed to make the connection between schon wieder and oft. Similarly, in Question 5 (b) some candidates failed to spot that the option gute Bezahlung was required, as the text had mentioned the fact that the job of a primary school teacher eigentlich einen hohen Lohn hat. Higher Tier candidates too must understand that they will not necessarily hear the exact word or words in the recording, that they will then see in the rubric on the question paper.

Some vocabulary proved particularly challenging to many Higher Tier candidates. In Question 2, very few candidates understood the sentence Viele Feuerwehrleute wurden verletzt. In Question 6 some candidates were not familiar with the meaning of ab und zu. In Question 7 many candidates did not fully understand the meaning of the words Staus, Umleitungen, Kofferraum or Klimaanlage. In Question 9 the words Briefträger and Schlange stehen were not widely known.

As at Foundation Tier, many Higher Tier candidates do not always give complete answers to questions set and then they cannot access the mark(s) available. There were many examples of this at Higher Tier, where responses were simply not precise enough. In Section 2 of Question 2 for example, some candidates wrote it rains. However, this was not sufficient to achieve the mark. The whole point is that es regnet viel. In Question 4(a) candidates had to give the answer almost half /50%, as the text specifically says fast die Hälfte. The same was true in Section 3 of Question 7 where the problem is that it costs more to travel before 9 am. If the candidate had written it costs more, then the answer was considered incomplete, and the mark was lost.

As at Foundation Tier, candidates sitting the Higher Tier papers must pay closer attention to the rubric and they must take note of how many details are required to answer the question set in full. When two or three details are required, then two or three marks are available. This was clearly the case in Section 1 & Section 2 of Question 2. Too many candidates only offered one detail in their answer, even though the rubric clearly stated how many details were required.

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UNIT 3: READING

Overview of the Unit

Candidates demonstrated their understanding of a wide range of German across all sub-themes as outlined in the Specification.

Questions in both the Foundation and Higher Tier papers were accessible to candidates of all abilities. The examination followed the same format as previous series, and candidates were familiar with common question types such as multiple-choice, tick-box, and main-idea identification tasks. Performance was generally strong in matching and multiple-choice questions across both tiers. Most candidates were also able to provide accurate short responses in English or Welsh where required.

However, questions requiring inference proved more challenging for weaker candidates. While concise responses in English or Welsh are encouraged, answers must be sufficiently clear and unambiguous to gain credit.

On the common questions (Foundation Questions 8 and 9 / Higher Tier Questions 1 and 2), Higher Tier candidates achieved higher marks than those entered for the Foundation Tier.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Foundation Tier Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5 (non-verbal responses)

Candidates generally demonstrated a good understanding of basic vocabulary and simple language structures. In question 1 many candidates mixed up Straßenbahn with Bahn. In question 2, opinions were identified successfully by most candidates but some adjectives like faul/fleißig were more challenging. The statements relating to environment in Question 3 proved more demanding for some candidates, although overall performance on this question was positive.

In Question 4, which was based on a factual text, prepositions such as um/bis presented difficulties for a number of candidates. Question 5 was generally answered well, with most candidates demonstrating a secure understanding of vocabulary and successfully identifying the tenses used.

Foundation Tier Q6

1.3. Customs and Traditions. Performance on the first literary task, adapted for GCSE, was generally strong. Most candidates demonstrated a secure understanding of the key vocabulary needed to access the text and respond accurately to the questions. Questions 6(e), however, presented a greater level of challenge with many candidates not identifying a Butterbrot as a sandwich, but just as bread/bread with butter (Brot mit Butter).

Foundation Tier Q7

1.2. Lifestyle. Almost all candidates identified the general message of the text correctly. Some candidates struggled to clearly convey the meaning for (c) as building up muscles, not becoming muscular.

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Foundation Tier Q8/Higher Tier Q1
1.1. Youth Culture. Most candidates showed a secure understanding of a broad range of vocabulary in this literary text, including language related to school life, family and free time. Some weaker candidates, however, misinterpreted Bibliothek, as bible and geschichtliche Daten as going on a date.

As expected, Higher Tier candidates tended to achieve higher marks than Foundation Tier candidates.

