
AS

GERMAN

7661/3 Speaking

Report on the Examination

7661

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General

There was a further decline in the number of students entered for this examination; very few centres had more than a handful of AS students. Visiting examiners encountered no significant problems with the organisation of the tests at centres. Examiners marking centre-conducted tests reported numerous cases of teachers not fully observing the instructions regarding administrative procedures. Once again centres are reminded to ensure the following:

- Full announcement at the start of each test (i.e. centre and student's number) following the prescribed wording in the instruction booklet
- CD or USB stick to be accompanied by clear information about the order of students, the stimulus cards used with each student and the teacher-examiner's name
- Correct labelling of tracks showing component, centre and student numbers
- Recordings to be saved in mp3 format
- Checking volume levels for both student and teacher.

All stimulus cards appeared to be equally accessible; students should choose cards whose content they understand well and to which they feel they can contribute their own ideas beyond the printed questions. Simply preparing and reading out lengthy answers to these questions does not necessarily lead to high AO2 marks. A good strategy to be employed would be to give a clear but fairly concise summary of the main content of the card without reading out all the information and then to be ready for a more detailed discussion of interesting and important elements on the stimulus. Students are also advised not to ignore the title on the card as this can sometimes serve as a worthwhile starting point for discussion. Students also do well to look at the third printed question before making their choice in order to consider how much relevant knowledge in relation to the German-speaking world they have.

Most students asked a relevant question connected to the stimulus material. Only few students formulated questions which did not fully communicate or were a repeat of either a printed question or one asked by the examiner. In such cases a deduction of one mark for AO2 had to be made.

Teacher-examiner conduct

Outcomes of the speaking test can be greatly affected by the way examiners conduct the discussions. Unfortunately, many marking examiners reported less than satisfactory conduct by teacher-examiners. There have been some improvements from the two previous years but it appears that some teachers do not have full understanding of the purpose of the stimulus discussion and thus did not provide full opportunities to their students which often led to a loss of marks in AO1, AO2 and/or AO4. The main issues were:

- Insufficient development of students' responses. The descriptors for AO1 contain reference to 'unpredictable elements'. To test students' ability to respond spontaneously and appropriately to such elements requires examiners to ask regular follow-up questions and to develop points. Many teachers allowed their students to read out lengthy prepared

statements without picking up on replies immediately and thus requiring a spontaneous reaction. Teachers should not shy away from interjecting suitable questions or prompts into long scripted answers if this can contribute to a real exchange and enable students to gain access to high AO1 marks.

- Too little exploration of the stimulus card. The three questions on each card are clearly structured with different aims: general understanding of the card content, own reactions on aspects of the stimulus and wider knowledge of the sub-theme. The prescribed questions do, however, not normally cover the entire content of the card and it is incumbent on the examiner to exploit most elements of the card in the time given. More teachers than last year adopted good practice of interspersing the printed questions with their own and attempting to exploit central elements of the card in more detail. However, too many teachers asked the three questions in quick succession, allowed students to read out long prepared answers without further discussion of what was said and without steering students towards other elements on the stimulus worth discussing. Such conduct did not enable students to show a deeper understanding of the material and prevented many students from gaining the highest AO2 marks. Stimulus cards from previous years are available to centres together with a 'possible content' document; the latter could give guidance and ideas to teachers as to a more thorough exploitation of stimulus cards.
- Insufficient opportunities for demonstrating AO4 knowledge. This was most noticeable with cards A-F (German-speaking society), but was a widely observed shortcoming in many discussions. AO4 marks can only be awarded for knowledge and understanding of the sub-theme in a German-speaking context. Teachers who asked a lot of general or personal questions denied their students chances to score highly at AO4; since AO4 marks represent a third of the total marks achievable the effect on the overall outcome for students was often quite serious. It is good practice to elicit German-related knowledge at appropriate points throughout the discussion, i.e. before the third question is asked, for instance through appropriate supplementary questions about the stimulus content. It is also essential to test not only German-related knowledge per se, but to invite students to evaluate facts they have learnt, to ask them to support their points with relevant examples and to express and justify opinions. Some teachers asked the third question rather late in the discussion and thus left little time for a discourse on aspects of German-speaking society or culture.

Most teachers adhered to the correct timings and if necessary prompted the student's question inside the time limit for each discussion. In a number of teacher-conducted tests both the formal and informal address was used side by side. Teachers should use the form of address they and students are used to and not attempt to change to the more unfamiliar *Sie* on the day of the test. The printed questions can and should be changed to the *du* form if this address is used between teacher and student.

