

GCSE

German

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J731**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J031 J131**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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A711/01/02 Listening

General Comments:

The Papers at both Tiers appeared to be more challenging for many candidates than last year's papers. There were few very high marks at Foundation Tier, indicating that the majority of candidates at this Tier were correctly entered. However, this did not appear to be the case at Higher Tier, where the number of low marks was quite high. Centres are reminded that candidates may achieve a better final grade overall if they do well at Foundation Tier than if they struggle to score many marks on a Higher Tier paper which is really beyond their capabilities.

Overall, there was again evidence of good preparation by teachers – candidates were very successful at answering objective questions based on a visual stimulus. However, it was obvious that questions which require candidates to answer in English, whether this involves selecting words from a list or producing short answers for themselves, cause problems for many candidates.

As was said in last year's Report, candidates' handwriting continued to cause problems this year. Candidates should be reminded again that it is pointless to revise hard for their examinations and then throw marks away by failing to write their answers clearly. It would also help examiners if, should a candidate need to change an answer and thus have to write it somewhere other than on the line provided, they would put an arrow to the new answer or indicate in some other way that it is there. Many examiners also commented on the poor quality of spelling in English revealed in many candidates' scripts. Although candidates are not penalised for spelling mistakes in this paper, they should be reminded that they cannot be awarded marks if it is impossible for examiners to work out what they are intending to say.

Unfortunately, candidates appeared to have forgotten or ignored the comments made in previous Reports regarding the need for careful reading of questions. The rubrics are included on the paper to help candidates, and so they really need to read them. There were, however, very few instances of candidates writing answers in the wrong language, though this did still happen on a small number of occasions (despite there being no questions requiring answers in German in this specification). The best candidates had made very good use of their five minutes' reading time – a small but pleasing number had made quite extensive notes on their scripts.

Despite the comments made in last year's Report, the number of candidates leaving a lot of blanks was commented on by many examiners – this year, this happened primarily when written answers in English were required. Since no marks are deducted in this paper for incorrect guesses, teachers should continue to encourage their candidates to make an attempt at every question.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Foundation Tier

Exercise 1

This was generally well done, with a few exceptions. For Q2 some chose A, some chose B. 'Zähne' was a problem for some. For Q8 many chose A, not recognising 'dreizehn'.

Exercise 2

Again, this exercise was mostly well answered. Common mistakes included for Q9 'edge of town', while for Q11 many chose 'slow'. For Q12 some went for each incorrect option, perhaps losing 'singen' between 'unterwegs' and 'zusammen' and for Q13 it was a similar story – 'Geschäfte' surprisingly seemed not to be well known. For Q14, 'Strand' caused problems for many candidates. Q15 and Q16 were generally answered correctly by the majority of candidates.

Exercise 3

More able FT candidates got all of this exercise right, while the less able made mistakes on many answers. For Q18 many put 'Bayern will win', obviously not understanding the significance of 'spannend'. In Q19 few understood 'gegenüber', while in Q21 'restaurant / café' invalidated many. There was poor recognition of 'Imbissstube', or 'near', missing the important 'direkt am'. For Q22 'roast' and 'toast' were frequent renderings. Many examiners commented on how surprising it was that so few candidates knew a word as common as 'Wurst'.

Foundation and Higher Tier

Exercise 4 at FT, Exercise 1 at HT

This exercise was generally quite well done at both Tiers. Common errors were for Q25/1 lots of Ms instead of Hs, hearing the 'zweiten Stock' but missing the room change. Q26/2 resulted in Hs instead of Ms and Q27/3 B instead of E, assuming 'cold food' rather than 'no food'. Q28/4 produced the most mistaken answer at both levels - as many opted for J as for K, obviously hearing the mention of costs and Euros, but missing the 'sofort'.

Exercise 5 at FT, 2 at HT

This exercise was mostly answered well in places and not so well in others at both levels. Popular misconceptions included the following – for Q29/5 'England', and for Q30/6 'bad/brilliant' and many other specific inaccurate answers. Q31/7 produced lots of 'no / more / some' - most seemed to be of the opinion he would be an English student in Germany, while others assumed 'nur' meant 'no'. For Q32/8 'guest family' was the most common incorrect response. Some 'on his owns' or 'with his friends', or answers implying that some of his family live in England Q33/9 Some good answers, but a lot of 'speak English' guesses. Q34/10 produced some strange renderings of 'Sehenswürdigkeiten' – there were lots of 'films / cinema', and even some 'kite flying'. For Q35/11 many understood the contribution bit, but not 'die Hälfte'. Q36/12 was, however, mostly answered well.

