
A-LEVEL GERMAN

7662/3T & 7662/3V Paper 3: Speaking
Report on the Examination

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General

The second year of this A-level examination was a successful one with many high level performances from students. Examiners of both the Visiting Examiner (V) and Teacher Examined (T) options enjoyed participating in and listening to many stimulating conversations. They were generally impressed by the breadth and depth of research students had carried out for their Independent Research Project and by the enthusiasm the majority of students showed for their chosen topic.

There were few administrative problems. Most centres who welcomed a visiting examiner provided the necessary Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) in time for examiners to prepare themselves. On the form, fewer topic titles than last year appeared in German and main sources were usually listed appropriately. Many CRFs were type-written; if students provide them in hand-written form they should make sure that their handwriting is fully legible.

A few administrative issues occurred again with centres conducting their own tests. Teachers are reminded to adhere to the instructions issued by AQA. These include:

- full announcement at the start of each test (ie centre and student number) following the prescribed wording in the instruction booklet
- CD or USB stick to be accompanied by information about the centre number, the teacher-examiner's name, the order of students and the stimulus card used with each student
- correct labelling of tracks showing component, centre and student numbers
- recordings to be saved in mp3 format
- volume levels checked for both student and teacher
- adequate packaging of CDs.

Part 1: Discussion of Stimulus Card

As in the first year, most students used the 5 minutes preparation time well, writing down a few points rather than lengthy answers to each printed question and preparing two appropriate questions to ask of the examiner. Discussions often turned out particularly successful where students had read through the card carefully and formed their own ideas and views on various elements, including some that were not covered by the prescribed questions. There were few problems with understanding vocabulary on the stimulus.

Teacher-examiner conduct

Students' performances can be affected by the way examiners conduct the discussions. Unfortunately, markers again reported many cases of less than satisfactory conduct by teacher-examiners in this part of the test. Despite some examples of very good conduct, it appears that some teachers did not have full understanding of the purpose of the stimulus discussion and did therefore not provide the best opportunities for their students to gain marks. 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 deliver lengthy statements

without picking up on what was said. Teachers should not shy away from interjecting suitable questions or prompts within long answers if this can contribute to a real exchange and thus 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: understanding of the card content, own reactions to aspects of the stimulus and wider knowledge of the sub-theme. The prescribed questions do not normally cover the entire content of the card and it is incumbent on the examiner to exploit other elements of the card in the time available. While slightly more teachers than last year interspersed the printed questions with their own and attempted to explore the important elements on the card in more detail, many teachers asked the three questions in quick succession without further discussion of the student's response and without steering the student towards other items on the stimulus worth discussing. This approach did not normally enable students to show a deeper understanding of the material and prevented a considerable number of students from gaining the highest AO2 marks. Stimulus cards from previous years are available to centres together with a document containing possible contributions to each of the printed questions; these could give guidance and ideas to teachers as to a more thorough exploitation of stimulus cards
- insufficient opportunities for demonstrating AO4 knowledge and understanding. This applied most seriously to cards A–C (German speaking society), but was also observed during the discussions of stimulus cards about the sub-themes that are clearly related to the German-speaking world. AO4 marks can only be awarded for knowledge and understanding of the sub-theme in a German-speaking context, and teachers who asked a lot of general or personal questions about the family, digital technology or youth culture denied their students chances to score highly in AO4. It is good practice to elicit German-related knowledge at appropriate points throughout the discussion, ie before the third question is asked. In order to open access to the highest AO4 marks, it is also essential to test not only AO4 knowledge as such but to invite students to further discuss and evaluate facts they have learnt, to express and justify opinions and to support points with relevant examples. There was still a tendency among teacher-examiners to let students produce a list of facts about festivals, sights in Berlin etc without engaging students in a more detailed discussion about these.

Good examining technique is achieved by varying the types of question, by asking concise and clear questions and by using mainly open-ended rather than closed questions. In many discussions too many closed questions of the '*Denken Sie, dass...*' type or longwinded '*oder*' questions were asked; an abundance of such questions can result in less time lost for student participation, in suggesting possible answers and in providing vocabulary to students.

Markers were pleased to report that overlaps between the stimulus card and a student's IRP topic hardly ever occurred. If in doubt about a possible overlap teachers should err on the side of caution and move to the next combination on the allocation grid. Most teachers adhered to the correct timings and, if necessary, prompted the student's questions inside the time limit for part 1.