Students' performance

AO1: Visiting and marking examiners observed that the majority of students spoke with good or very good fluency and if required reacted appropriately to unpredicted questions. Marks below 3 were quite rare, but in many teacher-conducted tests students could have achieved better marks if the teacher had followed up on their responses more consistently thereby introducing regular unpredictable elements and supplying opportunities for independence and spontaneity. A few teacher-examiners seemed to be working from a pre-set list of questions and occasionally failed to adapt and rephrase their questions to less able students.

AO2: Most students had good understanding of the stimulus material; few vocabulary items appeared to be completely unfamiliar or were misunderstood. Through good questioning technique and further exploration of the card content many students were able to obtain marks of 4 and 5; however, as mentioned above, teacher-examiners often missed clear opportunities to enable students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the stimulus.

AO3: As in previous years, most students succeeded in communicating their ideas. Breakdown of comprehension due to grammar or vocabulary errors were rare and marks between 6 and 10 were most common. Most students attempted some sub-ordinate structures introduced by *weil*, *wenn* and *dass* and some were able to employ past tenses appropriately and accurately. Most conspicuous errors occurred with verb/subject agreement, word order and modal verb structures. Quite a few students had difficulties with German numbers and dates. Pronunciation was mostly acceptable or good although weaknesses with correct z and v sounds existed; it is surprising that a high percentage of students who had no problems with the German *ch* as in *ich*, *möchte*, *richtig* etc still pronounced two prominent words that are central to sub-themes – *Architektur* and *Technologie* – with a hard k.

Common grammar errors included:

- *kann/können (die Kinder kann..)*
- *will/wollen (man wollen...)*
- Infinitive in modal verb phrases (*ich möchte besucht*)
- Use of *wenn* and *als*
- Past participles (*ich habe bekommt*)
- Perfect tense auxiliary verbs (*ich habe gefahren*)
- Word order after *und/aber/oder* (*und gibt es, aber es nicht gut ist*)
- Personal pronouns (*er/ihn*)
- Possessive pronouns (*sein/ihr*)
- Prepositions (*auf dem Handy, zu Deutschland, drei Jahre vor*)

Common vocabulary errors:

- *wissen / kennen*
- *verbringen/verpassen/spenden*
- *schauen/zeigen*

- *bekommen/werden*
- *jemand/jeder*
- *eigene/einige*
- *interessant/interessiert*
- *überraschend/überrascht*

- *in meiner Meinung*
- *ich stimme / ich stimme mit es (for ich stimme zu)*

- Card D: *3 Punkt 5 Millionen* etc. instead of using *Komma*

AO4: Performances once again differed widely. Many students had learnt relevant facts about German-speaking society and culture and also had acquired good understanding and appreciation of the sub-theme in a German-speaking context while others had rather superficial knowledge. When discussing cards A to F, visiting examiners often found it difficult to entice students into referring clearly and consistently to the German-speaking world and too few teacher-examiners made real efforts to focus on a German-speaking country in the wider discussion. Too rarely did students mention evidence from German sources (*‘Ich habe in einem Artikel in...gelesen, dass...’*), correspondence with German exchange friends (*‘Mein deutscher Freund hat mir gesagt/geschrieben, dass...’*) or personal experiences and observations from a visit (*‘Als ich in Deutschland war.....’*) in order to support and exemplify statements about family life, the role of music, digital technology etc in German-speaking society. Discussions on the sub-theme linked to Cards G to L naturally revolved to a greater extent around German-related matters. The mark scheme emphasises the need for expressing and justifying views and for drawing conclusions based on the student’s understanding of the sub-theme. Some teacher-examiners concentrated too heavily on eliciting facts about German-speaking culture without inviting students to discuss and evaluate their factual knowledge in more depth. Pre-learnt statements from students about German-speaking artists, about festivals or about important buildings in Berlin were common; such memorised facts are of course not to be dismissed and will be credited with AO4 marks, but good examining technique tests students’ critical (and spontaneous) response by exploring their understanding in more depth.

