



GCSE

GERMAN

8668/SF: Speaking Foundation
Report on the Examination

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Introduction

It is pleasing to report that the 2022 GCSE German Foundation tier speaking test was successful in its primary aim of allowing all students to demonstrate a level of oral proficiency commensurate with their ability. The overall impression is that, despite school closures during the pandemic, the level of performance was generally in line with previous years of this specification.

The following report aims to give a comprehensive overview of the Foundation tier speaking test, both in terms of teacher conduct and student performance. It will highlight best practice as well as signposting areas for future improvement.

Teachers have clearly worked incredibly hard to support their students and to enable them to perform as well as they did this year. There was much to be commended in what examiners heard and this report highlights these good practices.

The following comments are provided to support teachers in the preparation of students for next year.

Tier of entry

It is pleasing to note that nearly all Foundation tier students performed in a way that justified their tier of entry. There were very few cases of performances that would have merited a Higher tier entry.

Audio files and quality of recordings

Most tests were conducted in a suitable venue with a quality recording device. However, there were some cases where external background noise and/or poor quality recordings affected the audibility of what the students said.

Teacher Conduct

Test Routine Procedures

It was pleasing to see that although speaking tests have not been held since 2019, the vast majority of teacher-examiners had prepared well and adhered closely to the guidelines laid out in the *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations*. This allowed for the smooth running of tests, something which puts the student at ease and enhances their ability to performance.

It is important that the introduction to each new candidate includes the Role-play number, Photo card letter and nominated General Conversation theme. During the test, procedural matters should be announced succinctly in the target language. Suitable wording is provided in the *Instructions for the conduct of the examinations*. It is particularly important to announce a change of theme during the General Conversation.

Timings

Most students completed the Photo card task comfortably within the Foundation tier time limit of two minutes. On the rare occasions that not all five questions were asked within the time limit, this

was due to a very hesitant delivery by the student and/or an overlong and repetitive answer to the first question eliciting a description of the photo.

Most General Conversations adhered to the minimum and maximum timings. Very few failed to reach the minimum time; however, there were some occasions when coverage of the second theme did not meet the minimum time requirement. This impacted on the mark awarded for Communication .

Centres are reminded that the timing of the second General Conversation theme starts immediately the first question on that theme is asked. All time used up to this point is allocated to coverage of the first theme. Centres are also reminded that anything said by the student beyond the maximum time limit is disregarded for assessment.

Conducting the Role-play Task

Encouragingly, the prescribed role in the Teacher's booklet was adhered to by most teacher-examiners. Unfortunately a student's answer is invalid if the script is re-worded by the teacher-examiner.

In the case of two-part questions, often ones requiring an opinion and reason, it is good practice to elicit the two elements separately.

Conducting the Photo Card Task

Most teacher-examiners asked the questions as they appeared on the card. Paraphrasing is allowed but any change of wording must maintain the exact original meaning of the question. For example, on Photo card E, 'Region' is an acceptable alternative to 'Gegend', whereas 'Stadt' is not.

On some occasions a key element of a question was fronted and repeated. For example, on Photo card B, Task 4: *Und deine Freunde, was essen deine Freunde im Restaurant?*

Or on Photo card D, Task 3: *Und in letzter Zeit, was für Fitnessstraining hast du in letzter Zeit gemacht?* Teacher-examiners are reminded that, if a student has started to give a wrong but still incomplete answer, the full question can be re-asked. However, if a complete and wrong answer has been given, any subsequent answer to a repeated question will be disregarded for assessment.

Conducting the General Conversation

The majority of questions were relevant to the themes and appropriate to the ability of the student, further evidence of good teacher preparation. Questions were consistently asked that allowed all students to give and explain opinions, necessary for accessing the Foundation tier top band for Communication. More-able students were nearly always given the chance to use three time frames and thereby access the 9-10 band for Range and Accuracy.

A few lower-ability students were asked a succession of tense-orientated questions, which left them confused and resulted in unclear or even unintelligible responses. It is worth noting that the successful use of three time frames is only required for a top band mark in Range and Accuracy, and that some students will be more successful answering a range of simple questions in the present tense.

At times, students misunderstood a question and gave an understandable but inappropriate response. If this occurs, the teacher-examiner should rephrase the question or ask a subsequent

question as quickly as possible. Any irrelevant information offered by the student cannot be credited but will count against the accuracy of the performance.

Some teacher-examiners employed a questioning technique through which students were clearly able to demonstrate spontaneity. The resulting conversations had a pleasing feel of authenticity. However, examiners noted an increase in performances dominated by pre-learned responses; this technique may have been employed as a means of support for students affected by the loss of learning in the past two years.

In some examples of best practice, teacher-examiners allowed even the least able students to demonstrate spontaneity through the use of simple follow-up questions, such as *'Und wie findest du ...?'*, *'Warum?'* and *'Wie oft?'* This kind of questioning technique can really help students sustain a conversation, particularly at the lower end of the ability range.