Students' performance

All stimulus cards were accessible. Students should choose a card to which they feel they can contribute their own ideas beyond the printed questions. Simply reading out verbal information on the card does not usually lead to high AO2 marks. A good strategy at the start of the discussion would be to give a clear but fairly concise summary of the main content of the card and then to be ready for a more detailed discussion of the card content. Students are also advised not to ignore the title of the stimulus; it 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 of card in order to consider how much relevant AO4 knowledge they have.

Card A: Das Comeback der Familie

Due to its position at the top of the allocation grid, this card was frequently discussed. Although most students could express the current trend towards larger families, many missed the essential point contained in the statement underneath the boxes, ie the higher birth rate not being enough to reverse the decline in population. Some conversations explored possible reasons for the higher birth rate in cities and among immigrant families, but often students simply read out the four listed reasons without further explanation, after which many teachers quickly progressed to a personal or general discussion about the family. Few students explained the benefits of flexible working hours for mothers or how an increase in *Kindergeld* helps families. Knowledge of the wider-sub-theme often included statistical figures about different types of families in Germany and the legalisation of same sex marriage, but many students were allowed to talk at length about general family issues and/or their own family.

Card B: Machtlos in der Datenflut?

Examiners reported that several students who chose this card had not fully understood what the organisation Digitalcourage was about. Few students explained or commented on such fundamental concepts as the rights of the individual, collection of data about citizens, data protection or 'self-help'; fewer still used the quotations containing key words like '*dunkle Seiten, ausspionieren* or *Marketing-Objekte* to demonstrate a real understanding of the stimulus material. Answers to the second question were therefore often of little substance. A few students seemed to think that Digitalcourage was itself in the business of collecting and exploiting data. Regrettably, too many teacher-examiners failed to guide students towards the central issues presented on the card, entering instead into general exchanges about the use of digital technology in modern lives. AO4 knowledge varied widely among students. Students with personal contacts in a German-speaking country usually referred to their communication with a German friend or their own observations in the country, while other students only offered a few statistics and general statements about the importance of digital technology.

Card C: Das Super-Model aus dem Schwarzwald

Students who chose this card usually related well to its content, especially to Anna's young age and combining this kind of work with school attendance. More able students sometimes expressed surprise that a model from Germany should achieve such international success and many aired opinions about paying models such large sums of money. Teacher-examiners hardly ever referred to the manager's statement in order to explore what a realistic attitude to the fashion business could be. Wider knowledge of fashion among young people in German-speaking countries was

often rather limited so that the sub-theme discussion regularly drifted into personal aspects and sometimes from fashion into music.

Card D: Sicherheit auf dem Oktoberfest

The card was handled with varying degrees of success. In many cases the security aspects were read out without further comment, and it was not always clear whether students really saw the connection between these measures and what caused them to be introduced; when questioned about the reason for banning large bags or the installation of fences and barriers many students struggled to give a relevant answer. Very few students or teachers picked up on the minister's statement and not all students seemed to fully understand the second printed question. During the wider sub-theme discussion, most students had some knowledge of festivals with *Karneval* featuring most often besides *Oktoberfest*; many teachers were, however, reluctant to seek critical responses from students through further discussion of some aspects of such popular festivities. Some markers commented on the fact that many students' perception of traditional festivals like Christmas in German-speaking countries was rather limited or vague; *Weihnachtsmärkte* was usually the only aspect students could name.

Card E: Moderne Architektur in Deutschland

This card was located quite low down on the allocation grid and was not often discussed. Most of the few students who chose this card seemed to be genuinely interested in architecture and had some imaginative ideas and opinions both about the buildings featured on the card and on wider issues regarding modern architecture.

Card F: Der Berliner Mauerweg

A wide range of performances resulted from this stimulus. Some students seemed to think the card was about the Berliner Mauer itself rather than an opportunity to trace its course. Not infrequently, the cost of building the Berlin Wall was stated as 4 million Euros and sometimes the Info-Tafeln and Gedenktafeln were not mentioned at all. When guided by good questioning from the examiner, students exploited the different historical and contemporary elements of the card; some offered thoughtful reasons for maintaining the memory of the Wall and its victims. Most students knew the names of other historical buildings in Berlin, but deeper insight into their history or significance was often quite sparse.

