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# AS-LEVEL GERMAN

Unit 2 Speaking  
Report on the Examination

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## General comments

Visiting examiners reported no major problems with the organisation and the running of the tests. Teachers at centres were cooperative with the arrangements, providing completed STMS forms and prompt cards in good time and drawing up schedules for the sessions. Examining visits usually went smoothly with suitable rooms for examination and preparation, helpful invigilators/chaperones and efficient examination officers. Some examiners of the 2T option reported problems with incomplete STMS forms, unsatisfactory labelling of CD tracks or unplayable CDs/USB sticks. Centres must check the recordings before dispatching them and make sure the students are easily identifiable by markers. Writing on the CD is not helpful. CD tracks should either be labelled digitally or a clear insert with the running order and candidate details should be supplied. Most recordings were of good quality although in a number of centres the teacher's voice was much more audible than the candidate's. Recording levels should be checked carefully for each participant before starting the tests.

Timing was usually good although some teachers once again devoted too much time to the nominated topic to the detriment of the remaining topics. All conversation topics should be given approximately the same time and stop watches should not be re-set during the test so as to ensure agreement with the marker's timing device. Timing should start with the first stimulus question rather than the general introductions. A few teachers appeared to be over-anxious about exceeding time limits and sometimes finished the test half a minute or more before 15 minutes thereby affecting the candidate's interaction mark.

Visiting examiners were pleased to observe that students were universally well prepared for the examination. Most were very communicative often displaying real enthusiasm for the language. Most students seemed to enjoy talking to an unfamiliar person and coped well with more unpredictable lines of questioning. Unfortunately, a number of teacher-examiners once again felt the need to 'play safe' by sticking largely to a set list of (rehearsed) questions; this denied students opportunities to react and develop ideas with a degree of spontaneity and to access higher interaction marks. There were however some teacher-examiners who skilfully involved their students in a real conversation by listening to and following up on their responses and who varied their questions between individual students.

Few incidents were reported this year of native speakers not being familiar with the format and requirements of the test. Nevertheless, a few native speakers lost marks unnecessarily due to offering such long answers to the stimulus questions so that no time was left for the discussion.

### Part 1: Discussion of stimulus card

Timing between the five questions and the ensuing discussion was on the whole fine with most students spending between 2 and 2 ½ minutes on their prepared answers. Often there was an imbalance in the scope of development students offered in response to the five questions; many students – including those in the higher bands of ability - gave fairly limited answers to the questions dealing with the card itself but then delivered a long speech when answering the last question. All cards appeared equally accessible and were fairly evenly chosen by students. It must be stressed that all cards must be used in accordance with the prescribed sequence; some markers of the T-option felt that at a few centres, certain cards were deliberately left out. As laid down in the instructions, the discussion on the stimulus should arise from the candidate's responses to the questions and should further explore the subject matter of the card and related aspects of the sub-topic. Unfortunately, many teacher-examiners followed a pre-determined range of questions which - while mostly staying within the sub-topic - had little or no connection with the content of the stimulus card.

**Karte A: Wie wird man Popmusiker?**

This card was quite well done by most students. Question 2 led to many students lifting language from the card rather than re-phrasing the brief information appropriately. Question 3 differentiated well between able and less able students; a few students failed to address both *Vor-* and *Nachteile* in question 4. Discussions usually focused on the type of music students liked and teachers often followed familiar lines of questioning i.e. music during homework, relevance of classical music, controversial texts etc.

**Karte B: Immer mehr Vegetarier**

This card produced mixed results. The majority of students had problems with the pronunciation of *Vegetarier/vegetarisch* and few were able to explain the statistical information without reading out numbers; many students could not handle *Komma* in 1,5 and 6,8 using *Punkt* instead. While many referred to the information about the age group, hardly any candidate speculated on the reason for the greater popularity of vegetarianism among younger people. The second element of question 3 i.e. offering an opinion was often ignored. Only very able students gave full and cohesive answers to this question by explaining all three reasons, using the pictures and rephrasing the captions; in some cases however this took too long and deprived the student of time for the discussion. Examiners expressed surprise that ecological concerns leading to a vegetarian life style did not seem familiar to most students who chose this card. Question 4 was also a good discriminator while students of all levels were able to talk in detail about their own eating habits - whether healthy or not. Discussions usually expanded on aspects of healthy eating but some teachers concentrated too soon and too heavily on unrelated issues like drugs and smoking or strayed into the sub-topic of sport/exercise.

