



A-LEVEL GERMAN

7662/3T/3V Speaking
Report on the Examination

7662
June 2022

Version: 1.0

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General points and administration

This was the first time that speaking tests were held after a two-year break due to the pandemic. It was noted that despite the disruption in classroom teaching most students were well-prepared for the tests and seemed to have covered all of the themes and sub-themes on the specification.

With the introduction of the 'Media Submission Portal' centres did not have to send CDs or USB sticks to the marking examiner. Very few technical problems with the audio files were reported. However, some centres failed to send the accompanying paperwork to the examiners who were instructed only to mark tests for which the paperwork had arrived. The Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) are of particular importance for assessing the IRP presentation and discussion. In many cases marking was unnecessarily delayed because of CRFs arriving late or not at all. Centres are also asked to include with the attendance list and CRF a note indicating the stimulus card discussed by each student and the name of the teacher-examiner.

Visiting examiners enjoyed face-to-face conversations with students; most students responded well to the opportunity to demonstrate their language skills and their knowledge of the topic area on the chosen stimulus card and on their research topic. Arrangements and accommodation at centres for conducting the speaking tests were generally good.

Teacher-examiner conduct

The outcome of speaking tests can be strongly influenced by the conduct of examining. Markers of teacher-conducted tests voiced concerns about the standard of examining in many teacher-conducted tests. Areas of shortcomings were:

- A general reluctance to pick up on points made by students and to ask appropriate follow-up questions. Many teachers used a series of unrelated questions, sometimes from a prepared list, and accepted students' answers without further prompts or more probing questions into what was said. In both parts of the examination, it is essential to provide students with the opportunity to engage in a real conversation, to respond to unpredicted questions, to explain and justify views and to draw conclusions.
- Allowing students to deliver long monologues. This was particularly problematic when students read out very long prepared answers to the printed questions on the stimulus card and were given insufficient opportunities to demonstrate the qualities required in AO1 i.e. responding to spoken language. Furthermore, simply reading out information on the card word by word does not demonstrate good understanding of the material and will by itself not score AO2 marks.
- Insufficient exploration of the stimulus card content. High AO2 marks can be awarded where students show thorough insight into the stimulus material and are invited to discuss specific aspects on the card in more detail. Examiners are therefore required to intersperse the printed questions with suitable supplementary and follow-up questions. Too many teacher-examiners asked the three printed questions in succession without following up on

students' replies and without exploiting important elements within the stimulus material further. This practice regularly denied students the chance for a high score at AO2.

- Too little focus on the German-speaking world in the wider discussion of sub-themes. This was a more frequent problem with cards relating to 'Aspects of German-speaking society' (i.e. cards A, B, C) but also occurred within the other three themes. Students need to show that they have acquired relevant AO4 knowledge by clearly referring in their responses to Germany, Austria or Switzerland. Teachers regularly failed to maintain this German-specific connection in their questioning and asked too many general or personal questions for which high AO4 marks cannot be awarded. In preparation for the examination, stimulus cards from past years could provide useful material for wider discussions of sub-themes in the context of a German-speaking society and culture.
- Long answers to the student's own questions. Delivering extensive replies takes up time that should be available for students' contributions. It is essential that the examiner's response is as brief as possible.

Good examining technique varies the types of questions and uses concise and mostly open-ended questions (*Wie? Warum? Was? Inwiefern?* etc). In many discussions the teacher-examiner asked too many closed questions of the '*Denken Sie, dass...*' type and/or longwinded '*oder*' questions; an abundance of such questions reduces the time for student participation; it often suggests possible answers and provides students with vocabulary. Questions and prompts like *Was können Sie mir über erzählen/sagen?* should also be avoided since these invariably lead to long (prepared) monologues.

Timing: The stimulus card must be discussed for 5-6 minutes. By and large, teacher-examiners adhered to this timing, but there were exceptions where the discussion of the card greatly exceeded the allocated time causing a 'knock on effect' on the time available for the IRP discussion. Marking stops at 18 minutes of total length of the test and any contribution from the student after that point cannot be considered for assessment. The timing device needs to be started when the first question is asked, not when the student starts their answer. Lengthy greetings and welcoming remarks by the teacher (i.e. *Wie geht es dir heute?*) before the start of the test should be avoided.