Card G: Die neuen 'Gastarbeiter' in der Schweiz

This was one of the most frequently discussed card, but also one where many misconceptions became obvious. Many students paid no attention to *neue 'Gastarbeiter'* in the title and, despite reading out the fact that these immigrants come mainly from Germany and Northern Europe, they often linked the content of the card to the original *Gastarbeiter* from Turkey, Italy etc or the more recent influx of refugees. Escape from civil war, famine or 'a better life' were frequently mentioned as reasons for coming to Switzerland. The listed advantages for immigrants and workers were often read out, but few students had more to say about the need for qualified workers or the increased tax income and other benefits for the Swiss economy. Answers to the second question were often rather limited or irrelevant; many students ignored the word *diese* in this question and tried to find disadvantages pertaining to immigration in general, usually quoting language problems and racism. Many wider sub-theme discussions very soon strayed away from the sub-theme of immigration since students frequently wanted to talk about integration, racism, the AfD and Pegida.

Card H: Bessere Integration durch Burka-Verbot?

This was probably the most popular card. All who chose it had a good deal to say about the issue presented on it; there were many thoughtful contributions from students, most of whom were against the ban of burka and niqab. Not all students knew *Gesicht* and some struggled to explain the difference between the garments and hence the reason for the law. Some students had not realised that this was about Austria and repeatedly referred to Germany. Once again, numerous students simply read out the opinions in the two boxes without further comment and only some teacher-examiners subsequently involved students in a more detailed exploration of the statements. *Maßnahmen* in the third question was occasionally misinterpreted as ‘problems’. Markers expressed some disappointment at the limited breadth of specific AO4 knowledge; many students only mentioned *Sprachkurse* as a means towards better integration and talked in general terms about the need for integration; a few knew about sports projects, sometimes even quoting the ARGE programme which featured in last year’s set of stimulus cards. Discussions regularly deviated into the sub-theme of racism.

Card I: ZARA

The card was generally well understood and the subject of racism seems of considerable interest to many students. However, few students were fleshing out the information in the three boxes with their own explanations and too few teacher-examiners invited students to say more eg about possible participants and topics in the workshops, what advice could be given to victims, the need for annual statistics etc. *Opfer* and *Zeugen* appeared not be universally understood and (*Zivil*) *courage* was often pronounced as an English rather than a German word. Some students interpreted the two pictures well, but many struggled to explain to what extent this initiative could be effective. Wider knowledge of the sub-theme usually focused on AfD and Pegida. Several students mentioned last year’s events in Chemnitz or other incidents as examples of hostile attitudes towards immigrants or Muslims, but there could have been more attempts by teacher-examiners to evaluate such factual knowledge.

Card J: Sind die Deutschen EU-Skeptiker?

The quality of performances resulting from this card differed considerably. Some students read out the content of the table in great detail with no additional comments; a good AO2 score then depended on the examiner exploring the statements and figures with supplementary questions. Occasionally *zahlt* was confused with *zählt*. Students who had an interest in and knowledge of this sub-theme had quite a lot to say; they named possible reasons and added personal opinions to the items in the survey; many expressed surprise at the high percentage favouring a German referendum. The picture with the two flags outside the *Reichstag* was sometimes referred to in support of arguments about the importance of the EU for German politics. The discussion of the sub-theme invariably headed towards Germany’s actions in the refugee crisis; broader knowledge about Germany’s role in the EU was quite patchy.

Card K: DEMO: Lasst uns über Politik reden!

This card was also handled with different degrees of success. The most able students explained the bullet pointed aims in their own words and a few were able to interpret the term *politisches Selbstbewusstsein*. Usually, however, the three aims were read out verbatim by students and often not further explored by teacher-examiners. The messages and slogans in the grey bubbles offered something for everyone; less able students usually picked out the anti-racism bubble since they felt on fairly ‘safe ground’ talking about young people’s attitude towards this issue. Well informed and

politically interested students often spoke lucidly about the voting age, the need to vote, freedom of the press and even the more abstract concept of ‘loving or losing democracy’. Similarly to Card J, wider AO4 knowledge around this sub-theme was often limited to matters of immigration and racism; other issues such as membership of, or attitude towards, political parties, participation of young people in politics or current environmental campaigns were hardly ever mentioned.