Most teacher-examiners were aware of the requirement for the student to ask a question during the General Conversation. Some students asked the question at a moment of their choice while others waited for the teacher to elicit it at the end of the test.

Some students had been trained to ask a question through adding *Und du?* to the end of a response. For example: *Ich wohne in einer Stadt? Und du?* This is a legitimate technique as long as the question tag corresponds to the preceding response.

Where the tag does not properly follow the question, for example: *Die Stadt ist sehr laut. Und du?*, or the student asks a question after the time limit has been reached a one mark deduction has to be applied. This is also the case if the student question is not relevant to either of the two General Conversation themes.

Student Performance

Student Performance in the Role-play Task

Most students were well-trained in decoding the target language bullet points and formulated appropriate and succinct responses. It is pleasing to note that there were very few examples of a student lifting and using the subject pronoun (*du/Sie*) or possessive adjective (*dein/Ihr*) from the bullet-point.

Students of all abilities recognised and responded appropriately to the standard formulation of: *Deine Meinung über ...*

On occasions students gave far more information than was necessary to accomplish the task, which is to be discouraged. Conversely, some students tended to give very minimal responses which could only be credited if they correlated with the previous line spoken by the teacher-examiner. For example, on Role-play 2 Task 2 (*Für wie viele Personen.*) a number was sometimes stated in isolation, which did not communicate anything following on from the teacher-examiner line of *Gerne*.

On all tasks, other than the unprepared (!) bullet point, students should be encouraged to produce a short stand-alone statement that includes a verb. Furthermore, students need to be aware that the teacher-examiner prompt may not always take the form of a direct question. It is vital that students prepare a response to the written bullet-point prompt and deliver this at the appropriate moment irrespective of whether it is directly elicited by the teacher-examiner.

Some students found the formal role-plays more challenging than the informal scenarios. A common failing continues to be a lack of recognition of when a request has to be made, as in Role-play 4 (*Eine Fahrkarte für Sie.*) or Role-play 6 (*Eine Fitnessklasse für Sie.*) It is recommended that teachers train their students to recognise the significance of the ‘für Sie’ prompt words on transactional role plays.

Many students were able to form a question effectively from the prompt word(s) provided on the question (?) task. Examiners noted that an increasing number of students had been tactically trained to apply a *Wie findest du ...?* formulation, which often worked but was sometimes inappropriate to the nature of the prompt words provided.

Some students struggled to respond appropriately to the unpredictable (!) task, a possible casualty of the limited opportunities teachers have had for practising oral work. Students who succeeded were those who had a good command of question words and had been trained to give a short but appropriate response, even if the rest of the question may not have been fully understood. For example, Role-play 3 Task 2: *Wie oft hörst du Musik? Manchmal.*

Specific Foundation Tier Role-play Issues

On the transactional role-plays, some students successfully employed the phrase ‘*Ich möchte*’ to make a request. However, ‘*möchte*’ was often pronounced as ‘*mochte*’, which creates ambiguity and reduces the potential Communication mark for the task to 1.

Students generally found the following role-play tasks to be the most challenging.

Role-play 1

Task 5: Omission of ‘German’ element when formulating a question around ‘*Deutsche Feste*’.

Role-play 2

Task 1: Students often failed to pick up on the fact that ‘für Sie’ denotes the need to make a request.

Task 5: There was general difficulty in forming a question from the prompt *Trinken?* A common attempt was *Hast du Trinken?*

Role-play 3

Task 3: Many students appeared not to read the bullet-point carefully enough, missing the ‘wo’ after the hyphen and not addressing the key element of *where* to buy music.

Role-play 4

Task 3: As in Role-play 2, the need to make a request, denoted by ‘für Sie’, was often missed.

Task 4: The key word ‘*wohin*’ was known by very few students.

Role-play 5

Task 3: As in Role-play 3, many students missed the ‘wo’ prompt after the hyphen and gave an irrelevant answer about the size of their town.

Role-play 6

Task 1: As in Role-play 2 and 4, the need to make a request, denoted by ‘für Sie’, was often missed. A statement like ‘*Ich habe eine Fitnessklasse*’ conveyed the wrong message and could not be credited.

Role-play 7

Task 2: Another example of key prompt words after a hyphen, in this case *'wie groß'*, being overlooked. Consequently, some students offered an irrelevant opinion about their maths class.

Task 5: *'Noten'* was not widely known or was often not referenced in the question.

Role-play 8

Task 1: As in Role-plays 2, 4 and 6, the need to make a request, denoted by *'für Sie'*, was often missed. Some students stated that they had a job, which was the wrong message.