Higher Tier

Exercise 3

Most candidates, even the more able, struggled with parts of this section, only a few getting all the marks. Common errors included the following responses - Q13 'treat'; Q14 'village hall / home'; Q15 'cake'; Q16 'turnout'; Q17 'village hall / zoo'; Q18 'likes / prefers'; Q19 'delighted / annoyed'; Q20 'disappointed'.

Exercise 4

The first 4 questions were well answered, the last 4 only more able candidates were able to answer. Common mistakes with Q21 included 'lots of / too much traffic', missing the 'das geht aber' or not understanding 'Luftverschmutzung'. For Q22, if candidates missed 'Maske', then 'pollution / air pollution / breathing' was the common guess. Q23 was generally well answered,

as was Q24. Those who didn't manage to get the correct answer reverted to 'pollution / factory gases' or other similar attempts. A few were quite close with 'water' but no 'rain'. Q25 was only answered correctly by a very small number of candidates. Many went for 'homeless', but those who could not access '*die Miete*', but heard '*Geld*' went down the poverty route. Q26 was better answered than 25, but many put down 'eating / stealing in the supermarket', not understanding '*Müll*'. Very few managed a correct answer to Q27, mostly continuing the 'poverty' or 'homeless' idea. Some understood '*Ausländer*', but then assumed they took the best jobs. Q28, again, very few answered correctly - the ones who were close answered '(cheap) German lessons', without conveying the idea of the lessons being free.

Exercise 5

This proved to be a taxing exercise for all but the most able. Many candidates did not score a single point, and those with 1 mark generally got it for number 32 or 35. Common incorrect renderings included for Q29 'fabric / clothes', 'things for England' – the German '*Lebensmittel*' was not at all well known. Q30 tended to be answered with 'in Germany / usually / last week / recently' because very few candidates understood '*Durchschnitt*'. Q31 was commonly answered with 'getting a job / formulas / getting a flat'. A small number of candidates secured the mark with 'filling in a job application'. Q32 Candidates who got close to the correct answer here were awarded the mark. Those who didn't tended to give an answer which was the complete opposite to the correct one like 'lots of jobs', obviously thinking that '*Arbeitslose*' meant 'jobs'. Q33 produced very few good answers. Many guessed at 'funny', being misled by '*lustig*'. For Q34 neither '*Sitten*' nor '*Kultur*' were well rendered. Some got 'culture', but most went for 'speak more languages / make more friends', guessing from the question. Faced with Q35, quite a lot got the 'what he wants' answer. No script which I saw contained the response 'smart clothes when meeting clients', although 'smart' was a frequent guess - 'suit', 'casual', 'shirt and tie' were also all common. For Q36 only a few attempted to describe what he thought of the dress code. Most guessed at the dress itself, and the guesses were very similar to those for Q35.

A712 Speaking

General Comments:

This is the fifth year of this specification requiring centres to conduct Controlled Assessment of Speaking, marked by centres and moderated by OCR. On the whole, improvements continue in all areas

Administration

Most centres did a good job and deadlines for submitting work to moderators were properly observed by nearly all centres. There were some clerical errors – centres should ensure that all arithmetic has been carefully checked or there may be delays in moderating. Centres should also check that the transfer of marks from the WMS to the MS1s is correct.

More centres submitted work via the OCR repository this year. Most recordings were of a good quality, although centres should check that recordings are loud enough. Candidates Notes Forms were generally attached and most centres correctly included the signed Centre Authentication form (CCS160) in the material sent to the moderator. The centre mark sheets (MS1s) for both tasks should be sent to the moderator. Issues with missing documents were generally quickly rectified.

When making entries centres can only enter one component (01 Repository or 02 Postal). Centres using the Repository should note that they can scan the necessary paperwork and upload it using the 'Administration' tab. More centres used this option. Centres using Component 02 sent their recordings to moderators on CD or USB.

Centres are reminded to check that the recordings are in the format required by OCR (MP3) and that recordings are suitably backed up.

Internal Moderation

Centres are responsible for ensuring that their candidates have a reliable order of merit. If more than one teacher is involved, the centre must carry out internal moderation and it was clear that this had been effectively done by many centres. A few centres were asked to review their order of merit and in this case centres may need to review their internal moderation process.

