
AS-LEVEL **GERMAN**

Unit 1 Listening, Reading and Writing
Report on the Examination

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General comments

This paper produced a slightly narrower spread of performance than that of previous series, with notably fewer low-scoring scripts. Most students appeared to be well prepared for the range of topics and task types that made up the paper and very few seemed to have run out of time. The writing task in Section B gave students the opportunity to show off their German and many did so to good effect, using a wide range of structures and vocabulary to express and justify their reaction to the chosen title. Illegibility was noted as an issue in 2014 and this was even more the case in 2015, especially in Question 9 where only correctly spelled answers gained marks. A very small number of students answered some or all of Question 1 in German instead of English, which meant that no marks could be awarded.

Section A

Question 1

This transfer of meaning task on single people was on the whole well tackled. Where difficulties occurred, they tended to involve points of detail.

(a) Most students understood *in den siebziger Jahren*, but a few gave wrong answers such as '1970' or 'the 1700s'.

(b) This item was well answered, with many students scoring both marks.

(c) This was the most challenging item in Question 1, because in order to score the first mark students had to realise that *Ein-Personen-Haushalte* referred to households, not people. Answers such as 'over 50% of people live alone' were factually incorrect and therefore gained no credit.

(d) Many students showed good understanding of the key words *unabhängig*, *Abenteuer* and *Verantwortung*. A few misinterpreted *Abenteuer* as ...*teuer* and thought it was a reference to living costs.

(e) This item was fairly well answered. The phrase *gutaussiehende Menschen* was occasionally misunderstood, with a few students mistaking the sound group ...*de Mensche(n)* for the English word 'dementia'.

Question 2

This non-verbal listening task on stress in the home was well answered. Part (f) proved to be the least accessible item, perhaps because they did not grasp the significance of the phrase ...*keine Katastrophe, ... wenn die Wohnung nicht immer sauber ist...*

Question 3

Many students coped well with this non-verbal listening task on fashion. The most accessible items proved to be parts (c) and (h) and the least accessible were items (a) and (d).

Question 4

This listening task on TV required students to answer questions in German. The accuracy of their German was not assessed, but they had to convey all required information clearly; in a few instances linguistic errors impeded communication. Those students who tried to transcribe lengthy sections of the recording often failed to gain marks because they included incorrect or irrelevant material. A safer approach was to re-express the key ideas in language that the student knew to be correct.

(a) This item was very well answered.

(b) Most students gave both pieces of information correctly. A few had difficulties with the word *Aufmerksamkeit*.

(c) Many students gave the correct answer, but the word *zuverlässig* sometimes caused difficulty.

(d) This item produced a wide range of responses. The word *Aufsicht* was sometimes wrongly transcribed as *Aussicht*, for which no credit could be given. The word *Gewaltszenen* seemed unfamiliar to many students; the element *...szenen* was sometimes wrongly written as *...sehen* or *...sehen*.

(e) This item tended to cause difficulties for those who tried to transcribe directly from the recording: in particular the word *fehlt* was sometimes wrongly transcribed as *fällt*, which distorted the meaning unacceptably. However there were also some good examples of students using their own words, such as *Die Kinder bewegen sich nicht (genug)*.

(f) Most students showed good understanding of the relevant section of the recording. In particular, the word *verständlich(er)* seemed generally familiar.

Question 5

Most students coped well with this matching task on the topic of siblings. Part (a) attracted the largest number of correct responses and part (c) proved to be the most difficult, perhaps because some students did not recognise the subjunctive form *wäre* in the stimulus text.

Question 6

This gap fill task on music produced a wide range of attainment. The most accessible item proved to be the second gap, where many students successfully matched *geschützt* to the phrase *sind durch Copyright...*. Correct answers to the fifth and sixth gaps – *sammelt* and *erwarten* respectively – were relatively scarce.

Question 7

This non-verbal task on the topic of holidays was fairly well tackled. Most students correctly identified statements B, E, N and R as true. The most elusive correct answer was F, perhaps because the term *Fernflüge* was unfamiliar.

Question 8

Like Question 4, this question required students to give answers in the target language, but the assessment was made purely on the basis of successful communication. As in previous years, the sub-questions were phrased in such a way as to encourage students to pick out key words and phrases from the text rather than copying lengthy sections of the stimulus text.