Teachers are once more reminded that it is advisable to use the same form of address throughout the test and not to alternate between *du* and *Sie*. The questions on the stimulus cards can and should be adapted to the *du*-form if this is the usual form of address between teacher and students.

Students' performance

AO1: The majority of students spoke with good fluency and usually gave appropriate responses to unpredicted questions. In many teacher-conducted tests students could have scored more highly if the teacher had provided more opportunities for spontaneity and independence by following up on prepared or pre-learnt statements with additional questions that invited spontaneous development of points.

AO2: Students showed, on the whole, good understanding of the stimulus material and many students obtained marks in the higher bands. As mentioned above, markers of teacher-conducted tests often reported insufficient exploitation of the card content through the lack of appropriate supplementary and follow-up questions. Many students were thus denied opportunities to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the stimulus which limited their AO2 score.

AO3: Examiners reported that the disruption to students' learning experience in the past two years caused a slight deterioration in the standard of grammatical proficiency compared to previous years but that the vast majority of students were able to communicate well. Very weak performances in grammar and pronunciation were relatively rare so that most students achieved marks in the 5-6 band or above. Many students demonstrated thorough awareness of basic and complex grammar using sophisticated structures. Sub-ordinate clauses and infinitive structures were handled successfully by many students, but the verb/subject inversion in main clauses was frequently not observed. Examiners noted some accurate comparative and superlative forms (*beliebter, am interessantesten*) and also quite an impressive use of passive voice structures. On the other hand, insecure knowledge of past participles was quite widespread. Naturally, many students rely to some extent on prepared and pre-learnt phrases, especially when talking about their IRP topic, and credit is given for the appropriate and well-remembered use of such material. However, some students used idiomatic phrases such as *Es lässt sich nicht leugnen/Es liegt auf der Hand/Ich bin zu dem Schluss gekommen/ in Anbetracht der Tatsache* too indiscriminately and not always appropriately.

Some examiners felt that the standard of pronunciation had deteriorated slightly due to the lack of face-to-face practice. A complete breakdown of comprehensibility was however rare. Problems with pronouncing the German *ch* correctly were again prominent (e.g. *Tecknologie, schleckt*) and the production of German *z* and *r* sounds varied. Errors with the pronunciation of a closed German *e* as in *schwer, mehr* etc (often heard as *schwär, mähr* etc) still persisted as did the wrong shortening of vowels before *ß* as in *Maßnahme* or *Fußball* (often pronounced as *Massnahme, Fussball*); English renderings of cognates such as *Idee, Musik, Studie, Generation* (with a soft *g*) were quite frequent. Students are also reminded to pay careful attention to the pronunciation of IRP related vocabulary. All too often English versions of *DDR, Bayern, AfD* and mispronounced names like *Haber, Michael, Dreyman* were heard.

Common grammar errors included:

- conjugation of modal verbs (*wir kann/man wollen* etc.)
- wrong use of *konnte/könnte*
- *muss nicht* instead of *darf nicht*
- inappropriate infinitive structures: *Sie wollen Jugendliche zu wählen*
- preposition 'ago': *drei Jahre vor/drei Jahre früher*
- word order after *und/aber/auch*: *aber glaube ich, und gibt es, es auch zeigt*
- *es gibt* where *es gab* would be necessary
- *wenn* instead of *als* in subordinate clauses

Common vocabulary errors included:

- *kennen/wissen*
- *schauen/zeigen*
- *Charaktere* instead of *Figuren/Personen* when referring to films/books
- use of *nur* as an adjective: *die nur Partei*
- *jeder/jemand*
- *Interesse/interessant/interessiert*
- *im Ost/im West*
- *einzig/einige*
- *spenden/verbringen/ausgeben*
- *überall* used for 'overall'

Discussion of stimulus cards

During their preparation time it is, of course, important for students to form ideas about answers to the printed questions. Before choosing one of the two cards they should also consider how much relevant AO4 knowledge about a German-speaking country they have so that they can deal successfully with the third question. Students are also advised not only to look at the three printed questions and then prepare their answers. If they study the material and develop a few thoughts on specific elements they will be better equipped to react to unexpected questions.

