



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE (NEW)
GERMAN
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2019

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UNIT 1

General Comments

This year the majority of oral exams were conducted after Easter. Most centres communicated efficiently with the examiner in advance so that the suggested timetables could function smoothly. Some centres even provided a map or instructions for travel to the school beforehand and reserved a parking space, which makes all the difference when time is short. The accommodation provided was nearly always appropriate, away from noise as much as possible, with no disturbances outside the examination rooms, and preparation areas and toilets close by. Refreshments were kindly offered in nearly all centres. In most centres, examiners were able to meet the candidates for short briefing sessions prior to the day's exams. These meetings are particularly useful for explaining the new complex rules for the selection of A and B cards, for "breaking the ice", and for reassuring the candidates that examiners will try to support them as much as possible.

Comments on individual questions/sections

The aims are for students to demonstrate their knowledge of German speaking countries, their ability to understand and respond to a text, and their fluency and spontaneity in expressing views and opinions on selected areas of the specification.

Generally speaking, students were again well prepared for the challenges regarding AO4 and AO2. The majority of students succeeded in arguing their chosen point of view relating to card A by tapping into their knowledge of Germany. Again a high number managed to apply to good effect argumentative structures such as "Da haben Sie Recht, aber...", "Ich finde aber...", "Ja vielleicht, aber... Ich habe aber gelesen, dass...". In general, candidates' knowledge of the country has improved even more. Many candidates were able not only to quote names of writers, artists or film directors but also to give more detailed information on them and their works. In the shortness of time available, however, it may be difficult for teachers to cover all the topic areas in depth. As approximately one third of marks are allocated for AO4 teachers seemed to have concentrated on imparting knowledge of the country, which might have been at the expense of oral practice and of teaching grammatical structures. A small number of candidates had a good or even very good knowledge of the country but found it difficult to express their ideas in appropriate German.

As regards the B cards, the majority of candidates managed to demonstrate their understanding of the text successfully. More candidates than before employed to good effect structures such as: "der Text sagt", "laut dem Text", "wir lesen im Text, dass...". Occasionally, however, the examiners had to refer the candidates back to the text so that they were able to gain good marks for AO2. All A and B cards worked well, but those cards which directly referred to the students' experience, such as the ones relating to selfies, helicopter parents or youth magazines, worked better than the ones on the importance of religious festivals, the importance of beer and wine in German speaking countries, or the influence of English on the German language. A number of candidates misunderstood card A5 which referred to playing music and singing rather than listening to music.

A higher number of candidates than last year were able to talk about the film they had watched for their written exam. They found it easier this year to give relevant examples of German films, as card A6 demanded. Candidates will obviously benefit from discussing the unit 2 film in class and, as time in the classroom is precious, they should also be encouraged to watch further films in their own time.

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UNIT 2

General Comments

This unit caused no major problems for the majority of candidates. Most marks were lost in the translation exercise and in the essay.

The first listening exercise on the Fire Brigade run by volunteers was completed successfully, as a high number of candidates achieved at least 6/8 marks. Surprisingly, several candidates ticked **1a** *Wenn es im Dorf brennt, werden Dorfbewohner ausgebildet*, even though common sense would tell you that training villagers to be fire men or women during a fire might be a bit late.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** The first listening exercise on the Fire Brigade run by volunteers was completed successfully, as a high number of candidates achieved at least 6/8 marks. Surprisingly, several candidates ticked **1a** *Wenn es im Dorf brennt, werden Dorfbewohner ausgebildet*, even though common sense would tell you that training villagers to be fire men or women during a fire might be a bit late.
- Q.2** Question 2 was tackled successfully by a considerable number of candidates. In some cases false statements were identified, but the correction was left out. In other cases statements were identified as being correct, but an explanatory sentence was given nevertheless, e.g. in 2e) where, in addition to the correct statement *Die Zahl der vegetarischen Studenten steigt* candidates added the equally correct comment *Immer mehr Leute essen kein Fleisch*. A small number of candidates, however, provided a negation as correction for a false statement, which resulted in a loss of marks. In answer to 2g) for instance, i.e. *In der deutschen Mensa wird nicht viel für Vegetarier getan*, a small number of candidates stated: *Es gibt viel für Vegetarier in der deutschen Mensa*. Surprisingly a relatively high number of candidates could not remember the word for cook which was required for 2d), and they used alternatives such as *professionelle Koche / Köcher / Küchen* instead.
- Q.3** Marks were lost in this section because candidates failed to check their answers carefully against the text. *Schlug* fits grammatically in 3) but contradicts the text as the teacher is not violent. In a similar fashion *laut* in 4) makes grammatical sense but the text gives no indication about the volume of Maik's laugh.
- Q.4** Most candidates found the text fairly accessible and managed to complete the sentences in this exercise. Problems were encountered in c) where a frequent offering was *Während des zweiten Weltkriegs verloren viele Menschen ihren Garten*, which does, however, not comply with the text. The same is true for an answer provided for d) *Heute bieten sie Entspannung aber machen auch sehr viel Arbeit*.

