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GCSE

**GERMAN**

8668/WH Paper 4 Writing Higher Tier  
Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

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

This year, the exam returned to its pre-pandemic format and there was no additional option on questions 1 and 2 at Higher tier, which potentially had an impact on the quality of work students were able to produce. As expected, the quality of answers for Higher tier students was considerably better than for Foundation tier, suggesting that students were for the most part, entered for the appropriate level.

Most students were able to cope well with the overlap questions, many scoring full marks, and were also able to make a reasonable attempt at the translation, but many found it difficult to cope with the increased demands of question 2, which became a real discriminator. On this question in particular handwriting was at times a major issue, either because the writing was too small or because it was so carelessly written. Whilst examiners will try their absolute best to read what the student has written, credit cannot be given for work that is unintelligible. Students should be reminded that it is their own interests to ensure that examiners are able to read their work clearly.

The mean mark on the paper was just over 38/60 (just under 65% of the total mark) and only slightly lower than last year's mark.

## Question 1

### General comments

The overlap questions proved accessible to most with 1.2 (*Schule*) proving the most popular choice at Higher tier.

On the overlap questions, students are best advised to restrict their answers to 90 words as requested, and not to attempt to write about things outside their capabilities in German. Where messages break down, either by use of English or simply German that fails to communicate, marks for Content are unlikely to exceed 4/10 and for marks in the top two bands a minimum of 2 opinions are required. For Quality of Language, references to all three time frames are required for marks in the top band and there must be some attempts to use complex structures.

### Question 1.1

Although not as strong as 1.2, performance on question 1.1 was pleasing, with just over 45% of students attaining top band marks for Content and 63% for Quality of Language

A significant number of students failed to understand *auskommst* in bullet point 1, and of those who did, very few were able to use it correctly. Those who misunderstood it tended to write about going out with family, where the family came from or how their family got on with their friends. Students who tried to use *sich verstehen* as an alternative often struggled with the reflexive pronoun.

Understanding of *wichtig* on bullet point 2, however, caused fewer problems and many students wrote enthusiastically about what their friends mean to them, although some failed to say why their friends were important, which was required, and *hilfen* was a common misspelling of *helfen*.

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Most students seem to have been well trained to expect both a past and future tense on this question and many were able to use tenses effectively, often bringing the past or future into their response to bullet points 1 and 2. *In letzter Zeit* on bullet point 3 was not understood by all, however, and a small number of students wrote about summer holidays the previous year which could not be credited, although those who used what they had clearly learnt about holidays but prefaced it with *Letztes Wochenende* or something similar had access to full marks. Where problems with tenses did occur, these tended to be missing auxiliaries with the perfect tense and with the future *mochte* or *wurde* were commonly seen as was *möchte* with a past participle. These could not be accepted; however, a pure future tense was not required and many students found other ways of expressing future plans.

### Question 1.2

This option proved the most popular at Higher tier and produced the highest percentage of students attaining top band marks for Content with just over 52%, and 70% achieving top band marks for Quality of Language.

Students were clearly well rehearsed in writing about school subjects and many wrote at length about a number of subjects, although provided some reference was made to their favourite or best subject this was not in itself a problem. Students are best advised, however, to restrict their answers to the information requested as lengthy answers frequently lead to more errors. Surprisingly, perhaps, some students failed to recognise *Fach* and wrote about things other than school subjects.

*Prüfungen* was generally well known by Higher tier students, who gave some heart felt descriptions of the trauma of exams.

Many students were able to make some comment about last year at school, although for both this and future plans there were some overly ambitious answers which were rarely successful. Some students started their answer with *Meine Pläne für nächstes Jahr ist...*, which led to some clumsy constructions, and a fairly small number misunderstood *Pläne* and wrote about travelling somewhere by plane.

### Question 2

#### General remarks

Question 2.1 (*Live-Events*) proved the most popular option, with 55% of students choosing it, however option 2.2 (*Umwelt*), which was chosen by 45% of students, produced the best performances. Both questions produced some passionate responses and students often had a lot to say, although attempts to express complicated ideas often led to a lack of clarity and errors.

Some students seem to have been trained to add comments on all questions about the opinions of other family members or various friends. Where these have not been asked for, such comments become rather repetitive and are not necessarily fully relevant. Students are advised to read the bullet points carefully and ensure their answers remain pertinent at all times.

On both questions, a considerable number of students had clearly been taught idiomatic phrases which they were determined to bring into their writing, often artificially, and in the worst cases only

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half remembered. Whilst these can be entertaining, only rarely do such idioms lend fluency and students are best advised against using them in an examination.

Whilst most students are quite adept at using the more common subordinating conjunctions rarely was the word order correct, and for the higher mark bands examiners are looking for a variety of complex structures which are not restricted to conjunctions and which add fluency to the piece of writing.

