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GCSE

**GERMAN**

8668/SH: Speaking Higher  
Report on the Examination

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## Introduction

It is pleasing to report that the 2022 GCSE German Higher 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. Examiners even noted some improvement in role-play and photo card technique, whereas the quality of pronunciation seemed to have declined, perhaps due to the reduced time for speaking practice in class.

The following report aims to give a comprehensive overview of the Higher 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

Most students performed in a way that justified their tier of entry. There were, however, some weaker performances where a Foundation tier entry would have been more appropriate.

## 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

Nearly all students completed the Photo card task comfortably within the Higher tier time limit of three minutes.

Most General Conversations adhered to the minimum and maximum timings. Very few failed to reach the overall 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 and may have been a result of the lost learning of the past two years where students are likely to have had fewer opportunities to practise their speaking than in previous years.

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 L Task 3, '*neulich*' is an acceptable alternative to '*in letzter Zeit*', whereas '*letzte Woche*' is not.

On some occasions when a key element of a question was fronted and repeated. For example, on Photo card J, Task 4: *Und deine Freunde, essen deine Freunde gesund?* Or on Photo card P, Task 5: *Und in der Zukunft, was möchtest du in der Zukunft lernen?* Teacher-examiners are reminded that this technique provides an unfair advantage to those students; to maintain fairness any subsequent student response has to be invalidated.

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 the 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 achieving a high mark for Communication. Students were nearly always given the chance to use three time frames and thereby gain access to higher marks for Range and Accuracy.

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. Some teacher-examiners listened to student responses and then gained further information or clarification through the use of simple follow-up questions such as *Wie oft? / Warum (nicht)? / Mit wem? / Und wie findest du ...?* The result was a conversation that had a pleasing feel of authenticity. Unfortunately, examiners noted that this was the exception rather than the rule and too many performances were 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.

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. Unfortunately, some questions were elicited and asked beyond the maximum time limit and a one-mark penalty was applied to the mark for Communication.

## **Student Performance**

### **Student Performance in the Role-play Task**

Most students were well-trained in decoding the target language bullet points and formulated an appropriate and succinct response, including a verb. On occasions students gave far more information than was necessary to accomplish the task, which is to be discouraged.

Some students found the formal role-plays more challenging than the informal scenarios and did not always recognise when a request has to be made, as in Role-play 11 (*Einen Imbiss für Sie.*) or Role-play 16 (*Deutschstunden für Sie – wie viele.*) It is recommended that teachers train their students to recognise the significance of the 'für Sie' prompt words in transactional role plays.

Examiners noted that most students had been well trained in recognising the need for a past or future time frame and responding appropriately.

Many students were able to form a question effectively from the prompt word(s) provided on the question (?) task. Examiners noted that many 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. Many students had been trained to give a short but appropriate response. For example, Role-play 13 Task 2: *Und warum kommen Sie nach Deutschland? Es ist schön.*

The most creative use of language occurred on Role-Play 17, Task 4, when some students put their teacher-examiner on the spot by asking *Tragen Sie Kleidung in der Schule?* A clear and linguistically correct message that naturally scored 2 marks.

Some students used the opportunity afforded in Role-play 14 to support radical action on environmental issues. A common utterance was: *Ich mag Umweltproteste, weil es wichtig ist.*

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## Specific Higher Tier Role-play Issues

On the transactional role-plays, most students successfully employed the phrase *‘Ich möchte’* to make a request. However, *‘möchte’* was sometimes 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 10

Task 2: This was an unprepared task that required two short answers to simple questions about watching television. Students coped better when the two elements were elicited separately, but some still failed to recognise the meaning of the question words *‘wo’* and *‘wann’*.

### Role-play 12

Task 1: Some students made a request to play a sport rather than attend a sporting event. The need to state a time, prompted by *‘wann’*, was sometimes missed.

Task 5: Some students successfully asked a question about transport but omitted the *‘zum Event’* element.

### Role-play 13

Task 1: Some students referred to a past trip to Germany, which did not score any marks. It is always important to read the scene setting statement for a role-play, where a clear context is given. In this case: *Sie planen einen Besuch in Deutschland*.

Task 4: The meaning of *‘mieten’* was not widely known. Moreover, either *‘mieten’* or *‘Auto’*, or even sometimes both, were often mispronounced.

### Role-play 14

Task 4: Some students referenced a past time frame but did not state an eco-friendly activity.

