AQA

GCSE
GERMAN

8668/SF Paper 3 Speaking Foundation Tier
Report on the Examination

Introduction

Changes were made to the 2023 papers to reflect the removal of the regulatory requirement to test vocabulary outside of the published vocabulary list.

It is pleasing to report that the 2023 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 student performance was slightly improved since the previous series, owing perhaps to improved techniques for tackling the Role-play and Photo card tasks.

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. The content of this report has been informed by senior examiners listening to a wide sample of student performance and is therefore representative of the entry cohort as a whole.

Quality of recordings

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

Teacher Conduct

Test Routine Procedures

Most teacher-examiners adhered closely to the guidelines laid out in the *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations*. This allowed the smooth running of tests, something which puts the student at ease and helps the marker at a later stage.

In some tests, teacher-examiners did not follow the stipulated procedures. It is important that the introduction to each new student 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 Foundation tier time limit of two minutes. On the rare occasions that not all five questions were asked within the allotted time, this was due to a very slow delivery by the student and/or an overlong and repetitive type of 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.

Schools/colleges are advised to note 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. Schools/colleges are also reminded that anything said by the student beyond the maximum time limit is disregarded for assessment.

Conducting the Role-play task

The prescribed role in the teacher's booklet was adhered to by most teachers. However, some teacher-examiners re-worded the script, thereby invalidating any subsequent response by the student.

In the case of two-part questions, often ones requiring an opinion and reason, it is good practice to elicit the two elements separately. This was not always common practice even though it is helpful to students.

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 cards D/F/I, it was permissible to substitute *'in letzter Zeit'* with *'neulich'*. However, on Photo card H, the rephrasing of *'Bekommst du Taschengeld?'* with *'Bekommst du Geld?'* was not allowed.

There were some occasions when a key element of a question was fronted and repeated. For example, on Photo card E, Task 3: *Und letztes Jahr … was war letztes Jahr dein Lieblingsfach in der Schule?* Or on Photo card G, Task 5: *Und deine Freunde … was machen deine Freunde, um fit zu bleiben?* On other occasions, a key question word was repeated with emphasis at the start of the question. For example, on Photo card I, Task 5: *Wie oft ... wie oft gehen deine Freunde einkaufen?* Such questioning 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

Most teacher-examiners asked questions that were appropriate to the ability of the student. There was still, on occasions, the sense of a set list of questions being asked without consideration of the ability or interests of a particular student.

Questions were consistently asked that allowed all students to give and explain opinions, necessary for accessing the Foundation tier top band for communication. Higher attaining 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 teacher-examiners persisted in asking low attaining students 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. When this occurs, it is important for the teacher-examiner to curtail the response by rephrasing the question or asking a subsequent question. Any irrelevant information offered by the student cannot be credited and will count against the accuracy of the performance.

It is important that teacher-examiners employ a questioning technique through which students are clearly able to demonstrate spontaneity. Some tests were conducted in such a way that allowed this to happen and the result was a conversation that had a pleasing feel of authenticity. However, examiners noted that this was the exception rather than the rule and too many performances were dominated by pre-learnt responses.

In some examples of best practice, teacher-examiners allowed even the lowest attaining 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 low attaining students sustain a conversation.

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, or the student was not prompted at all to ask a question.

Some students had been trained to ask a question through adding *Und du?* to the end of a response. For example: *Ich spiele Fußball. Und du?* This is a legitimate technique as long as the question tag corresponds to the preceding response. On occasions, this was not the case and so the task was not fulfilled. For example: *Fußball ist toll. Und du?*

There were a few occasions when a question was asked by the student that was 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 an appropriate and succinct response including a verb. 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/Ihre Meinung über …* The most common opinion structure used was *‘Ich finde …’* with a simple adjective. Compared to the previous series, there were very few examples of *‘Ich feinde …’*

Some students developed responses beyond what was necessary. It is important to note the number of details required to fulfil a task, which is always indicated in brackets at the end of a bullet point.