Candidate Performance

Candidates take part in an interactive spoken activity lasting four to six minutes. There are regulations about the Notes Form and the preparation of material.

Notes forms

Most candidates had made good use of them, keeping to the forty word limit. Centres should note that symbols or codes are not allowed.

Timing

Timing starts from the end of the teacher's announcement. At the end of the six minutes, the examiner may complete a question and allow the candidate a brief response. No credit is given to any material after this point. Most centres adhered to the recommended timing. In some instances, recordings were too long and resulted in the reduction of marks at moderation. This was often because a range of time frames, opinions and/or justifications were not in evidence before the end of the six minutes. As a result, the upper bands of the mark scheme for Communication and Quality of Language were not available. Centres with this on their report should review their examining technique.

Where candidates do a Presentation and Discussion, the presentation should not exceed two minutes. Lengthy presentations do not allow for spontaneity and candidates are not able to access the top bands for Communication if the task becomes a lengthy monologue with little time left for follow up discussion as candidates need to be able to deal with unpredictable questions. There were more tasks at four minutes this year and candidates could still achieve the full range of the mark scheme, although there were instances where it was felt they could have lasted a bit longer to benefit candidates. Tasks short of four minutes are self-penalising as candidates tend not to produce a range of vocabulary, structures and tenses.

Tasks

Most centres set appropriate, varied and interesting tasks. There were some good Presentations and Discussions, Conversations and Interviews. Candidates were generally given the opportunity to offer more information and develop answers, especially when teachers used more open-ended questions allowing candidates to demonstrate what they can do. Some centres relied heavily on the same task title thus producing similar questions for each candidate. Candidates do need to deliver a faultless performance to achieve a top mark for Pronunciation and Intonation, equally a mark of 4 or 5 should not be awarded where there are instances of interference from the candidate's first language. Common mistakes were the confusion of the *ie/ei* sound and problems differentiating between *war/wäre*, *hatte/hätte* and *konnte/könnte*. This can also impede communication when a question is asked in one tense and answered in another. Intonation can also be affected where candidates are too reliant on pre-learnt material or their notes as they can sound too mechanical or rush their delivery.

A713/01 Reading

General Comments:

The June 2015 Foundation Tier German Reading paper followed the pattern of papers since 2010. Candidates knew what to expect, and had no difficulty in completing the paper in the time allowed. This year's paper proved quite challenging to candidates, and there were no candidates who scored full marks. Only a handful of candidates scored less than 15/40. Even the very weakest candidates scoring less than 10/40 had completed the paper fully. Some lower-scoring candidates had done reasonably well on the objective items, but had found Exercise 5, where brief responses in English were required, very daunting.

Teachers had done a good job of preparing candidates and entering them appropriately. To improve further, it would be worthwhile teachers checking the Vocabulary list – Alphabetical (on the OCR website) against their teaching materials. For example, page 2 of the Vocabulary list there is a list of "Prior knowledge" which includes some matters which have arisen in this 2015 paper.

This year a majority of assessors has commented about poor candidate handwriting, sometimes to the point of indecipherability. This sometimes even extended to confusion between D and B in objective items. Candidates should make every effort to present legible work. Details about successful responses are to be found in the mark scheme, which is available separately to centres.

The examination is set with each of the exercises targeting a number of different topics areas from the list in the specification. Over time, all of the specification is covered.

The target grades for Foundation Tier are G-C, with later questions aimed at the higher grades. However, there were occasional items early on in the paper which some candidates – even those who did well elsewhere – found taxing. To improve further, teachers might consider reviewing simple topics, perhaps at the end of a revision schedule when more complex matters have already been tackled.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Exercise 1, Questions 1-8

This exercise tested the understanding of items containing 2-5 words.

Question 1

Most candidates did this well. A few did not recognise *Obst*.

Question 2

Most candidates did this well, *Autobahn* being known to most.

Question 3

Amongst school subjects *Kunst* is one of the trickier ones. But most candidates did this well.

Question 4

Most could cope with *Schuluniform*.

Question 5

Geschenke was not known to all candidates, even with *Weihnachten* as an additional clue.

Question 6

Most candidates did this well, even if only by process of elimination. However a few clearly did not know *Sekretärin*.

Question 7

Some candidates did not recognise *Klempnerin*. Teachers are referred to Vocabulary list – By topic, page 52.

Question 8

Although *Bus* was in the longer compound *Schulbus*, most candidates correctly identified it.