- Q.5** Difficulties in this section stemmed from a lack of vocabulary, and a high number of candidates did not know *seit einigen Jahren*, *Ausflugziel*, *Gartenarbeit*, *Entspannung*. *Seit einigen Jahren* was frequently translated as *since a few years ago*, which is a word for word translation from the German original, but is of course no adequate English construction. In some instances *Ausflugziel* was translated as *target* or *flight destination*, even though that does not make any sense. Strangely enough, a number of candidates coped with the word *pflanzen* but faced difficulties with *bepflanzen*.
- Q.6** Again, the majority of essays were on the film *Das Pferd auf dem Balkon*, followed by *Barfuß* and by one or two essays on *Nichts bereuen* and *Scherbenpark*.

The majority of candidates who chose *Das Pferd auf dem Balkon* opted for title a). The description of the problems that the main characters face was frequently tackled in a superficial way. For instance, Mika's autism was mentioned only briefly, or Sascha's financial problems were not dealt with in detail. The more successful candidates managed to describe Mika's difficulties in forging friendships, his inability to understand jokes, or his obsessive behaviour in relation to eating routines. A number of candidates compared the difficulties the main characters face and argued convincingly that, at the end of the film, most problems had been dealt with.

Almost without exception those candidates who opted for *Barfuss* completed essay title a) which is about Nick's influence on Leila. Most candidates elaborated on the positive influence Nick has on Leila's development and how he helps her to lead a normal life. Better candidates pointed out that Nick also has a negative influence, since he teaches Leila to lie and cheat.

As in previous years, there was a high incidence of grammatical mistakes in a number of essays:

- Word order mistakes, especially as concerns the finite position of verbs in subordinate clauses; e.g. *dass Nick hat ein groß Einfluss*.
- Problems with possessive and personal pronouns, e.g. *obwohl sein Spielsucht hat er arbeitslos gemacht*.
- Common past particles were unknown, such as *gesehen*, *gegangen* and *verstanden*.
- False friends frequently led to mistakes e.g. *Sie müssen über das Auto liegt*. (lie/liegen- instead of lügen) or *Sie wurde bei ihrer Mutter eingesperrt*.
- Incorrect verb forms e.g. *die Charaktere hat einige Probleme* (even though the essay title states *In dem Film haben alle Charaktere Probleme*).

Careful checking of the essays for word order mistakes or endings could have resulted in a higher AO3 mark for the majority of candidates. The fact that some essays were extremely short had a bearing on the AO3 score awarded. Candidates need to be aware that they are expected to write approximately 300 words.

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UNIT 3

General Comments

This year again the majority of candidates were well prepared for the IRP as, on the whole, they had chosen suitable titles with a spectrum just wide enough to allow them to present their research findings in two minutes.

Most candidates had structured their talk efficiently, presented their findings within the time limit and also left some loose ends for the discussion. Unfortunately a small minority of candidates either got stuck with their IRP because they could not remember the entire content or had to be stopped because they had exceeded the time limit. Candidates can of course take their IRP Pro-forma into the exam which might help them to jog their memory.

Comments on individual questions/sections

In most centres candidates had chosen different titles which ranged from analysing the importance of German fashion designers to the problems Jewish people face in Germany nowadays. Here is a list of some IRP titles:

- Wie zeigt sich die Energiewende in Deutschland?
- Welche Probleme gibt es mit Plastikmüll in Deutschland?
- Inwiefern war die Wiedervereinigung der Wunsch der ostdeutschen Bevölkerung?
- Welche Probleme hat die jüdische Bevölkerung heutzutage in Deutschland?
- Wie erfolgreich wird der politische Aktionismus in dem Film „Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei“ dargestellt?
- Hat der Aufstieg der rechten Parteien zu mehr Gewalt in deutschen Fußballstadien geführt?
- Wie unterscheiden sich Ethikunterricht und Religionsunterricht an deutschen Schulen?