Card L: Blick in eine dunkle Vergangenheit

This card was not chosen by many students and examiners reported mixed results. Some students had apparently not fully understood the main point of the stimulus, ie former GDR citizens being able to look at Stasi files. Hardly any student referred to the three questions on the card expressing the uncertainties people had about being spied upon, potentially by family members or friends. Regrettably, not many teachers explored this significant element of the stimulus. Most students had some knowledge of negative and positive aspects of life in the GDR, but knowledge and insight into the major changes after unification was much more limited.

Part 2: Independent Research Project

An impressive range of topics was offered. Fewer topic titles than last year were unsuitable. Teachers can seek advice on their students’ title choices from the nominated IRP adviser and many had done so during the academic year. Nevertheless, centres are reminded of a few important points regarding the choice of IRP topics:

- topic titles must have a clear link to the German-speaking world and it must be possible to maintain this connection throughout the discussion. For instance, topics such as ‘Karl Lagerfeld’ (who worked in France for a large part of his life), ‘The *Goethe-Institut*’ or ‘Germany’s economic links with China’ are unlikely to fulfil this requirement
- comparisons with Great Britain should be avoided, e.g. *Bundesliga* and Premier League
- the topic should not be too broad and the title should, if possible, indicate the scope or main focus of the research. For example, topics such as ‘Germany since 1945’ or ‘The German Health System’ lack a clear focus and purpose of research. Discussions on such broad topics inevitably result in superficial coverage of many points to the detriment of a deeper and critical discourse on fewer items
- topic titles should involve critical and analytical research rather than mere factual knowledge. For instance, the title ‘The rise of Hitler and the Nazis’ points at a descriptive and factual approach, whereas ‘Could Hitler’s rise to power have been prevented?’ aims at evaluation and critical analysis
- topic titles and sub-headings on the Candidate Record Form should be in English.

Among popular historical topics were the Weimar Republic, resistance to the Nazi regime, the divided Germany/*Berliner Mauer* and German reunification. Other frequently chosen subjects were: German football, immigration and the refugee crisis, the rise of populism/right-extremism in Germany, Angela Merkel, and the German car industry. A number of students had explored aspects of German films or books, most prominently *Das Leben der Anderen*, *Good-bye Lenin* and *Der Vorleser*. Examiners encountered some unusual topics; to name only a few: the re-introduction of the lynx into the Harz mountains; *Lebkuchen*; the tradition of *Kaffee und Kuchen*; the legacy of the Viennese Waltz; the poet Else Lasker-Schüler; *Struwwelpeter* by Heinrich Hoffmann; the film *Das Kabinett des Dr. Calligari*.

Presentation

The majority of presentations were well-timed; relatively few substantially exceeded the 2 minute time limit. Examiners marking the T option time the entire test to 18 minutes maximum and stop marking at this point. If Part 1 and/or the presentation overrun considerably, less time is available for the student's IRP contributions to be credited. A number of presentations were much shorter than 2 minutes, with some lasting less than 1½ minutes; such very short presentations usually lacked in substance. Teachers are reminded that they can give their students feedback on the length of their presentations prior to the test being taken.

Many students delivered a meaningful, cohesive and well-structured presentation that was fully relevant to the topic title. They offered a broad overview of the research with some key findings and placed essential facts into the context of the main focus of the topic; this allowed them to demonstrate good understanding and to achieve high AO4 marks. There were a few presentations where students simply listed their intentions (*Ich werde über....sprechen*), gave reasons why they chose their topic and/or described the sources they used, but said very little about the content and outcome of their research; presentations of this nature could only achieve low marks. It is important that memorised presentations are delivered at a natural speed; some students recited their prepared talk so quickly that some of it was hard to follow or became incomprehensible.

Discussion

The majority of students had clearly chosen a topic of personal interest and were keen to demonstrate their knowledge and opinions during the discussion. They were able to react appropriately to unexpected questions and spoke with good or adequate fluency. AO1 marks below 6 were relatively rare. Students who over-relied on pre-learnt statements which were not always entirely relevant to the question asked had to be awarded low AO1 marks.

Most students had obviously invested a lot of time and hard work into their IRP research and had obtained wide-ranging knowledge as well as insight into the subject of their study. Many students achieved AO4 marks in the two top bands. Less able students tended to rely on mainly factual knowledge with limited ability to evaluate facts; however, few students were awarded very low AO4 marks.