Exercise 2, Questions 9-16

This exercise tested the understanding of short sentences. The majority of candidates did this exercise competently.

Question 9

Nearly all candidates knew the domestic task of laying the table.

Question 10

Despite *Neffe* being less commonly discussed in class than brothers and sisters, this question was generally well done.

Question 11

Klavier was not universally known.

Question 12

Nachrichten was found difficult by some.

Question 13

Mutti was known to most candidates, as was *schicke Kleidung*.

Question 14

Fernseh-Krimis in combination with *blöd* puzzled quite a few candidates.

Question 15

Most candidates clearly knew both *lustig* and *Vati*.

Question 16

Not all candidates spotted *Schlagzeug* as being practised by a drummer. Teachers are reminded that music is a specific item in Topic area 3. See page 6 of the specification on the website.

Exercise 3, Questions 17-24

This exercise tested short sentences, and also made reference to the fact that German is used outside Germany, in this case Liechtenstein.

Question 17

Many, but not all candidates spotted *alte ... Leute* and plumped for Natasha. Uschi was the most frequent incorrect answer.

Question 18

This question was reasonably well done by many.

Question 19

Most candidates spotted *Austausch* and got this right. Rolli was a common incorrect answer.

Question 20

This was well done by many candidates, although a few did not know *Ich werde* in Karl's social network post.

Question 21

Almost candidates spotted *Mechaniker* in Arpád's sentence.

Question 22

Most candidates were able to identify Torsten as the correct answer here, probably because they knew *helfen* and recognised that Brazil is outside Liechtenstein.

Question 23

Not all candidates were able to identify Rolli as the person who looks after the area near their home. Perhaps *Nachbarschaft* was tricky for some, with the suffix *-schaft* adding difficulty.

Question 24

Julia's likely improvement in English after a summer with her British aunt was spotted by a majority of candidates, although Karl, Vasily, Ingeborg, Arpád, Rolli and Natasha were all seen as possible by some.

Exercise 4, Questions 25-32

This exercise is also done by Higher Tier candidates as their exercise 1.

It followed a familiar format, with candidates required to say whether "Athena", "Tomasz" or "Both" was the appropriate answer for each statement. This required close reading of the two passages.

Question 25

"Athena" was the correct answer. Those who chose "both" clearly did not understand *Wintersporturlaub*.

Question 26

Most candidates spotted that skiing was too expensive for Athena.

Question 27

Almost all candidates got this question right.

Question 28

A majority of candidates got this wrong. They had failed to realise that *Hallenbad* does not qualify for "outside", and had stopped checking once they had found *schwimmen*.

Question 29

The answer "both" was chosen by a majority of candidates. Those who picked just one of the young people either did not know *gesund* or did not consider *viel Salat, wenig Fett, kleine Portionen* to be characteristic of healthy eating. Reasonable knowledge of the topic "Food and drink as aspects of culture and health" should have led candidates towards "both".

Question 30

Most candidates were successful here.

Question 31

Most candidates got this right.

Question 32

Tomasz makes no comment about smoking. However a number of candidates chose “both” for this. Candidates are reminded that their answers need to be based on the text in the question paper.

Exercise 5, Questions 33-40

This exercise is also done by Higher Tier candidates as their exercise 2.

Question 33

The correct answer, Channel crossing, was very rare, as were the acceptable alternatives. *Kanal* is clearly absent from candidates’ vocabulary. Most had some variation of “canal”, including canal bridges, and even the intriguing underground canal.

There were many guesses, including climate, cost, people, roundabouts, but driving on the left (which does put many Germans off driving in the UK) hardly got a mention.

Question 34

Nearly all candidates got the correct answer, “two weeks”.

Question 35

This question expected an answer based on *wir müssen unterwegs übernachten*. A wide variety of ways of expressing this was accepted. For a lot of candidates this was just as well.

Question 36

This question depended on the candidate’s ability to read the whole of paragraph 4 of the text: *Viele Leute sind der Meinung, dass Fliegen Probleme für die Umwelt macht, aber ich bin nicht so sicher.*

Only a minority of candidates spotted that Kai did not agree with *viele Leute*. This was in spite of a further clue being provided by his final statement: *Es gibt doch jedes Jahr Unterschiede im Klima!*

Question 37

A majority of candidates correctly opted for “sunbathe” or a synonym. However a substantial minority offered “swim”, even though the text reads: *aber schwimmen und tauchen mag ich nicht*. A few able but misguided candidates answered “dive”.