Some students found the transactional Role-plays more challenging than the informal scenarios. However, most were well-trained in recognising when a request has to be made, denoted by the words *‘für Sie’*. For example, on Role-play 9 Task 1: *‘Ein Instrument für Sie.’* The preferred structure in the student response, *‘Ich möchte’*, was more accurately pronounced than in previous

series. On occasions it was rendered as *'Ich mochte'*, which creates ambiguity and can only score a maximum of one mark.

Quite a few students did not fully accomplish a task when the bullet point included a key element after a hyphen. For example: Role-play 5 Task 1: *Deine Schule – wo.* Role-play 7 Task 1: *Tickets für Sie – wie viele.* It is important for students to read each task very carefully during the preparation time so that they give relevant responses.

Many students were able to form a question effectively from the prompt word(s) provided on the question (?) task. As in the previous series, 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 were not able to respond appropriately to the unprepared (!) task. 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 5 Task 3: *Wie oft kommst du zu spät zur Schule? Nie.*

Specific Foundation tier Role-play comments

The following Role-play tasks generally caused the most issues for students.

Role-play 1

Task 2: A surprising number of students did not recognise the word *Kleidung*.

Role-play 2

Task 1: Students often successfully asked for a *Ferienwohnung* but did not specify a location.
Task 4: A verb was not always used to make a clear statement about transport.

Role-play 3

Task 1: Some students did not recognise the *'wie oft'* element in the bullet point and gave an irrelevant opinion about learning physical education.
Task 4: Similar to Role-play 1, *Sportkleidung* was not always recognised.

Role-play 5

Task 1: Many students missed the requirement to state the location of their school, offering an irrelevant opinion.
Task 5: The pronunciation of *Pause* was often anglicised.

Role-play 6

Task 5: *Kinopreise* was often mispronounced as *Kinopriese*.

Role-play 7

Task 2: Students often gave the age of a third person instead of themselves.

Role-play 8

Task 2: This task was designed to elicit one detail about a good boss. Some students plausibly interpreted it in a different way and stated whether a male or female boss is better! Therefore, a response like *'Eine Chefin ist besser.'* was credited.

Role-play 9

Task 2: As in Role-play 6, *Preis* was sometimes mispronounced as *Pries*.

Student Performance in the Photo card task

Most students had been well trained in preparing suitably developed responses to the first three seen questions. A fully developed response comprises three clauses including a verb. A few students either offered too little information or gave over-long responses where a lack of clarity had an impact on the mark awarded.

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 stated the mood of a person based on facial expression. For example, in Photo card A, *'Das Mädchen sieht glücklich aus. '*

It was encouraging to note that most students began their response with *'Es gibt'*. The very ambiguous *'Der ist'* was heard far less than in previous series. However, an invented present continuous form to describe activities was still quite prevalent. For example, in card B: *'Die Kinder sind essen Schokolade. '*

Most students were able to give and explain opinions. 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 difficulty 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 comments

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

Photo card C

Task 2: Some students did not recognise the meaning of the question.

Photo card D

Task 4: The switch to the third person with a question about *'dein bester Freund / deine beste Freundin'* confused some students who gave an irrelevant first person response about sport.

Photo card E

Task 5: The meaning of *Schulnoten* was not widely recognised.

Photo card F

Task 5: The switch to the third person plural (*'deine Freunde'*) in the question confused some students who gave an irrelevant first person response about technology.

Photo card G

Task 5: The switch to the third person plural (*'deine Freunde'*) in the question confused some students who gave an irrelevant first person response about keeping fit.

Photo card H

Task 4: The meaning of *Teilzeitjob* was not widely recognised.
Task 5: The meaning of *Taschengeld* was not widely recognised.

Photo card I

Task 3: As in the Role-plays, a surprising number of students did not recognise the word *Kleidung*. There was a tendency to say what had been bought in a general sense with no reference to clothing.
Task 5: The switch to the third person plural (*'deine Freunde'*) in the question confused some students who gave an irrelevant first person response about shopping.

Foundation tier General conversation

Generally, 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.

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 accurately 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.

Some students were able to deliver a reasonably fluent performance by managing to incorporate some pre-learnt responses. However, balanced against this, was often a lack of opportunity to respond to simple follow-up questions.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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