Many students prepared a very lengthy answer to the first question on the card which covered all or most of the information presented, whether or not this information was actually targeted in the first question. Students need to be aware that the first question on the card is not as a rule on the lines of *Was erfährt man hier über...?* but often a more specific one. Very long but only partly relevant initial answers which incorporate the entire content of the card reduce the time available for further exploration of the stimulus material. Visiting examiners often interrupt such lengthy answers with a suitable question, but in teacher-conducted tests such good practice was rarely followed. Although markers of teacher-conducted tests reported some skilful and efficient questioning by teachers which resulted in good student performances too little further probing into the stimulus content took place. Many students read out lists of bullet points on the card verbatim, sometimes simply introducing them with *es gibt...* High AO2 scores for this approach are unlikely. Successful students used their own sentences to convey information, added some comment or opinion and thereby showed understanding of the material.

All cards were accessible and contained a similar amount of verbal information. Generally, students tended to prefer cards from the two A Level themes, probably because these themes had been taught more recently. Card J was chosen most frequently followed by cards D, B and I. The generally smaller cohorts of students for German mean that some cards which appeared further down the allocation sequence were discussed much less often. A number of centres did not follow the prescribed sequence of cards even though there was no obvious potential overlap with the student's IRP topic.

Card A: Familienglück durch Adoption

This card was not a frequent choice. Comments about the cost, length and conditions for adoption processes in Switzerland were quite sparse, indicating that some students had not fully understood the implications and hurdles for potential adoptive parents. The consequences of the lengthy process, the reasons for the rules on age and the possible causes of the drop in the number of adoptions - these were fruitful points for discussion but used by too few teacher-examiners. The wider discussion usually addressed aspects of the modern family such as *Regenbogen-* and *Patchworkfamilien* or *Homo-Ehe*, but the necessary reference to a German-speaking country was often not maintained. Some students mentioned so-called *Mehrgenerationenhäuser* becoming more popular in Germany.

Card B: Bildschirm statt Papier

A fairly popular choice. Most students could explain the scheme in general terms but many read out the advantages without further comment or development. In a few discussions, teacher-examiners used some of the bullet-pointed phrases as the basis for further exploration of the card but generally much effort could have been made to explore these points. Reasons why the '*papierlose Klasse*' may not be suitable for all ages or types of schools were hardly ever pursued. Many students struggled with pronouncing *Arbeitsmaterialien* and the use of *Tabletten* for tablet computers was wide-spread. Wider discussions on the sub-theme were often not sufficiently rooted in the target language countries; many students seemed to have surprisingly little knowledge about the use of digital technology in Germany, Austria or Switzerland.

Card C: 'Fast Fashion'

A small number of students chose this card which was handled fairly successfully. The environmental implications of fast fashion were well-known, but not all students fully understood the two initiatives; *leihen* and *Verleih* seemed unfamiliar and many students commented on second hand shops rather than the online platform for buying and selling second-hand clothing. The reasons for buying a lot of clothes cheaply and wearing them for a short period was a fruitful discussion point but unfortunately ignored by most teacher-examiners. Few students could talk about fashion trends in German-speaking countries, although some mentioned the increasing belief in *Ökomode* among German young people. Teacher-examiners tended to focus on personal dress preferences or the value of designer labels.

Card D: Eid – das muslimische Fest für alle

Appearing at the top of the allocation grid, this card was chosen frequently and handled with varying success. The card illustrated well a problem mentioned earlier i.e. students not paying attention to what aspect of the stimulus is targeted in the first question. In this case the initial answer should have just focused on the inclusivity of the Muslim festival, but many students relayed the entire verbal information, including a description of the two photos on the left hand side. Few teacher-examiners picked up on *offene Türen in Moscheen* or asked about *interkulturelle Veranstaltungen* both of which could have exemplified the value of intercultural exchanges.

