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# GCSE

# GERMAN

8668/SH Paper 3 Speaking Higher Tier  
Report on the Examination

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## 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 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 student performance was slightly improved since the previous series, owing perhaps to judicious tier of entry decisions and improved techniques for tackling the Role-play and Photo card tasks.

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. 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 examiner 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 Higher tier time limit of three minutes.

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 L/P/Q, it was permissible to substitute *'in letzter Zeit'* with *'neulich'*. However, on Photo card N, the omission of *'nach den Prüfungen'* in the question *'Was wirst du im Sommer machen?'* was not allowed.

There were some occasions when a key element of a question was fronted and repeated. For example, on Photo card J, Task 5: *Und die letzte Pause ... wie war die letzte Pause in der Schule?* Or other occasions, a key question word was repeated with emphasis at the start of the question. For example, on Photo card J: *Mit wem ... Mit wem wirst du deinen nächsten Geburtstag feiern?*

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 achieving a higher 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. 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 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, although questioning technique in this respect has improved, too many performances were still dominated by pre-learnt responses.

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 credit cannot be given. 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. On occasions students gave far more information than was necessary to accomplish the task, which is to be discouraged.

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 11 Task 1: '*Kleidung für Sie – was.*'

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 trained to apply a *Wie findest du ...?* formulation, which often worked but was sometimes inappropriate to the nature of the prompt words provided.

Most students were able to respond appropriately to the unpredictable (!) task and had been trained to give a short but appropriate response. For example, Role-play 14 task 3: *Und warum sollte man Sport machen? Es ist gesund.*

Some students did not fully accomplish a task when the bullet point included a key element after a hyphen. For example: Role-play 13 task 1: *Ein Auto für Ihre Familie – wie lange* or Role-play 16 task 1: *Eine Party für Sie im Eiscafé – Tag*. It is important for students to read each task very carefully during the preparation time so that responses are relevant.

### Specific Higher tier Role-play comments

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

#### Role-play 10

Task 1: Some students struggled to formulate an accurate perfect tense using *arbeiten*. The task was most effectively accomplished when the simple imperfect form *war* was used.

#### Role-play 11

Task 2: The use of *ausgeben* in the unprepared task made comprehension difficult for some. Responses often included an anglicised pronunciation of *Euro*.

#### Role-play 12

Task 2: Many students failed to understand the use of *sich treffen*.

#### Role-play 13

Task 3: Most students seemed to misunderstand the key question word '*wer*' and stated a destination. However, credit was still given for a named person within a statement like '*Ich fahre nach Berlin*'.

Task 5: *Tankstelle* was not widely known. However, many students were still able to formulate a plausible question.

#### Role-play 14

Task 1: Some students overlooked the key word *seit* in the bullet-point and did not attempt to reference how long they had been doing a leisure activity.

Task 5: *Fernsehsendung* sometimes provided a difficult challenge of enunciation and was often rendered as *Fernsendung*.

#### Role-play 15

Task 3: Students often failed to recognise the question's reference to what their friends do at breaktime. However, a first person response was accepted as long as it included the '*mit meinen Freunden*' element.

#### Role-play 16

Task 5: The prompt word '*Getränke*' tended to be mispronounced or even construed to be a past participle. A fairly common attempt at this task was *Was ist dein Lieblingstrinke?*

#### Role-play 18

Task 2: Many of those who wanted to say that they spoke German in their last lesson were not able to accurately formulate this. The use of the past participle *gesprochen* was rare as other forms (*gesprechen / gesprecht / gesprochen*) were created.

## 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.

One key skill for succeeding in this part of the test is the recognition of question words and formulations. If students are not well trained in this, they are prone to misunderstanding the task and giving irrelevant information.

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. Some students used facial expression to speculate on a person’s mood or characteristic. For example, in Photo card J, ‘*Ich denke, dass das Mädchen glücklich ist, weil sie lächelt.*’ Or Photo card N, ‘*Der Lehrer sieht streng aus.*’

As is to be expected at this tier, most students began their response with ‘*Es gibt*’ as opposed to ‘*Der ist*’. However, an invented present continuous form to describe activities was still quite prevalent. For example, in Photo card M: ‘*Die Leute sind joggen.*’ Or in Photo card O, ‘*Sie sind benutzen einen Computer.*’ Such usage is always given some credit for communication but also classed as a more serious lapse in 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 Higher tier Photo card comments

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

### Photo card J

Task 4: This task was often misunderstood. There was a tendency to talk about a bad subject with no reference to a school day.

### Photo card K

Task 5: Some students did not recognise the key question element ‘*Mit wem ...*’ and gave a description about how they will celebrate their next birthday with no reference to other people.

### Photo card L

Task 5: The past time frame of the question was not always recognised and the subsequent response was in the present tense.

### Photo card M

Task 2: Many students, including the highest attaining ones, did not pay enough attention to detail and missed the key 'wo' question word. As a consequence, responses were often about playing sport in the future but without the necessary reference to a place.

Task 3: There was a tendency to simply describe current sporting facilities rather than stating ways of improving them.

### Photo card N

Task 3: Most students were able to give a simple past tense opinion about their school grades last year, but some found it difficult to add a meaningful justification.

### Photo card O

Task 5: Some students did not address the key element of **which** social media they want to use tonight. A response solely relating to why they want to use social media was irrelevant to the question.

### Photo card Q

Task 4: Successful attempts at answering this question usually included the words *Geld*, *Lohn* or *Gehalt*. However, some students were unable to articulate a response.

## The Higher tier General conversation

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.

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. Schools/colleges are advised that even a three-clause response is considered to be extended for marking purposes.

Most students attempted a wider variety of language structures and vocabulary than students at Foundation tier. Accurately formulated *weil*-clauses were commonplace but sometimes overused. Most students used some modal verb forms. The best performances included a wider 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*.

The standard of pronunciation was best characterised as inconsistent. This was mainly due to unsounded umlauts or the anglicised rendering of cognates. Some students delivered pre-learnt responses and lacked authentic intonation, which also precluded a higher mark in this category.



Many performances were fluent, but not necessarily in an authentic way, as pre-learnt material was often delivered at a reasonable pace. The best performances were ones where the student combined an ability to extend responses with shorter, very natural answers to 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.