A high number of candidates this year chose topics related to environmental problems in Germany, which is probably in line with current trends, such as Fridays for Future. Others followed German news regularly and opted for topical IRPs which related to the impact of the refugee crisis on German society or the influence of far right groups on German life. Most candidates had a personal interest in their chosen topic and usually managed to argue their points successfully and back them up by AO4 evidence. In many cases candidates enjoyed being the experts on their chosen topic and having to explain their arguments to the examiner. Those candidates whose IRP title was formulated as a question or who had attempted a comparison between two aspects were more likely to provide analysis in their presentation than those who had chosen a very general title such as *Imbisskultur in Deutschland*. A small number of IRP titles were of a very general nature and had no connection to German speaking countries, for example *Gefahren von sozialen Medien* or *Die Grenzen der Massentierhaltung*, and candidates therefore lost a high number of marks in the AO4 section.

The accuracy marks in the discussion section were again relatively low for a number of candidates, apparently because they lacked oral practice. In order to improve their performance candidates are well advised to immerse themselves as much as possible in a German context by watching German films, listening to news items or exchanging news with a German pen friend. It would also be helpful if they took every opportunity to speak German in the classroom.

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UNIT 4

General Comments

The second year of this unit 4 exam again proved to be quite challenging for a high number of candidates. A high number of candidates struggled with the cloze exercise in Question 4 and with the reading comprehension exercise in Question 6. Most marks were lost in these two exercises.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** The first listening exercise posed no major problems, most candidates scored at least 7/10 marks. Frequently candidates had not realised that Elisabeth does not work as a cashier any more and therefore ticked the wrong box.
- Q.2** A number of candidates struggled with the concept of *Solidaritätszuschlag* and therefore scored low marks in the matching exercise. They assumed that the *Bundeskanzler* had introduced this tax levy, though the text stated that it was initiated by the *Bundesfinanzminister*. A high percentage of candidates wrongly assumed that, in West German towns, there were traffic problems rather than streets in bad repair. They obviously failed to check their answers carefully against the text.
- Q.3** Answers to comprehension questions for the third listening were either not precise enough or gave evidence of misunderstandings. In answer to the first question a) *Wie kann Pascal ein mehr oder weniger normales Leben führen?* a number of candidates wrote *Pascal ist lernbehindert und braucht Hilfe*, or *Sie muss bei allen Angelegenheiten helfen*, which is true, but does not answer the question. For the two-point question b), scores were lost because only one item was mentioned, e.g. *er kennt politische Parteien*.

A fair number of candidates failed to understand that the reporter thought the number of people who were discriminated against was low, and for d) they stated *die Zahl ist hoch*. Some unknown vocabulary items also resulted in a loss of marks, e.g. *Stimmzettel, Kreuz, Grundgesetz* and *Bestimmung*.

- Q.4** The cloze procedure in this exercise is a format most candidates are not yet familiar with. This exercise is very demanding on time, since 15 gaps have to be filled by reviewing 25 alternatives from the box. The majority of candidates failed to realise that a Stasi officer gives a speech on the 90th birthday of Wilhelm and awards a medal. In their attempt to fill the gaps a number of candidates simply inserted any word they came across in order to possibly score some points by sheer fluke. Even if the candidates had not comprehended the text their common sense should have guided them and made them realise that statements such as *hängte ihm die Ehefrau/ die Partei/ der Feuerwehr um* do not make any sense.