Pronunciation of *religiös*, *traditionell* and *Moscheen* often caused problems. Many students ignored the word *religiös* in the third question and named *Oktoberfest*, *Silvester* or *Karneval* as examples; *Weihnachten* was often reduced to the popularity of *Weihnachtsmärkte*. Too few teachers insisted on religious festivals and more often than not the line of questioning did not aim at evaluation of factual knowledge. In the wider discussion, the sub-theme of *Feste und Traditionen* was sometimes not adhered to by teachers who instead asked about the immigration, integration and racism. AO4 marks were not available for contributions on these sub-themes.

Card E: *Das Museum der 100 Tage*

The card was not discussed often and was handled with different degrees of success. Students who had real interest in art entered into rewarding discussions with visiting examiners. Others demonstrated limited understanding of the special features of this art festival in Kassel, for instance the fact that art is exhibited in several locations, including outdoors; *Gegenwart* seemed not to be universally known. With good questioning some aspects of the stimulus material could be explored, for instance the reasons why the *documenta* attracts many young visitors, whether photography is a genuine art form or what precise benefits for Kassel the event brings. The second question sought students' opinions on contemporary art or outdoor installations. Many teacher-examiners did not provide opportunities for such detailed and spontaneous discussions and thus often limited their students' AO2 score. Answers to the third question produced a rather narrow range of German-speaking artists but most students could name some, Hundertwasser being the most frequently mentioned. Many students were allowed pre-learnt mini-presentations about artists or art groups without analysis or evaluation through further questions.

Card F: *Gemeinsame Geschichte*

A reasonably popular card with numerous details to talk about. It produced mixed results. Many students seemed to miss the fact that this museum was about 1700 years of German-Jewish history and not just about the Holocaust. *Mittelalter*, *jüdischer Alltag* or *die Zeit nach 1945* were thus often ignored or only fleetingly read out. These aspects needed more probing from examiners; in teacher-conducted tests this rarely happened; fruitful discussion points in the second bullet-pointed list were also not used sufficiently. These shortcomings in examining often resulted in disappointing AO1 and AO2 marks. Answers to Question 3 and in the wider discussion usually mentioned *Checkpoint Charlie*, *East Side Gallery* and occasionally *Museumsinsel*, but in many cases this knowledge was often not developed through further questioning aiming at evaluation, justification of opinions or appropriate evidence all of which are important elements in AO4 criteria.

Card G: *Ein neues Zuhause*

Stimulus material about the theme of multiculturalism usually draws good and well-informed responses from students. Many who chose this card understood the main point here i.e. refugees being offered accommodation in private homes rather than hostels. How these initiatives are funded seemed less clear. Successful discussions considered the advantages and possible problems of living in private households or the negative aspects of large refugee centres. In the wider discussion, the majority of students knew about *Gastarbeiter* and the *Flüchtlingskrise* in Germany; the recent influx of Ukrainian refugees also featured in some conversations. The three

sub-themes within the theme of multiculturalism are linked, so it was perhaps inevitable that wider discussions on immigration often deviated into considering aspects of integration and racism. However, examiners often digressed too quickly from the given sub-theme and allowed many (pre-learned) contributions from students about aspects of integration and racism. They are reminded that for full opportunities to access higher AO4 marks it is important to largely address aspects pertinent to the sub-theme at the top of each card.

Card H: *Integration durch Musik und Tanz*

This card appeared low down on the allocation sequence and was therefore very rarely chosen. Question 1 required students to summarise in their own words the special character of this event rather than simply reciting the information in the bullet-pointed list and reading out the quotations verbatim. The event was generally considered to be a meaningful initiative for furthering integration and good knowledge of the wider sub-theme was conveyed following the third question. Some students mentioned programmes and projects that featured on stimulus cards from previous years.