**Karte C: Urlaub – die schönste Zeit des Jahres!**

This card was also handled with different degrees of success. The pronunciation of *europäisch/Europa* caused real problems and the statistics as well as the pictures and text were not exploited as well as could have been expected. The *wie* element of question 2 was frequently ignored or students read out the content of the speech bubbles rather than rephrasing it in whole sentences. Students are advised to study the questions very carefully during their preparation time so as not to miss out some essential part of composite questions. Students who did not understand *eigenen* obviously had little chance of a relevant answer to question 3. On the other hand, there were some good points being offered on the advantages and drawbacks of home holidays as well as the possibilities for saving money when on holiday. The last question gave ample opportunities for talking about own preferences and many discussions addressed issues of modern mass tourism.

**Karte D: Großeltern – ein Teil der Familie**

This card was done fairly well by most students who chose it. There were a few problems with handling the possessive pronouns *sein* and *ihr* when describing Anton's and Jasmin's relationships with their grandparents. Some students had apparently not realised that Jasmin's grandmother actually lived with the family and all too often the teenagers' statements were read out rather than summarised. A few imaginative reasons were given for question 3 but in answer to the fourth question many students had not thought about any points apart from 'learning about the war' and 'learning about technology'. In response to the last question many students talked about their own grandparents rather than the role of grandparents in general. Discussions usually adhered to the sub-topic of family relations but occasionally deviated into marriage/partnerships.

### **Karte E: Shopping im Netz**

This card presented a lot of information to students to be exploited but it also served well to discriminate between different levels of ability. Able students made good use of the clearly laid out points for and against internet shopping while less able students either used the information very selectively or quoted the points in the boxes verbatim even if they might not have fully understood all the vocabulary e.g. *Lieferung*. Many students ignored the statistics, and responses to question 4 differed considerably in scope and quality; some students named a wider range of people for whom internet shopping is attractive e.g. young people, disabled citizens, families with children, people working long hours while others only mentioned their own age group. The last question produced predictable answers about daily use of the internet. Some discussions explored the stimulus material further whereas many teachers immediately progressed to standard questions on other aspects of the sub-topic e.g. use of mobile phones.

### **Karte F: Gute Freunde**

Many students made good use of the information on the card while others used it rather selectively. *Zuverlässigkeit/Ehrlichkeit* seemed to be familiar to most students while the pronunciation of *Humor/humorvoll* often caused problems (resembling *Hummer/hummervoll*). Few students made reference to *aller Altersgruppen* limiting their contributions to their own experiences; hardly any student commented on the somewhat surprising statement comparing friendships with having a partner and children. Question 3 generally produced good responses about the value of inter-cultural friendships which were universally seen as totally normal and enriching. Question 4 was a good discriminator with responses ranging from minimalist statements to differentiated thoughts about the differences between a friend and a partner. Most discussions stayed within the sub-topic and explored students' ideas about friendships in more detail.

### **Part 2: Conversation**

There were very few problems regarding the required coverage of the three conversation topics and the minimum time that must be given to each. Most teacher-examiners made clear transitions between topics. At some centres teachers unnecessarily covered all sub-topics of the last two conversation topics; this resulted in rather superficial exchanges based on a list of set questions with few attempts from teachers to develop points by picking up on students' responses. Similarly, examiners do not need to cover all bullet points on the student's prompt card within the limited time available. While the nominated topic should give the candidate a confident start into the conversation it should not become a series of entirely pre-learned monologues often delivered at greater speed than the rest of the conversation. While many students do rely to some extent on prepared materials for all topics they are not served well if they are never asked to react to unpredicted supplementary questions from the examiner. Teachers can also introduce an element of unpredictability by varying their questions within a cohort of students rather than focussing on the same aspects within sub-topics and using identical questions with successive students. Examiners observed that in some centres certain sub-topics were hardly ever discussed or avoided all together.

A few teacher-examiners tended to ask overlong and over-complicated questions which either confused students or deprived them of time for their answers. All examiners – whether external or internal – need to reflect on their questioning technique e.g. the ratio of open-ended to closed questions, how much vocabulary is supplied through long suggestive questions or putting alternatives to the candidate (*oder*-questions), the need to avoid repetitive *Glauben Sie, dass.....* questions etc. Teachers are also reminded not to switch regularly between *du* and *Sie*; it is preferable to use the form of address students are used to from the classroom. Questions on

stimulus cards can and should be adapted to the informal address if the teacher wants to use *du* in the remainder of the test.