Question 38

Very many candidates answered this correctly. There were some who invented prices in a variety of currencies (£, €, \$), despite there being no concrete prices in the text.

Question 39

Nearly all candidates got the correct answer, “interesting”. However the prevalence and variety of mis-spellings of “interesting” in English were both considerable.

Question 40

Very many candidates mentioned either a hire car or a castle visit and gained a mark. There were also good numbers of candidates who guessed based on their own experience. Guesses included showers, toilet visit, eating, shopping, sleeping, and buying a car. Answers need to be based on the text in the question paper.

A713/02 Reading

General Comments

The June 2015 Higher Tier German Reading paper followed the pattern of papers since 2010. Candidates knew what to expect, and all but a few candidates had no difficulty in completing the paper in the time allowed. A very small number of candidates, however, had not attempted questions 37-40, perhaps because they were on the last outside page of the booklet. Candidates should be made aware that there will always be 40 questions in A713. They should also be alerted to the words "Turn over" which always appear on odd-numbered pages if the paper is not yet finished.

This year's paper was marginally easier for candidates than the 2014 paper. A few candidates scored 40/40.

Only a handful of candidates scored less than 15/40. Some lower-scoring candidates had done reasonably well on the objective items, but had found Exercises 2 and 4, where brief responses in English were required, very daunting.

Teachers had done a good job of preparing candidates and entering them appropriately.

To improve further, it would be worthwhile teachers checking the Vocabulary list – Alphabetical (on the website) against their teaching materials. For example, page 2 of the Vocabulary list there is a list of "Prior knowledge" which includes some matters which have arisen in this 2015 paper.

This year a majority of assessors has commented about poor candidate handwriting, sometimes to the point of indecipherability. Candidates should make every effort to present legible work.

Details about successful responses are to be found in the mark scheme, which is available separately to centres.

The examination is set with each of the exercises targeting a number of different topics areas from the list in the specification. Over time, all of the specification is covered. The target grades for Higher Tier are D-A*, with later questions aimed at the higher grades. However, there were occasional items early on in the paper which some candidates – even those who did well elsewhere – found taxing. To improve further, teachers might consider reviewing simple topics, perhaps at the end of a revision schedule when more complex matters have already been tackled.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Exercise 1, Questions 1-8

This exercise is also done by Foundation Tier candidates as their exercise 4. It followed a familiar format, with candidates required to say whether "Athena", "Tomasz" or "Both" was the appropriate answer for each statement. This required close reading of the two passages.

Question 1

"Athena" was the correct answer. Those who chose "both" clearly did not understand *Wintersporturlaub*.

Question 2

Most candidates spotted that skiing was too expensive for Athena.

Question 3

Almost all candidates got this question right.

Question 4

A majority of candidates got this wrong. They had failed to realise that *Hallenbad* does not qualify for “outside”, and had stopped checking once they had found *schwimmen*.

Question 5

The answer “both” was chosen by a majority of candidates. Those who picked just one of the young people either did not know *gesund* or did not consider *viel Salat, wenig Fett, kleine Portionen* to be characteristic of healthy eating. Reasonable knowledge of the topic “Food and drink as aspects of culture and health” should have led candidates towards “both”.

Question 6

Most candidates were successful here.

Question 7

Most candidates got this right.

Question 8

Tomasz makes no comment about smoking. However a number of candidates chose “both” for this. Candidates are reminded that their answers need to be based on the text in the question paper.

Exercise 2, Questions 9-16

This exercise is also done by Foundation Tier candidates as their exercise 5.

Question 9

The correct answer, Channel crossing, was very rare, as were the acceptable alternatives. *Kanal* is clearly absent from candidates’ vocabulary. Most had some variation of “canal”, including canal bridges, and even the intriguing underground canal.

There were many guesses, including climate, cost, people, roundabouts, but driving on the left (which does put many Germans off driving in the UK) hardly got a mention.

Question 10

Nearly all candidates got the correct answer, “two weeks”.

Question 11

This question expected an answer based on *wir müssen unterwegs übernachten*. A wide variety of ways of expressing this was accepted. For a lot of candidates this was just as well.

Question 12

This question depended on the candidate’s ability to read the whole of paragraph 4 of the text: *Viele Leute sind der Meinung, dass Fliegen Probleme für die Umwelt macht, aber ich bin nicht so sicher*.