Card I: *Ein Schritt im Kampf gegen Rassismus*

This card was discussed very frequently and with varying success. Students often read out all the information in the two boxes as they appeared and were unable to convert some of the complex nouns into verbs. *Sichtbar* did not seem to be a very familiar adjective. Relatively few students realised that people with black African background were a minority among non-white Germans and did not grasp the idea that this ethnic group needed a separate voice. The most successful students explained the need for keeping the survey anonymous well and could explain and analyse the aims of the project. Too few teacher-examiners explored important aspects such as what kind of discrimination black people may experience or what exactly they expect from society and politicians. In the wider discussion, most students mentioned the *AfD* or *Pegida* but talked much less frequently about racism in everyday life, in sport, the work place, education etc. Deviation into the sub-theme of integration occurred regularly.

Card J: *Aktive europäische Bürgerschaft*

Appearing at the top of the allocation sequence made this card the most frequently discussed. The content and aims of the project were generally well-understood especially when examiners picked up on and explored individual aims or activities in more detail. Too many teacher-examiners were satisfied with hearing the *Inhalte*, *Ziele* and *Aktivitäten* read out point by point without probing further into some of them. Some students found the vocabulary in the box challenging; mispronunciation of *Krise* (as *Kreise*), *Institutionen* or *Engagement* occurred. When faced with complex vocabulary and a multitude of nouns students need to try and find their own, simpler, words to paraphrase and explain them. *Gedenkveranstaltungen* was widely unknown but a few students expressed a view on the value of *Städtepartnerschaften*. Disappointingly little reference to the views expressed by participants was made. By and large, students demonstrated good knowledge about Germany's role in the EU; they regularly mentioned the high number of German members in the European parliament or Germany's major financial contributions. However, some teachers strayed into areas outside AO4 knowledge by extensively discussing general issues relating to Europe or Brexit.

Card K: ‚Von der Jugend für die Jugend‘

This was a fairly popular card and on the whole handled well. Students who chose it seemed to be genuinely interested in politics and particularly in environmental issues. Some students thought that the meetings of the *Jugendparlament* were not often enough. Once again, the first question on the card should have been answered more concisely by summarising the three projects rather than reading out every detail in the three boxes. *Jugendliche* caused regular pronunciation problems (*Jungen, Jungend, Jungenliche*). Successful students expressed opinions about the statements in the three speech bubbles, including views on the value of demonstrations - often quoting ‘Fridays for Future’ - and the need to make political issues less abstract and complex. Too many teacher-examiners did not explore these important aspects following the student’s initial response to question 2. The last question and wider discussion produced answers of varying depth and quality although most students presented some information about young voters’ participation in elections in the German-speaking world or expressed views about the reduction of the voting age to 16.

Card L: *Aufbau Ost*

This card was also a popular choice but produced mixed results. Many students read out the captions under the picture without any further development or explanation as to why the investments were necessary or what effects on life in the former GDR they may have had. Examiners needed to probe into these points more thoroughly to enable students to show real understanding and appreciation of the card content. *Sanierung* did not appear to be well understood and was addressed by only the most able students as was the meaning of Gregor Gysi’s statement. Surprisingly many students struggled to answer the second question about the importance of investing into the Eastern regions of Germany after reunification. Question 3 was generally done well as students talked about aspects of life in the GDR such as the *Stasi*, lack of *Reisefreiheit*, job security in the GDR etc. Some students however missed ‘*vor der Wende*’ and gave (pre-learnt) narratives of life ‘before and after’ or of lasting differences between East and West. The film *Good-bye Lenin* was again a popular work studied for Paper 2 and probably widely shown for learning about this sub-theme; it evidently fed into the wide-ranging knowledge students had which often included personal evaluation (*Wie hättest du dich gefühlt...? / Wären Sie auch in den Westen gegangen?*)

Individual Research Project

As in previous years there was a wide variety of IRP topics, among them many very interesting and also unusual ones. The majority of students seemed to have genuine interest in the subject they had chosen and it was obvious that a lot of hard work had gone into the research. A suitable title for a topic can be of real help for guiding the student through well-directed and analytical research; centres are reminded that advice on the suitability of topics and titles is available from an IRP adviser. Details can be obtained from AQA. Support and guidance on formulating good IRP titles can also be found in various documents on the AQA website.