Card A: Willkommene Helfer

This card was a popular choice. Many students read out all the points in the box without further comment or interpretation and many teacher-examiners failed to explore these elements in more detail. Most students understood the card to be about help for single or teenage mums; the fact that all young parents may have to deal with problems other than just financial ones was not mentioned. Some students thought that *Betreuung* referred to childcare for working mothers etc. Relatively few students had a personal view on *unbezahlt*, even if prompted by the examiner, but some presented good reasons why the *Internet-Plattform* and *Online-Community* can be helpful to parents. In the wider discussion teacher-examiners all too often focused on general or personal family matters instead of linking the exchange to the German-speaking society. Questions such as *Wie kommst du mit deinen Eltern aus?/Möchtest du später heiraten?* did not attract AO4 marks. A good number of students talked well about the change in law regarding same-sex marriage in Germany, but in many discussions reference to a German-speaking country was limited to a few statistical figures about the number of *Scheidungen*, *Patchwork-Familien*, *Einzelkinder* etc.

Card B: Liebe auf Distanz

Not many students chose this card. Those who were invited by the examiner to explore the comprehensive information on the stimulus often did so successfully, making valuable comments about the various reasons for such a relationship or suggesting how to make it work. Few students could think of advantages of a *Fernbeziehung*. The same observations as with card A apply to the wider sub-theme discussion, i.e. many teachers turning it into a predominantly general or personal conversation about marriage and partnerships, family etc.

Card C: Jugendliche im digitalen Stress

Many students who chose this card by and large missed the central message contained in it and linked 'digital stress' exclusively to cyber mobbing. The listed *Stressfaktoren* were frequently read out verbatim, often with seemingly limited comprehension; unless prompted by the examiner, few students talked about the problems arising from young people's excess use of mobile phones and the potential effects of constant exposure to messages, pictures etc. *Jugendliche* in the third question was often ignored as students talked about digital technology in society as such. Some students made good contributions about *Kommunikation in der realen Welt*, but unfortunately many teacher-examiners regarded this card as an opportunity to ask standard questions about students' personal attitudes to and usage of mobile phones rather than exploring the actual content of the card. Consequently, wider discussions of the sub-theme after question 3 often continued to deal with personal and general aspects of digital technology rather than explicitly German-related ones.

Card D: Deutschlands erfolgreichste YouTube Stars 2018

Because this was one of cards on the top of the allocation grid the card was frequently chosen. Some students summarised the content of the stimulus well but many did little more than read out

the information. There were however some good and wide reaching discussions as to the different type of YouTubers, their target audiences and reasons for their success. Not all students understood the second printed question, stating how rather than why YouTubers are popular. Too few teacher-examiners focused sufficiently on the German-speaking context when discussing the wider-sub-theme. Some students would have been wise to look at the third question before choosing the card: several knew next to nothing about German-speaking internet stars, but others were quite knowledgeable and able to gain good AO4 marks.

Card E: Die schwarze Szene

This was the least popular of all 12 cards. The students who chose it found the material accessible, but needed to resist the temptation to simply read out all the bulleted points. Few students had informed views about this particular manifestation of youth fashion and relevant knowledge about fashion trends among young people in the German-speaking countries rarely reached beyond naming a few labels.

Card F: 'Jeunesse' Jugendorchester

Due to its prominent placing on the distribution grid this was a frequently chosen card and produced some good results across the range of abilities. Students often expressed opinions on the value of participating in musical activities and sometimes supported these by their own experiences of playing in orchestras etc. Some teacher-examiners tried to explore some of the points in the grey box, e.g. the benefit of holiday camps and playing different music genres, but in many teacher-led discussions a large part of the material on the card remained unexploited. For instance, hardly any student was asked why young musicians need support or how concerts for young people may differ from 'normal' concerts. In many centre-conducted tests, a much clearer focus on the German-speaking world

rather than on personal musical tastes, listening habits etc could have taken place during the wider sub-theme discussion.

Card G: Die Kieler Woche

This was a fairly popular card which was handled with varying degrees of success. Examiners were frequently under the impression that many students failed to grasp the special character of this event, i.e. revolving around ships and sailing; most teacher-examiners did not attempt to steer them towards a clearer understanding of this element. Successful students used the information on the card as evidence for how popular and varied an event the *Kieler Woche* is, but often the words and figures were simply read out by students without putting them into full sentences and without teachers probing deeper. All students were able to talk about one or more festivals in the German-speaking world, most frequently about *Oktoberfest* and *Karneval*. Students should bear in mind the distinction between a festival and a custom or tradition: *Weihnachtsmarkt* as an example of a

festival is not entirely relevant. Frequently, students offered their knowledge in the form of pre-learned mini-presentations the content of which were subsequently not discussed and evaluated in many centre-conducted tests. A few students had apparently used stimulus cards from previous years and used their wider AO4 knowledge to good effect.