Only a minority of candidates spotted that Kai did not agree with *viele Leute*. This was in spite of a further clue being provided by his final statement: *Es gibt doch jedes Jahr Unterschiede im Klima!*

Question 13

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Question 14

Very many candidates answered this correctly. There were some who invented prices in a variety of currencies (£, €, \$), despite there being no concrete prices in the text.

Question 15

Nearly all candidates got the correct answer, "interesting". However the prevalence and variety of mis-spellings of "interesting" in English were both considerable.

Question 16

Very many candidates mentioned either a hire car or a castle visit and gained a mark. There were also good numbers of candidates who guessed based on their own experience. Guesses included showers, toilet visit, eating, shopping, sleeping, and buying a car. Answers need to be based on the text in the question paper.

Exercise 3, Questions 17-24

This passage on work experience required careful reading of a passage containing several tenses and more challenging vocabulary, as well as some straightforward items.

Question 17

The correct answer, animals, was chosen by most candidates. All four pets mentioned are listed in the Foundation [sic] section of the Vocabulary List – Alphabetical. The next most popular choice was the answer "heroes", for which there is no justification in the text.

Question 18

Most candidates chose the correct answer "the children are new". The next most popular answer was "the teacher is inexperienced". Richard is clearly on work experience, and not a teacher.

Question 19

This question expected an answer based on *endete um halb eins*. A large majority of candidates got this right. A few candidates chose "late in the afternoon", which is clearly incorrect.

Question 20

Many candidates chose the correct answer, "wooden blocks". The next most popular choice was "plastic bricks", perhaps reflecting candidates' own experience as toddlers, but which had no basis in the text.

Question 21

A majority of candidates correctly opted for "paint". However "act" and "read" were chosen by those who did not understand ... *Bilder gemalt*. There is no basis in the text for either of these options.

Question 22

The correct answer, "getting changed" depended on an understanding of ... *ziehen sich die Kinder um*. Around half of candidates spotted this. However the plausible answers "finding their coats" and "putting toys away" – neither of which had any support in the text – were chosen by those who were replying on their own experience as toddlers. It might be possible to decide which of them come from particularly tidy homes...

Question 23

A large majority of candidates chose "on foot". Transport is obviously well taught.

Question 24

Nearly all candidates correctly identified "is totally exhausting" as correct.

Exercise 4, Questions 25-32

This exercise had many questions which allowed the more able candidates to shine, but were tricky for more modest candidates. The exercise of writing answers in their own words in English was a good discriminator.

Most scores on this exercise were between 0 and 4, an indication of the testing nature of this type of exercise. The standard required of those aiming at top grades is a high one.

Question 25

The intended answer, “mid-twenties” was spotted by a minority of candidates only. Most of the rest guessed specific ages (7, 17, 30 and 70 were the most common) or gave very general answers such as “middle-aged”, “adult”, “quite old”.

Question 26

The idea of playing to an audience was required. The expected answer: “appeared on stage” was given by only a few candidates only. Other expressions were accepted, such as “performs”, “does gigs”.

The notion of performance ruled out answers such as “plays music”, “practices”, “teaches music”, “records music”.

A small number of candidates was convinced *Bühne* is a town in which he played.

Question 27

A fairly precise motivation was required here. He only had a small number of fans, or a small fan base. Careful reading of the text was required to reach this answer.

Mention of relatives presumably came from *dass er nur eine relativ kleine Zahl fester Fans hat*, and did not gain a mark.

Fans did not tell him to take part in a talent show, so no credit was given for that guess.

Imprecise English was perhaps to blame for “he only had little fans”, another incorrect answer.

Question 28

A good number of candidates were able to offer either “talent show” or “TV show”.

There were some guesses based on popular views of talent shows. These included: “by doing something unusual”, “by being fashionable” and “easily”. None of these earned a mark.

Question 29

Many candidates found a way of expressing *Seine Meinung stimmt*.

However a good number thought his opinion “absolute” or “definite”, misled by *absolut*.

Question 30

The obvious answer, “it’s the only one he takes seriously” was known by some. Others were helped by generous interpretation of similar answers in the mark scheme. What is clear is that *ernst* remains unknown by many candidates. It is in the Foundation Tier Vocabulary – Alphabetical list.

Question 31

The best candidates understood *Bei allen anderen hat die Jury fast keine Ahnung von Musik*.