- Q.5** The first part was generally done well, candidates found it easy to identify synonyms in the text. For the second part, instead of carefully reading the text some candidates were misled by common sense stereotypes and they completed **3)** from list A with **a)** from list B, which resulted in the following sentence: *Integration kann niemals erfolgreich sein.* In a similar fashion some candidates ticked **4b** *Obwohl sie einen Job haben, haben sie keine Zukunft.*
- Q.6** There was a high amount of gaps in the answers to the reading comprehension questions for a number of candidates who found the text very demanding and could not cope with the complex ideas of the text. Hardly anyone managed to answer the first question **a)** correctly which asked for the two types of champions. In answer to **e)** *Inwiefern war die Weltmeisterschaft multikulturell?* some candidates stated *Die Besucher der Fußballspiele waren multikulturell*, which is obviously not specific enough. With regard to question **g)** in some cases the question was restated *Sie haben die Fußballspieler in das Bundeskanzleramt eingeladen.* Some answers to question **h)** *Was lobte die Kanzlerin?* could not be credited since the concept of “*verdient gemacht*” was misunderstood, e.g. *dass Deutschland unendlich verdient hat*, or *sie sagte, dass sie Deutschland verdient hatten.*
- Q.7** Limited vocabulary as well as a lack of grammatical knowledge led to a loss of marks in this translation exercise. Frequently, the following vocabulary items were not known: *wussten, verursachen, Themen, Frieden, Freiheit, Kopftuch, Unterdrückung, and verbreiten.* A number of word order mistakes occurred, and a high number of candidates were unfamiliar with common past participles such as *gekannt* or *gewusst*. Only very few candidates managed to produce a correct German passive structure when translating the phrase *an ideology in whose name violence and hate are spread.*

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UNIT 5

General Comments

This is the second year of this unit 5 exam, and candidates seemed to be better prepared since lessons had been learnt from the first cycle.

By far the most popular text proved to be *Zweier ohne* again, with an equal number of candidates opting for essay title a) and b). The more traditional play by Dürrenmatt *Die Physiker* took second place, and one or two centres opted for Brecht's *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* and Lenz' *Fundbüro*.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Regarding essay title a) for *Zweier ohne*, a number of candidates successfully analysed Vera's importance for the plot. They pointed out that Vera initially was of no importance at all, but increasingly posed a threat to the relationship between Ludwig and Johann, which most likely led to Ludwig's death. The better candidates demonstrated that Vera was associated not only with the motor cycle which stands for the friendship of the two boys, but also with the Asian tower which again is a symbol of the boys' friendship and their dreams. In answer to essay title b) for *Zweier ohne*, a good number of candidates skilfully demonstrated how the motive of death was linked to the main ideas of the novel.

Owing to a lack of linguistic competence some candidates experienced difficulties in analysing Vera's role. The uninitiated reader would not have been able to understand some of the candidates' sentences, e.g. *Meiner ersten Idee für wie wichtig Ludwig Schwester für die Entwicklung der Handlung ist, wie Vera scheint die richtigen Farbe von Ludwig.* Word order problems were prevalent in various essays, and frequently German constructions were influenced by English structures, for example: *Ludwig weißt Johann ein Freund wollen. Sie wird bei Ludwig ziemlich entfremdet. Die Handlung der Roman ist Ludwig wollen einer Zwillinge zu sein.*

Of the two questions on Dürrenmatt's play, title 2a) was most popular i.e. *Inwiefern kann man behaupten, dass Möbius ein verantwortungsvoller Wissenschaftler ist?*

The majority of candidates managed to exemplify to which extent Möbius is a responsible scientist. The better candidates explained convincingly that Möbius acted irresponsibly when taking his research findings to the asylum and thereby giving Dr von Zahnd the chance to get hold of his potentially destructive scientific work. A number of candidates also pointed out that the murder of the nurse was an irresponsible act. With respect to the second title, i.e. *Wie effektiv ist das Ende des Stücks deiner Meinung nach?*, some essays attempted to exemplify to which extent the end of the play reflected the situation of the Cold War, but these attempts were not always successful.

Owing to a lack of linguistic competence some candidates found it difficult to express their ideas: *Er könnte seine Geheimnis zu andere Leute sagen, anstatt Doktor von Zahnd schließt er im Sanatorium ein.* Personal or possessive pronouns were often used inappropriately, for example *weil er Plan scheitert.* Word order mistakes were quite prevalent and in some cases verbs were missing altogether, as the following example shows: *Jedoch wir müssen über dem Gründe warum Möbius ein verantwortungsvoller Wissenschaftler ist.*

Summary of key points

- It is surprising to see that hardly any candidate wrote an essay plan prior to tackling the essay, which in some cases led to overlong essays that lost focus and mainly consisted in retelling the plot. The other extreme were very short essays which also failed to convey relevant ideas. Candidates should always bear in mind that they will have to write approximately 400 words.
- Candidates are also well advised to check their essays carefully for word order mistakes, endings and agreements.



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