Card H: Bräuche und Traditionen in Deutschland

This was also a popular choice and produced mixed results. Although the majority of students understood the main purpose of the stimulus, i.e. questioning whether old traditions are still relevant in our time, few were able to explain the two examples on the card in their own words. A lot of verbatim rendering of the information on the card occurred. Hardly any student linked *Maschkeren* to the change of seasons from winter to spring and how important this was to our ancestors; similarly, very few students made independent reference to the age and mostly pagan origin of such customs but the majority of students defended the continuation of old customs. All had some relevant AO4 knowledge although many of the teacher-conducted sub-theme discussions were rather factual and descriptive rather than explorative.

Card I: Kunst – das große Geschäft

This card was rarely chosen. Few students made comments about the combination of art and business, as hinted at in the title; most students read out the points on the card without expanding on them, except perhaps a brief comment on the large price of 15 million dollars. Knowledge of the sub-theme was varied, often quite patchy. Some students regarded the last question as a trigger to deliver a pre-learned piece about a German artist. This is a permissible strategy as long as teachers subsequently facilitate a thorough, spontaneous discussion and evaluation of some aspects of the artist's life or work. Over-reliance on prepared and memorised material caused some students to ignore the word *Künstler* in the third question and immediately launch into the description of a German-speaking architect.

Card J: Frankfurt am Main – das 'Manhattan von Deutschland'

The card was generally well done although once again in many centre-conducted tests the discussion was very superficial and missed out a number of elements worthy of exploration. There were good contributions about the pros and cons of living in a high-rise building and about the importance of green spaces in a city like Frankfurt. Unless asked to do so most students did not make comments on old and new architecture existing side by side as illustrated on the card, but the pun of *Mainhattan* was understood by many; correct German pronunciation of the river *Main* was very rare. Knowledge of the sub-theme was quite varied; some students talked in an informed manner about different styles of architecture, from the Gothic to *Bauhaus*, but many others demonstrated rather superficial knowledge relying on material lifted from textbooks and often citing just one example of a building, the *Brandenburger Tor* being the most popular. Students are reminded that it is not enough to simply know the names of a few famous buildings without being able to say more about their character, significance, their appreciation by the public etc.

Card K: Die lange Nacht der Museen

This card was discussed frequently and often successfully. The best performances were those where students explained the main features of the event in their own words, adding opinions and conveying something about the special nature of visiting museums at night. Some students had obviously not developed such an understanding of the stimulus material and resorted to quickly summarising the card by reading out the points in the box. They struggled to explain the reason for shuttle buses or why one would want to speak to artists; many did not seem to understand *kulinarische Überraschungen*. The third question asked about *Kulturleben* and it was striking how many students immediately referred to Berlin's architecture or its history rather than cultural institutions and/or events, thus rendering their responses somewhat irrelevant. Many named the *Mauer* (not really a museum), but v few cited *Museumsinsel*. In their preparation time students should look carefully at the third question in order to avoid delivering prepared statements that may not fully address the question. Nevertheless, since most students had some knowledge of culture in Berlin some good AO4 scores were achieved in the wider sub-theme discussion, provided that students could not just list items and facts but also contribute to a more wide-reaching conversation about them. Unfortunately, many teacher-examiners did not probe into their students' factual knowledge and consequently denied them opportunities to demonstrate a deeper understanding.

Card L: Der Comedy-Bus

A wide range of performances resulted from this card. Some students seemed to understand the special concept of this sightseeing tour, stating that the comedy element may be more important than seeing the main sights of Berlin. Other students were not able to explain what made this tour different or what Frau Schröder's quotation was aiming at. *Rentner* did not appear to be universally understood as few students referred to them. It is important that examiners help students who have only partial understanding of the card content by asking appropriate supplementary questions. The time, length and price of the tour were regularly picked up, but students were not always invited to express and explain their opinions about these. As with card K, answers to the third question about *kulturelle Sehenswürdigkeiten* often mentioned only architecture or history (*Brandenburger Tor, Holocaust*

Denkmal, Checkpoint Charlie), ignoring Berlin's broad pallet of museums, galleries, cultural events etc.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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