Many candidates were reduced to guesswork (largely clueless) about such matters as judges’ fairness, harshness, niceness, talent or musical taste.

Question 32

Correct answers interpreting *Ihm ist es egal* were rare.

Most candidates relied on guesswork on such matters as rudeness, jealousy, stupidity, annoyingness and incorrectness. None of this gained a mark

Exercise 5, Questions 33-40

This exercise also had many questions which allowed the more able candidates to show their ability. For weaker candidates, at least some of the questions were accessible. Scores of 0/8 were rare in this exercise.

The layout with nine paragraphs, one each for the example and the 8 questions, guided candidates through the exercise.

However, the standard required of those aiming at top grades is a high one, and good marks on this section were quite an achievement.

Question 33

The correct answer, *eher konventionelle Kleidung*, was in to be found the text. The incorrect option A was chosen by those who had overlooked *später*.

Question 34

The correct answer depended on working out that *Lächeln* is a sign of friendliness.

Question 35

The correct answer required a global understanding of paragraph 4. In global terms paragraph 4 concerns *Wen man zuerst grüßen soll*.

Question 36

The importance of *Kunden* to every business is clearly stated. A very small number of candidates failed to turn over to Questions 37-40, losing 4 marks.

Question 37

Candidates found this question the most straightforward of the exercise.

Question 38

More competent candidates were able to see that *nach einem leicht erkrankten Kind* was related to *über ein erkältetes Kind* in the options.

Question 39

Able candidates were able to marry up *den Kollegen nicht auf die Nerven zu gehen* with *dass man den Anderen nicht stört*.

Question 40

This item tested *Nicht erlaubt: sich während des Telefonats mit anderen Sachen zu beschäftigen*. A good number of candidates correctly chose option C, *zur gleichen Zeit etwas anderes zu machen*.

A714 Writing

General Comments:

All teachers are reminded that the Guide to Controlled Assessment (Writing) document should be closely consulted before preparing candidates for this Unit. Procedures and clear rules for preparation and final writing up are set out here in detail. The document also includes recommendations for scheduling, as well as an extensive bank of task suggestions and ideas differentiated according to perceived candidate ability and potential. These are usefully linked to GCSE Specification Topic Areas. Given the time-tabling demands that teachers face these days, much time and anxiety may be saved by strategic planning for Controlled Assessments at the start of the GCSE course, within the departmental scheme of work. Teachers are particularly encouraged to consider the “Possible adaptations” task ideas within each Topic section for the additional scope and opportunities for originality that they offer to more ambitious candidates. Such candidates may also be interested in devising their own adaptations.

As in previous years there was again some excellent individual work seen in 2015. There were also some obvious generic pieces from within centres, which showed little authenticity – for example where candidates “saw the sights” or “went on excursions” on a holiday visit, though neglected to say what they were or to make them at all relevant. Some greater contextualisation of tasks – ie: awareness of the readership for which the item was devised - was noted in a few centres this year, but too frequently the ‘Task Purpose’ requirement stated remained unexploited and apparently irrelevant. A lack of any clear direction here to start with denies candidates the opportunity to focus on the notional point of the writing task that they themselves are being required to undertake.

Approach to Tasks

It is a reasonable assumption that most candidates’ writing ability in the target language will improve with practice. Whilst it is a good idea to expose candidates to the “Controlled Assessment experience” relatively early in the two-year GCSE course, it is not necessarily to their advantage to submit such early exercises. Where they are submitted, it is clear that candidates have been encouraged to focus on structures rather than effectiveness and coherence – in other words, on language, rather than on meaning. This is to give disproportionate attention to the Quality of Language mark-scheme, at the expense of the Communication mark-scheme. Yet both are equally weighted, at 15 marks maximum. Focus on structures is all the more evident when tasks set are over-suggested, with too much content guidance given. Candidates are then left with no room for individuality, for independent thinking, and therefore for authenticity. It becomes the teacher’s ideas that are variously delivered according to the individual candidate’s recall. Candidates quite often even number their paragraphs accordingly. It is doubly difficult for candidates to present ideas effectively when these are not their own. Examiners are instructed to draw up their assessments on effective performance relative only to the task title, any given context, and the purpose; they are required to ignore the Teacher Information Form, if this happens to be included with candidate submissions. (NB: Teachers are again reminded that these must be retained on file at the centre until December following the examination session.)