Students also need to remember the requirement for justified opinions for marks in the top two bands; some very well written pieces could not be awarded more than 9 for Content as justifications were missing.

### **Question 2.1**

The best students were able to write enthusiastically about an event they had been to as well as give a number of advantages and disadvantages of live events. Just over 11% scored a mark in the top band for Content, and just under 15% for Range of language, with just under 25% scoring 4 or 5 for accuracy. There were some limited responses, with around 30% scoring between 1 and 6 on Content and around 40% achieving only 2 for Accuracy. Students should be aware, however, that where a question asks for both advantages and disadvantages, at least one example of each must be covered for the bullet point to be credited. Some students were confused by the rubric and wrote about organising an event for an *Online-Jugendforum* and others wrote about *Live-Events* on the internet, which was perhaps not something that had been anticipated but was generally acceptable. Others referred to a *Live-Event* throughout rather than a concert, festival or match, which tended to read rather clumsily.

The majority of students had a lot to say about both advantages and disadvantages: atmosphere, live music, meeting other people, food and drink, cost, danger, environmental impact. Very few seemed to recognise that *Vorteile* and *Nachteile* were plurals, often using them with *ist* or using the plural form to express a singular: *eine Vorteile ist...* Some students referred to *du/dein* rather than *man*.

Most students seemed to have experience of a Live-Event, mostly pop concerts, but there was a sprinkling of sporting events and even some classical enthusiasts. These led to enthusiastic descriptions although not always well expressed, and the perfect tense was not always well handled. Some students digressed into overly long descriptions of their favourite band/singer/music, and quite surprisingly of the food and drink available, neither of which were fully relevant.

### **Question 2.2**

This option was slightly less popular, possibly because some students did not understand '*Sorgen*' in bullet point 1, however students had clearly prepared material on *die Umwelt* and it produced the best scores, with 22% achieving between 13 and 15 marks for Content. Range of language scores were also considerably higher than in option 1, with nearly 30% scoring between 10 and 12. The scores for Accuracy were also impressive, with just over 40% scoring 4 or 5 out of 5. There were some limited responses, however, with around 25%

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scoring between 1 and 6 on Content and around 30% only achieving 2 for Accuracy.

Some students had clearly not understood 'Sorgen' on bullet point 1, often assuming they were being asked what they do / have done for the environment and gave long and detailed answers which, sadly, were not relevant. Others managed to fulfil the task if they linked their activities to environmental problems. The best answers expressed genuine concern for the environment and there were some impassioned pleas for action. The success of these tended to hinge around knowledge of subject specific vocabulary and in some cases this was simply not good enough and communication was seriously impacted by poor spelling and half-remembered words.

Perhaps because they occur in the same chapter in textbooks, some students saw social problems such as homelessness, unemployment, drugs, poverty and problems in developing countries as environmental problems, which unfortunately did not cover the bullet points.

The second bullet point was generally well done, with students able to write about a number of things they will do, from recycling to buying electric cars, installing solar panels and organising events to raise awareness of environmental issues. A lot of students were planning on building nest boxes for birds, which clearly also appears in one of the text books! Here again, however, where they were unsure of the correct German and some students resorted to English which caused messages to break down. The opinion of other family members about helping the environment is once again not fully relevant. Some students used *man* throughout, however the question asked was *du in der Zukunft machen wirst....* Where there was no reference to *ich* the second bullet was not covered, restricting the Content mark to 12.

### Question 3

In general, performances on the translation questions were below what one would expect at Higher tier and were lower than the performance of last year's cohort. This year 2.6% of students achieved full marks for conveying Key Messages, however almost 60% reached a mark of 4+, which is rather more encouraging. For Application of Grammatical Knowledge and Structures, the percentage dropped to a little over 44%. Whilst students may often have gained marks for conveying key messages, word order errors and incorrect verbs meant that a lower mark was often awarded for Application of Grammatical Knowledge and Structures.

The passage is made up of elements of language which present different levels of challenge. Not surprisingly, the higher demand combination of 'like' and 'go out' in the first sentence caused difficulty, although 'in my free time' and 'with my friends' were generally well done.

'Last Saturday we went to a football match and then to a café next to the stadium', which was also high demand, caught out all but the most able and almost all students made no attempt at the prepositions and failed to distinguish between the definite and indefinite articles. Neither *nach* nor *ins Fußballspiel* conveyed the correct message and *dann*, *neben* and *Stadion* were rarely known. Amazingly, Café caused problems with *Kafé / Kaffee* commonly seen. A reminder, perhaps, that students need to revise all the vocabulary that they have come across, also that this is a translation exercise and attempts to paraphrase cannot be credited.

More successful, however, were translations of 'I play sport quite often because I want to be fit and healthy'. Surprisingly, the last sentence which contained the phrase 'our teacher' was not handled as well, with *Lehrer* sometimes misspelt as *Lehre*, although many students knew *streng* so were able gain some credit at the end.

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

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

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