Teacher-examiner conduct

Some teacher-examiners enabled their students to demonstrate the skills necessary for the higher bands in AO1 and AO4. There were, however, cases where the teacher's conduct could have provided more opportunities to access higher AO1 and AO4 marks. It is essential that the student is engaged in a genuine discussion – this is part of the AO1 descriptor – and that the conversation is allowed to develop as naturally as possible, giving the student plenty of chances to react spontaneously to follow-up questions and to explain or justify points made. Questions like '*Was kannst du mir über.....sagen?*' should be avoided as they inevitably lead to lengthy rehearsed answers. It is also not in the student's best interest if the teacher works from a pre-set list of questions and moves on to the next question after one response from the student. The sub-headings on the CRF serve as a general outline of the scope of the topic but do not have to be covered in their entirety. A detailed and searching discussion covering fewer points is likely to lead to higher marks than superficial coverage of many items. Some less able students were allowed to produce lengthy pre-learnt answers to what seemed familiar questions and without being asked regular follow-up questions which would have required a spontaneous reply. Teachers must

ensure that, after mock and practice tests, the students do not know what questions will be asked in the real examination.

In many IRP discussions, teachers placed too much emphasis on eliciting facts and did not give enough weight to evaluation, analysis and conclusions. Many teachers were reluctant to challenge the students' views or to invite them to consider the opposite side of an argument. Even very able students were sometimes denied chances to demonstrate 'critical and analytical response' rather than just factual knowledge.

Marking examiners reported that several IRP discussions did not relate sufficiently to the actual topic title. For instance, if the topic is about 'Sophie Scholl's legacy today', but a large part of the discussion is taken up with historical facts about Sophie Scholl and her actions without regular reference to the title, high AO4 marks cannot be awarded.

AO3

The standard of linguistic proficiency was similar to last year. The mark scheme across all assessment criteria allowed students to compensate for grammatical shortcomings by speaking with eloquence, fluency and thorough insight into their topic and to achieve a good overall outcome. Very few students regularly failed to communicate their ideas due to gaps in knowledge of grammar and vocabulary or faulty pronunciation. There were some excellent performances where students demonstrated thorough awareness of basic and complex grammar and used sophisticated vocabulary, structures and appropriate idiom with confidence. The majority of students achieved marks in the 5-6 band or above. Handling of past tenses varied and a considerable number of students persistently used the present tense when referring to historical events. Subordinate clauses and infinitive structures as well as the passive voice were attempted by many students. As in previous years, students are advised against the over-use of essay-style phrases and idioms which are often not appropriate in a spoken context, e.g. *es lässt sich nicht leugnen, in Anbetracht der Tatsache* etc.

The general standard of pronunciation was good; many students had good mastery of German consonants, vowels and diphthongs. Problems with open e sounds in words like *schwer* (pronounced as *schwär*) were noticed as well as English pronunciation of names that were central to students' IRP topics e.g. *Bayer (Leverkusen), RB (Leipzig), DDR, Hannover*. Other common pronunciation errors included: *Gebaude, deutschsprachig, Geschichte* for *Gesicht, Berlin* as *Börlinn, Tecknologie*; short instead of long vowel before *ß* e.g. *Maßnahme, Fußball* (as *Massnahme, Fussball*); English pronunciation of *Idee/Musik/System/Moment/Studie*. Pronunciation and intonation were often affected when students delivered pre-learnt monologues, especially when these contained sophisticated memorised vocabulary.

Common grammatical errors included:

- conjugation of modal verbs (*wir kann/man wollen* etc)
- wrong use of *konnte/könnte*
- *muss nicht* instead of *darf nicht*
- verb *wissen*: *ich wisse, man wisst, habe gewissen*
- past participles and auxiliary verbs: *ich habe besuchen/bekommt/ich habe gefahren*
- confusion of possessive pronouns *sein* and *ihr*
- inappropriate infinitive structures: *Sie wollen Jugendliche zu wählen*

- preposition 'ago': *drei Jahre vor/drei Jahre früher*
- word order after *und/aber/weil*: *und gibt es, weil es gibt....*

Common vocabulary errors included:

- *meinen/bedeuten*
- *kennen/wissen*
- *schauen/zeigen*
- *stark/streng*
- *Charaktere* instead of *Figuren/Personen* when referring to films/books
- use of *nur* as an adjective: *die nur Partei*
- *jeder/jemand*
- *Überraschung/überraschend/überrascht*
- *Interesse/interessant/interessiert*
- *im Ost/im West.*

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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