Visiting examiners and 2T markers reported good or very good fluency among the majority of students. Marks below the middle band were rare. Occasionally, able students tried too hard to avoid grammatical errors to the detriment of their fluency. As mentioned earlier, the great majority of students were keen to show what they knew and most interaction marks therefore ranged from 7 to 10.

Positive comments were also made about the standard of pronunciation. Very few students scored below 3. Examiners felt that *Umlaut* pronunciation was handled slightly better than in previous years but there were still many incidents of missing *Umlaute*. A frequent problem was the clear distinction between *für* and *vor* and many students' failure to pronounce *ch* in words like *machen*, *Technologie*, *noch*, *auch*, *schlecht* (often as *sleckt*). English *z* for words like *zwischen*, *zurück*, *Zeit* was also common. Intonation was of mixed quality and often suffered when there was an abundance of memorised material. Other common weaknesses included: *Jungenliche*, *Kultschur*, *Fusschball*, *Vurkung* for *Wirkung*, *Generation* with a soft 'g', *Famili*, *Elten* for *Eltern*, *DVD* (*Dewede*), *Idee* as in English, *tipisch* for *typisch*, words ending in *e* pronounced with *ä* (*Leutä*).

### Knowledge of Grammar

Very few students were unable to communicate clearly due to grammatical shortcomings so that marks below the middle band were relatively rare. The main area of concern pointed out by many examiners was once again verb/subject agreement; some students appeared to make very little effort at accurate conjugation even when using very common verbs - *ich gehen*, *er machen*, *ich wissen*, *wir muss* etc. even *ich hat*, *sie sein* occurred regularly. Syntax in subordinate clauses with *weil*, *dass*, *obwohl* was generally handled well but many students frequently placed the verb at the end after *und*, *oder*, *aber* as well as *dann*. There were many students who accurately handled the inversion of verb and subject well while many others consistently ignored this basic rule of syntax. Similarly, some students were confident in the use of the perfect and imperfect tense but many students had difficulties remembering correct past participles and auxiliary verbs (*gehilft*, *bekommt*, *geschrieben*, *ich habe gelaufen* etc). Reflexive verbs often lacked the reflexive pronoun (*wir verstehen gut*, *man könnte allein fühlen*) and a number of students did not use any adjectival ending when required.

Other common errors:

Personal pronouns e.g. *ich kann er besuchen/mit mich*; comparative/superlative of adjectives (*mehr interessant*, *das größest Problem*); use of prepositions e.g. *ins/im* confusion, *zu Hause gehen*, *auf dem Internet*; use of *zu/um...zu* in infinitive clauses; confusion of *muss nicht/darf nicht*; confusion of *wenn/als* in subordinate clauses.

Most students' range of vocabulary was good or satisfactory. Occasionally students tried to use too many over-ambitious words or idioms in pre-learned statements that clearly contrasted to their more limited lexis in unprepared replies or were sometimes more suitable to written rather than spoken language. Few students had major gaps in basic and topic-specific vocabulary that could have rendered communication difficult.

Common vocabulary errors included:

*verbringen/spenden/ausgeben*; *entspannend/Entspannung*; *dürfen/erlauben*; *töten/sterben*; *übergewichtig/Übergewicht*; *stressig/gestresst (ich bin stressig)*; *im Fern* for *im Fernsehen*; *eigen/einzig/einige*; *bekommen/werden*; *normalweise*; use of *süchtig (Alkohol ist süchtig)*; *nicht jetzt* for *noch nicht*; *stark/streng*; *schauen/zeigen*; *das ist ein Schade*; *in meiner Meinung*; *kontrollen* for *kontrollieren*; *jemand/jeder*; *helfen/hilfen*; *Stunde/Uhr*.

As in previous years many examiners felt that the keenness and interest shown by the majority of students often overrode linguistic shortcomings; both visiting examiners and markers of the T-option once again found it enjoyable to listen to so many students showing a good level of proficiency in and clear enthusiasm for the German language.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

## **Converting Marks into UMS marks**

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)