Foundation Tier Q9/Higher Tier Q2
3.1. Current Study. Candidates found this question challenging. Vocabulary related to school life i.e. Noten, Zeugnis, Unterricht proved difficult for many FT and some HT candidates. Some candidates were unable to distinguish between past and present tense and the vast majority of candidates in both tiers did understand the time correctly.

Foundation Tier Q10 Translation
3.2. World of work. Many candidates found the vocabulary related to work and money challenging. Weaker candidates often overlooked details such as oft/neues/im Moment and were not precise enough when translating habe ich extra verdient (I had extra money does not clearly convey the exact meaning).

Higher Tier Q3,4,5 (non-verbal responses)
Candidates generally performed well on the non-verbal response questions, demonstrating a good understanding of key vocabulary and grammatical structures, including different tenses. Question 3(d) proved more demanding for some candidates who misunderstood alle with allein. Question 4(1) was also often challenging with candidates opting for F due to the meaning being correct, however grammatical structures were incorrect.

Higher Tier Q6
2.1. Home and Locality. Some candidates identified the key information within this longer texts. In many cases, this demonstrated that the relevant section of the text had been located correctly. However, marks were occasionally lost due to a lack of precision in English or Welsh responses. For example, das kleinste Haus was sometimes translated as “small house”, which did not accurately convey the superlative meaning. Candidates should be encouraged to read back through their answers to ensure that they are both grammatically accurate and fully reflect the meaning of the original text.

Higher Tier Q7
3.2. World of work. The majority of candidates responded successfully to this literary text, adapted for GCSE, on a skills. Most were able to recognise the key vocabulary and language structures needed to answer the questions accurately. The more demanding parts, Questions (b) and (e), were generally handled well by more able candidates, who demonstrated a secure understanding of the text. In contrast, some less able candidates appeared to rely on guesswork or chose not to attempt these questions.

Higher Tier Q8
2.2. The wider world. As with the previous question, the majority of candidates performed well and demonstrated a good understanding of the factual German text. However, marks could not be awarded where responses lacked the level of precision required to convey the intended meaning accurately. Question 8(e) was particularly challenging with only the best candidates being able to gain the mark.

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Higher Tier Q9 Translation

2.3. Global sustainability. The translation task clearly differentiated between higher and lower attaining candidates. The most able candidates were able to recognise and accurately render more complex structures, while weaker candidates generally managed the vocabulary but struggled with more advanced language, such as man sollte öfter and possessive pronouns like unser altes Auto. Full marks could only be awarded only where both vocabulary and grammatical structures were translated accurately.

A number of candidates could not be awarded marks due to insufficient precision in their English/Welsh responses. Adverbs and other language parts such as prepositions continue to be frequently overlooked or omitted. It was encouraging to see that many candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. In particular, both Foundation and Higher Tier candidates showed overall good evidence of recognising different tenses.

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UNIT 4: WRITING

Overview of the Unit

The format of both the Foundation and Higher Tier examinations remained in line with previous years. Candidates were able to complete all tasks within the allocated time and generally observed the recommended word counts. Only the less able candidates found it challenging to produce sufficient detail and length to access the higher mark bands.

Overall, candidates appeared to be well prepared and responded appropriately to the requirements of each task. On the Foundation Tier, responses to Question 1 were typically concise and relevant, while Question 2 was generally answered using short sentences. Question 3 on the Foundation Tier, together with Questions 1 and 2 on the Higher Tier, required candidates to produce more extended pieces of writing, using a range of tenses, justifications and more complex language structures.

The translation tasks enabled stronger candidates to demonstrate a secure command of vocabulary and a wider range of grammatical structures. However, these tasks proved more demanding for weaker candidates, who often struggled with both lexical accuracy and grammatical knowledge.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1 Foundation Tier
Candidates were asked to provide simple information related to the theme of Holidays.

Most candidates were able to write short, clear sentences using a basic noun–verb–object structure. Full marks were awarded to responses that communicated the intended meaning clearly and demonstrated a good level of linguistic accuracy. Responses that only partially conveyed the intended meaning or contained significant errors were awarded one mark.

Minor inaccuracies, such as errors in gender, agreement, or spelling that did not impede communication, were not penalised. However, more serious errors, including incorrect verb endings or errors in word order, resulted in the loss of a mark.