(a)(i) This item was fairly well answered, although students who had not understood the first two sentences of the text sometimes gave *Privatperson* or *Rechenmaschinen* as their answer.

(a)(ii) Many students correctly identified the reference to *Rechenoperationen* in the text, but some did not understand the question word *Wozu?* and gave wrong answers such as *in großen Unternehmen*.

(b) This proved to be a difficult item, requiring students to link the clause *als der preisgünstige C64 auf den Markt kam* with the reference to young people in the next part of the sentence.

(c) Most students gave the correct answer.

(d) This item was generally well answered, although a few students mis-copied the word *Flachbildschirm* in such a way that its meaning was no longer clear.

(e) Some students wrongly gave *Automechaniker* as their answer.

(f) This item was fairly well answered. Some students wrote *Produktionsprozesse* without mention of *Fabriken*.

(g) Most students scored both marks for this item. A few misunderstood the phrase *von gestern* in the text and wrote, for example, *Emails von gestern lesen*.

(h) Although it required only a one-word answer, this item was difficult because it tested understanding of the whole of the last sentence *Die Behauptung ... gar nicht falsch*. Not all students knew the word *Behauptung* and some seemed to miss the double negative meaning of *gar nicht falsch*, leading them to write *Fernsehapparat* instead of *Computer*.

Question 9

As in previous series, this grammar test discriminated well at all levels. In order to score the mark each answer had to be correctly spelled. It was a pity that some students failed to gain credit either because they mis-copied the word from the examination paper, e.g. *uber-* instead of *über-* in part (i), or because their handwriting was so poor that it was impossible to tell whether the ending was *-er*, *-en* or *-em*.

(a) Many students used the time clues successfully to work out that a present tense verb was required. Some wrote the singular form *sinkt*, perhaps because they did not realise that *Besucherzahlen* was plural.

(b) Most students attempted an appropriate past tense verb. The mis-spelling of *begann* as *began* was quite frequent.

(c) This item, which required the neuter dative adjectival ending after *vom*, was generally well answered.

(d) This item caused some difficulty, with a number of students writing *(eines) großes (Kinos)* instead of the correct form *großen*.

(e) Many students gave the correct present tense form of the modal verb *müssen*, i.e. *muss*. The imperfect subjunctive form *müsste* was also acceptable.

(f) Some students put a masculine rather than neuter ending on *gut*, perhaps because they did not realise that the gender of *System* was given by the relative pronoun *das*.

(g) This was a difficult item: students had to produce the correct third person present tense form of *(ein)laden* and then write the verb as a single word, i.e. *einlädt*, because it came at the end of a subordinate clause.

(h) There was a good number of correct answers, but some students wrote *würde* which was inappropriate because of the present tense verb in the next clause.

(i) The correct past participle of *überleben*, i.e. *überlebt*, proved to be elusive; wrong forms such as *übergelebt* and *über(ge)leben* were quite common.

(j) This item caused some difficulty, with many students not realising that a subjunctive form of *haben* was necessary after the *würden* + infinitive combination in the preceding main clause.

Section B: Extended writing questions

Schools are reminded that the marks awarded for each of Range of Structures, Range of Vocabulary and Accuracy are not limited by the mark awarded for Content. The essay is assessed for Quality of Language independently of the Content mark unless the Content mark is 0, in which case the mark in the other three categories will also be 0.

As in previous series, the extended writing question produced a wide range of responses. Some performances were truly impressive in their focus, thoroughness, organisation and linguistic quality. A few were superficial and struggled to respond to the basic requirement of the task. Most students exceeded the recommended count of 200 words; those who wrote significantly more did not necessarily score higher marks because in some instances they became repetitive or wandered too far from the title.

In awarding the Content mark examiners are not looking for specific points – those included in the mark scheme are intended mainly to guide future students and teachers – but rather for a

well-balanced response to the chosen title, with opinions backed up convincingly by appropriate evidence and examples. The evidence used in this year's scripts was often pertinent, although some students devoted too much of their response to personal accounts, such as which sports they played or which advertisements they enjoyed most. Many students structured their response well, often using a range of adverbs such as *erstens*, *außerdem*, *trotzdem* and *schließlich* to help the reader to follow their train of thought. A few students contradicted themselves in their final paragraph, e.g. they gave equal weight to both sides of an argument in the body of their response but then wrote a one-sided conclusion. In a few cases vocabulary errors hindered communication and therefore affected the Content mark.