Task 2: Some students were thrown by the use of formal address in the unprepared question *'Wie alt sind Sie?'*

Task 5: Many students were unable to form an effective question from the prompt word *'Geld'*. A common attempt was *'Was ist das Geld?'*

Role-play 9

Task 1: Some students pronounced *'Kantine'* as the English word 'canteen'.

Student Performance in the Photo Card Task

Most students prepared fully-developed responses to the three prepared questions. Some students either offered too little information or gave over-long responses where a lack of clarity had an impact on the mark awarded. All teachers are advised to read the published mark scheme very carefully and familiarise themselves with how the Photo card is marked and how much clear development is needed to access the top band.

Most students were able to give a simple three-clause response to the first prepared question *Was gibt es auf dem Foto?* Many made reference to the setting, number of people, description of people and the weather. Occasionally, students were well-trained in stating the mood of a person based on facial expression. For example, in Photo card A, *'Die Frau sieht glücklich aus.'*

Some responses to the first question lacked clarity due to the use of *'der ist'*. Some students invented a present continuous form to describe activities in the picture. For example, in Card C: *'Die Kinder sind schwimmen.'*

Most students were able to give and explain opinions. Pleasingly, there were few students who were restricted to the 1-3 band through the failure to offer an opinion, or could not access the 10-12 band because no opinion was explained.

There was a rather mixed picture in terms of students' ability to recognise and respond appropriately to the question eliciting a response in a past or future time frame. At Foundation tier, this question will always be the second or third prepared bullet-point.

One common weakness was an inability to recognise questions in the third person or third person plural. Each photo card will include at least two questions requiring a response that is not in the first person so it is important that students are trained to respond appropriately.

Specific Foundation Tier Photo Card Issues

Students were generally challenged by the following Photo card tasks:

Photo card A

Task 2: Students often gave a first person opinion of Italian food, which was irrelevant to the question asked.

Task 4: *'Mit wem'* was not widely recognised.

Photo card B

Task 4: The switch to the third person plural with a question about *'deine Freunde'* confused many students who gave an irrelevant first person response about what they like to eat.

Photo card C

Task 3: Many students failed to recognise the key question word *'wo'* and gave an irrelevant response.

Photo card E

Task 4: The meaning of *'der beste Ort'* was unknown by quite a few students.

Photo card F

Task 5: As in other cards, the switch to the third person plural was not picked up by many students who gave a first person response saying what they do to stay fit.

Photo card G

Task 3: Some students gave an irrelevant response about what they *learn* every day instead of naming a subject they *would like to learn* every day. Reading a question carefully and identifying the appropriate time frame are crucial skills.

Task 5: As in other cards, the use of *'deine Freunde'* confused some students who gave a first person response.

Photo card H

Task 3: Many students did not recognise the meaning of *'Wie kommst du zur Schule?'*, often responding with an opinion about school.

Task 3: Some students only registered the first part of the compound noun *'Klassenfahrt'* and gave an irrelevant response about a class.

Photo card I

Task 3: *'Teilzeitjob'* was not known by some students.

The Foundation Tier General Conversation

It was pleasing to see that the majority of students managed to sustain a conversation for the minimum amount of time across two themes. Most students made an effort to develop responses, particularly to prepared questions from the nominated theme, often giving and sometimes explaining opinions in addition to basic factual information. Just over 16% of students gained a mark in the 9-10 band for Communication. A further 30% were in the 7-8 band, offering slightly shorter responses and/or greater lapses in clarity.

Most students relied on simple structures and vocabulary, which was sometimes repetitive, to convey basic messages. Opinions tended to include the same adjectives *'gut'*, *'interessant'* and *'langweilig'*. Some students did show an ability to incorporate a greater range of structure, including *weil*-clauses and modal verbs. On some occasions, intended messages were not communicated because the attempted vocabulary and structures were too complex for the ability of the student. Many students attempted to demonstrate the use of different time frames, but with varying degrees of success. When forming the perfect tense, an auxiliary verb was sometimes omitted, resulting in

a phrase such as *Ich Fußball gespielt*. When referring to a future time frame using *Ich werde*, some students forgot to include a second verb in its infinitive form at the end of the clause, as in *Ich werde Fußball*. Others used a past participle instead of infinitive, as in *Ich werde Fußball gespielt*.

The standard of pronunciation was quite variable and only some students were able to consistently enunciate basic German sounds such as *ei / ie / ch / j / w / Umlauts*. Many students pronounced words in an understandable way but showed little intonation to support the meaning of what was said. Lots of performances tended to be quite monotone. Only 15% of students achieved the full 5 marks for Pronunciation and intonation. The most common marks awarded were 3 and 4.

Some students were able to deliver a reasonably fluent performance using pre-learnt responses. However, balanced against this, was often a lack of ability, or lack of opportunity, to respond to simple follow-up questions. Around 18% of students achieved 5 marks in the category of Spontaneity and fluency. The most commonly awarded mark was 4, where there was some fluency but minimal spontaneity.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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