A number of candidates used the perfect tense, increasing the likelihood of making errors.

Question 2 Foundation Tier
In Question 2, candidates were expected to provide basic information related to the theme of work. Some responses lacked the detail and clarity required to access the highest band for Communication and Content. Weaker candidates often struggled to use basic topic-specific vocabulary accurately. A small number of candidates only communicated very limited meaning.

Responses that were significantly below the 50-word guideline generally lacked the range and complexity of language needed to demonstrate higher levels of performance. As a result, these candidates were unable to access the upper bands for Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy.

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Question 3 Foundation Tier / 1 Higher Tier
In this question, candidates were asked to write about free time and leisure. The instructions clearly required candidates to address all three bullet points, but some failed to write about what they did AFTER school and instead wrote about their school day. As a result, marks were lost for Communication and Content because of minor omissions.

Foundation Tier candidates often found it challenging to express their ideas and opinions with clarity and precision. Responses frequently relied on simple vocabulary and structures, and many candidates were unable to form the perfect tense accurately.

Higher Tier candidates generally demonstrated a greater range of language and were able to develop their ideas in more detail, often including a variety of opinions and justifications. However, weaknesses in verb usage remained evident across the cohort, particularly in the accurate formation of tenses, verb endings, and word order.

Question 4 Foundation Tier - Translation
Most candidates translated the first part successfully, although it was notable that a considerable number of weaker candidates frequently struggled to recall core vocabulary, such as wohnen.

As in previous series, the formation of questions presented difficulties for many candidates. A significant proportion of candidates were unable to apply inversion accurately.

For the use of past tense, most candidates were able to access some marks. However, errors in word order, the selection of the appropriate auxiliary verb, and vocabulary choice were common.

A similar pattern was evident in the final translation task. While many candidates were able to convey some of the intended meaning, inaccuracies in grammatical structures and vocabulary often limited the overall quality of responses.

Question 2 Higher Tier
Most candidates produced responses of the expected length, approximately 150 words, and addressed the task by including factual information, developed ideas, opinions, and justifications. Communication was generally clear and effective. However, among weaker candidates, meaning occasionally became unclear due to the use of over-complex sentence structures that were not always controlled accurately.

The strongest candidates produced well-organised and detailed responses, moving beyond simple descriptions to develop their ideas through explanations, opinions, and justifications.

Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy were generally strong. When attempting longer sentences with a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, responses of weaker candidates often contained recurring errors, particularly in verb formation, tense usage, and word order. Nevertheless, it was pleasing to see that many candidates were able to express their ideas and viewpoints clearly using a varied range of language including idiomatic expressions.

The highest-performing candidates demonstrated confidence and control across a range of grammatical structures and tenses. Their work featured a broad and ambitious vocabulary and included more complex constructions such as um...zu clauses, comparative structures, a variety of conjunctions, idiomatic expressions, and topic-specific language, all of which contributed to sophisticated and effective communication.

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Question 3 Higher Tier - Translation
Almost all candidates were able to convey at least some of the intended meaning, using basic grammatical structures with a reasonable degree of accuracy. However, it was noticeable that topic-specific vocabulary presented difficulties for many candidates.

Common errors included inaccurate word order, incorrect use of separable verbs, failure to apply the verb-second rule, and difficulties manipulating language across a range of tenses. Verb endings were a particular area of weakness, especially among weaker candidates.

Many responses were able to access marks through the successful communication of partial meaning, although grammatical inaccuracies were frequent.

Many candidates were able to convey information, ideas, and facts effectively, and the overall communication in German was clear. Most responses conveyed the intended meaning successfully, allowing candidates to access high bands for Communication and Content.

Common grammatical weaknesses included errors with verb endings, tense formation, and word order, particularly inversion and word order after conjunctions. While these inaccuracies affected the grammatical correctness, meaning was still conveyed.

It was encouraging to see many candidates attempting more complex language and structures. In line with the Mark Scheme, credit was given for such ambition, even where errors were present. The strongest candidates combined a wide range of language with a good level of grammatical accuracy.

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Qualification webpage: https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/german-gcse/ -tab_keydocuments

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WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk

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