Examiners awarded high Quality of Language marks to those responses which used a wide range of vocabulary and structures appropriate to the task and maintained a high (but not necessarily 100%) level of accuracy. The vocabulary used at this level should include topic-specific terms extending well beyond what might normally be expected at GCSE. The syntax should be varied and above all include a wide range of sentence types, including different tenses, subordinate clauses, infinitive clauses and – if appropriate for the task – conditional clauses. To achieve a high mark for accuracy students should demonstrate that they understand how the German case system works, even if they do not get every ending right.

Common linguistic errors in this series were:

- confusion between *müssen nicht* and *dürfen nicht*
- *nur* misused as an adjective
- confusion between *mehrere* and *mehr*
- *überall* instead of *im Großen und Ganzen*
- confusion between *verbringen*, *ausgeben* and *spenden*
- *schauen* instead of *zeigen*
- *streng* instead of *stark*
- *jemand* instead of *jeder*
- *Fern* used to mean 'television'

Question 10

This question, which asked students whether they agreed that advertising was a good thing, proved to be a popular choice. It was often well done. The strongest responses tended to be those where students made a small number of relevant points and developed each point fully, including well-chosen examples. It was fine for students to come down firmly on one side or the other, but equally fine for them to express a mixture of negative and positive opinions. The point about job creation was picked up by many students, some of whom gave good examples of the types of work involved in the advertising industry as well as mentioning the wider benefit of advertising for the economy. Weaker responses tended just to state that job creation was a good thing without offering any explanation. Among the less obvious points that some students made in their response as a whole were: some advertising has nothing to do with selling products but may provide a public service such as government-sponsored safety campaigns; printed advertising creates waste paper; some sites such as Times Square attract tourists because of their advertising and billboards; and advertising can promote sexism through the way in which it portrays women. A few students relied too heavily on long descriptions of particular TV advertisements.

Question 11

This question, which asked students why they thought fewer young people were playing sport and what might be done to motivate them, was also a popular choice. On the whole it was less well done than Question 10; some students tended to lose focus and write too much about the benefits of sport without linking their ideas to the title. It was important that students tackled both parts of

the question and many responses consisted of two clearly defined parts, one explaining the decline of sport and the other making suggestions for motivation. However it was equally acceptable for students to interweave the two parts of the question, i.e. by suggesting how one issue might be overcome before going on to explain the next issue. Most students nominated the increased use of technology, e.g. the time spent on social media, as a key reason for the decline in sport, but many also mentioned a general lack of time because of school and exam pressures, the high costs of membership fees and equipment, and sheer laziness. Less frequently made, but equally valid, points were that sport has a bad image because of scandals, that sports teachers promote competition too aggressively, and that parents don't take enough time to encourage their children to play sport. Little credit was given for long accounts of personal sporting achievements. In the second part of the question, many students suggested spending more money on facilities, using well known personalities to promote sport, and improving PE lessons in schools. On the whole the second part was less well handled than the first part, presumably because there are really no easy answers. A few students were brave enough to suggest that we are wasting our time forcing young people to play sport and that they are better off doing other things.

Question 12

This question, which asked students to explain whether they thought having lots of friends was more important than having a partner, was the least popular of the three Section B titles. Those who chose it generally did so successfully, with plenty of thoughtful analysis and exemplification. Some students latched on to the quotation *Feste Freundin oder beste Freundin – warum nicht beides?* and explained why both types of relationship were important, and indeed complementary. Some students stressed the importance of nurturing friendships even when one has a partner; opinions differed as to whether friends or partners were more likely to stand the test of time. A few students dealt sensitively with issues surrounding same-sex partnerships and ambiguous relationships that change over time. Others queried what is actually meant by *Freundschaft*, e.g. are Facebook 'friends' really friends? References to students' personal experiences, usually relating to parents or other adults, were sometimes well used. A small number of weaker responses betrayed a misunderstanding of the question, e.g. they focused too much on contrasting marriage with cohabitation.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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