In general, the quality and suitability of titles has improved over the years this specification has been examined. Many students phrased the title as a question and this can lead to a more focused and critical approach to the research. But there were still some examples of inappropriate topics or less than ideal titles. Students and teachers are reminded to avoid:

- unfocused and vague titles e.g. The German car industry, Kafka's *Verwandlung*, Martin Luther
- topics with a very broad scope e.g. the German health system, German film in the 20th century
- topics that include comparisons with Great Britain or other countries
- topics without a clear and exclusive connection to the German-speaking world e.g. German colonialism in Africa, German-Russian relations, mental health issues in sport, the film 'Cabaret'
- similar topics within a cohort of students unless clearly different angles for each topic can be established.

Some IRP titles still appeared in German rather than English on the Candidate Record Form. It is preferable if students enter concise additional headings on the CRF rather than additional sources; the former are more useful for directing and structuring the post-presentation discussion. Students should also ensure that handwritten information on the CRF is legible.

Popular subject areas for IRP research this year included:

- German football / the *Bundesliga*
- Immigration / refugee crisis of 2015
- Angela Merkel
- rise of populism/far right groups in Germany / the AfD
- German reunification and its aftermaths
- the NS period / Second World War
- the German car industry
- Grimms' fairy tales

Unusual topics included:

- Prussian values and their importance in Germany today
- German vampire literature
- Soviet occupation of Austria
- use of jokes in the GDR
- the reintroduction of wolves, bears and lynxes in Germany

Presentation

The majority of presentations were well-timed, very few going beyond two minutes. A number of students, on the other hand, did not make full use of the allocated time and delivered presentations that were up to half a minute short. Some talks were delivered with such speed that the content was often difficult to follow. Presentations achieved high scores if they were well structured, clearly setting out main findings and including brief evaluations, explanations or comments on these. Above all, presentations need to be relevant to the IRP title on the CRF. Examiners reported many cases where the content of the presentation did not score highly because it contained hardly any points that were clearly related to the remit in the IRP title. A number of students filled a large part of their talk with stating what they were going to talk about (*Zuerst möchte ich übersprechen und dann über ...*); others gave lengthy reasons for choosing the topic and/or listed source materials they used. Such presentations could not attract high AO4 marks.

Discussion

The vast majority of students demonstrated reasonable or good knowledge about their topic. Once more it became clear that topics with a narrower breadth generally lead to more in-depth knowledge and good insight whereas topics with a very broad scope may reveal gaps in knowledge or superficial understanding. Many students had not only acquired thorough knowledge of the area of study but had also formed personal views and conclusions about important aspects and were able to back up their opinions with valid evidence.

It is essential for achieving high AO4 marks that the examiner's questions afford regular opportunities for critical analysis, evaluation and conclusions. Some teacher-examiners failed to give sufficient space for this; they often 'played safe' by focusing on facts, not asking more probing questions, not asking for evidence or challenging students appropriately. Prompts like *'Erzählen Sie mir etwas über....'* often led to long, apparently pre-learned answers which were not followed up by further questioning. It is not necessary for examiners to go through all of the sub-headings on the CRF nor does the order in which they appear need to be adhered to. Some examiners of teacher-conducted tests expressed concern that students seemed to have some idea of what questions they might be asked. Discussions that contain a lot of apparently rehearsed contributions cannot result in high AO1 marks. Teacher-examiners are also advised to avoid lengthy exchanges about the student's motives for choosing a topic or how they found material for their research as these are unlikely to be eligible for AO4 marks. There is also no need for students to ask questions during the IRP discussion.

Despite the critical remarks above it must be reiterated that visiting examiners found most of the IRP discussions with students very stimulating and enjoyable as well as informative and that marking examiners also listened to many interesting and well-conducted conversations that conveyed not only the students' knowledge but also their enthusiasm for their research projects.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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