### Role-play 15

Task 1: The pronunciation of *‘Obdachlosen’* sometimes caused ambiguity.

Task 2: The verb *‘spenden’* was often misunderstood as ‘to spend’, sometimes making the subsequent reason inappropriate.

Task 4: The unprepared task required students to say why a job is good for teenagers. Quite a few students did not listen closely enough to the question and stated instead a good job for teenagers.

### Role-play 16

Task 1: Some students did not recognise the need to request a specific number of German lessons, as denoted by the *‘für Sie’* element of the prompt.

Task 2: Few students were able to say how long they had been learning German with an accurate use of *‘seit’*.

### Role-play 17

Task 2: Some students misinterpreted the prompt words and stated when they come to school. The attempted use of *‘seit’* was often inaccurate, although some meaning was usually conveyed.

### Role-play 18

Task 3: When stating an activity in a previous English lesson, the incorrect past participle *‘geschrieben’* was quite widely used.

Task 5: When formulating a question about a headteacher, the pronunciation of *‘Direktor’* was often anglicised.

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## Student Performance in the Photo Card Task

Most students prepared fully-developed responses comprising at least three clauses to the three seen questions. They also knew the importance of giving and explaining opinions. Just under 35% of students achieved a mark in the top band and a further 39% accessed the 10-12 band.

Some students 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, *'Ich denke, dass die Frau glücklich ist, weil sie lächelt.'*

Unlike at Foundation tier, the use of *'der ist'* was thankfully rare. However, quite a few students invented a present continuous form to describe activities in the picture. For example, in Photo card B: *'Sie sind streiten.'* Or in Photo Card G: *'Sie sind studieren.'* This is always marked as a statement that communicates some meaning but lacks clarity.

Students generally recognised the questions eliciting a response in a past or future time frame. On occasions, a present tense was used with a past time marker or the auxiliary verb was omitted in a perfect tense structure.

## Specific Foundation Tier Photo Card Issues

The following Photo card tasks generally caused the most problems for students:

### Photo card J

Task 4: The mix of singular and plural forms of *'Freund(e)'* caused some ambiguity of response.

### Photo card K

Task 4: Few students recognised the meaning of *'kennen lernen'*.

Task 5: Some students found it difficult to articulate in simple terms what is important in a friendship.

### Photo card M

Task 4: Some students did not recognise the use of *'Fahrt'* and described instead activities on a holiday.

### Photo card N

Task 3: The meaning of *'Orte'* was not known by some students.

### Photo card R

Task 2: A surprising number of students misread *'Freien'* as *'Ferien'* and consequently gave an irrelevant response.

Task 5: Some students did not understand *'verdienen'* and gave an irrelevant response about spending money.

## The Higher Tier General Conversation

It was pleasing to see that most students were well prepared for this part of the test and gave developed responses, particularly to prepared questions from the nominated theme. Opinions and justifications were regularly conveyed. Just under 19% of students achieved a mark in the 9-10 band for Communication.

It is worth stressing that, in order to score the highest marks, responses must be **clearly** developed. If there are frequent lapses in clarity, this will have an impact on the mark awarded for Communication. Sometimes the clarity of message suffers because students are trying to regurgitate over-long responses. Centres are advised that even a three-clause response is considered to be 'extended' for marking purposes.

Most students attempted a wide variety of language structures and vocabulary. Accurately formulated *weil*-clauses were commonplace but sometimes overused. Most students used some modal verb forms. The best performances included a wide range of subordinating conjunctions and relative clauses.

Students were generally able to form tenses accurately, including the conditional, and subjunctive forms (such as *hätte / wäre*) were sometimes used to good effect. On occasions, when forming the perfect tense, an auxiliary verb was 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*.

Around 40% of students demonstrated 'good' or 'consistently good' pronunciation and intonation. Around 52% of students showed some inconsistency in their pronunciation, often due to unsounded Umlauts or anglicised rendering of cognates. Some students delivered pre-learnt responses in a monotone fashion and lacked authentic intonation, which precluded a higher mark in this category.

Many performances were fluent, but not necessarily in an authentic way, as pre-learnt material was often simply delivered at a sustained pace. In some extreme cases, only around ten questions were answered by the student in a set of mini-monologues. The best performances were ones where the student confidently developed responses but also gave shorter, very natural answers to follow-up questions. Just under 40% of students showed the ability to take part in at least a 'very good exchange'. Only 16% of conversations had the 'air of spontaneity' necessary to score 5 marks.



### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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