Over-provision of content by teachers seems to be the main reason why many candidates are writing too much. This should be strongly discouraged. It is hardly surprising that candidates will of themselves aim to include as many teacher suggestions as they can without further regard for organisation. The outcome in such cases is often a lack of coherent structure and convincing development. Overlong items risk being repetitive in their language structures, the effect is one of “padding”, a loss of focus or point, and the reader’s interest inevitably begins to wane. This

undermines the “effectiveness” achievement, which is a pillar of the Communication mark-scheme. Communication marks are awarded for organisation and development of content, for ideas and their justification - that is, their point and relevance. Candidates have sixty minutes only for writing up what they have prepared. Part of the test is how effectively they can express themselves, how coherently and concisely, as well as with what measure of individuality over a projected number of words. The fact that no definitive upper word-limit is imposed is designed to offer a little individual freedom and leeway, and is a measure of trust for candidates that they will adhere broadly to the recommended guidelines of 200-300 words per item if targeting the higher grades. It also spares examiners the additional task of counting words to a cut-off limit. Candidates should therefore be strongly encouraged to provide word-counts as a means of self-control and discipline. Excessive length items of 500 words, even occasionally more, raise the question of adherence to the regulations, and ultimately of malpractice. It is clearly also unreasonable to expect examiners to spend significantly more time on some candidates’ submissions than on others.

Quality of Language

Reference to the mark-schemes for Quality of Language and Communication indicates quite clearly that they should not be seen as separate. The ‘clarity’ element of the Communication mark-bands is picked up in the Quality of Language descriptors:

- “.....routine communication” (4-5);
- “.....comprehensible” (6-7) ;
- “.....clear and reasonably coherent” (8-9) ;
- “.....mostly unambiguous” (10-11) ;
- “.....control” (12-13) ;
- “.....controlled” (14-15).

Following on from how tasks are approached (above), it is therefore important that candidates should understand what they are writing, and should “own” it. Performance should not be a regurgitation of perceived ‘good’ language ideas.

There is no merit in repeating structures such as *ist, es gibt, (ich) liebe* and *man kann* (+ infinitive) again and again simply in order to maximise quantity. The purpose of the preparation time allowance is to help candidates plan their task response logically, carefully and coherently. This should help them to avoid untidy omission marks and margin additions at the final writing-up stage, which can make the development of an item hard to follow. Whilst there are no marks for presentation, candidates should always recognise that work that is hard to read is hard to assess.

It is recognised that in German teaching subordinate clauses are always given a higher profile, because of word order requirements. The demonstration of these for their own sake and in excess quantity will not necessarily enhance a piece of work and may be intrusive. The mark-schemes also serve French and Spanish, where this particular aspect is much less significant. Subordinate clauses used correctly and with variety of tense and conjunctions also need to have point (relevance) and to make appropriate sense in context. The ‘staple’ conjunctions – *weil, obwohl, dass* and *wenn* are very well-established, and almost all candidates, regardless of ability otherwise, can produce at least one or two simple examples of these. More consideration could perhaps be given as to how to extend this basic range – eg: relatives with prepositions, as well as *wie, wer, wann, warum, bis, es sei denn, ob, als ob, zumal* etc. Whilst some candidates may not feel secure in exploring the greater sophistication of ideas that these will support, the best linguists could certainly be interested. It was pleasing to see that this suggestion had indeed been appreciated in small measure this year.

There was also more variation this year of justifying links as an alternative to *weil*, in the usage of adverbial words or phrases such as *deshalb*, *deswegen*, *dadurch*, etc. Prepositions *wegen* and *durch* can also function appropriately for justifying purposes. In general adverbial links and other connectives such as *außerdem*, *allerdings*, *trotzdem*, *zwar*, *letztlich* etc were often used effectively to personalise ideas and points of view, and this helped to enhance credibility and “ownership” of content.

The English justifier ‘so’, a ‘false friend’ for German, remains difficult to eliminate in this target language. Candidates should be made clearly aware that German *so* is a different type of link, meaning *auf diese Weise*. It does not explain cause or reason, but rather ‘how’ or manner, and is therefore not a synonym for *weil* or *denn* or even *also*. Likewise, *so dass* shows consequence and not purpose. Another pitfall frequently noted was the misuse of *überall* for ‘overall’ or ‘above all’.

Other recurrent problems were seen in candidates’ confusion of future and conditional tense. This needs more attention as to proper meaning differentiation. *Ich würde* introduces a more complex idea, and is not a substitute for *ich werde* in terms of meaning. *Ich würde* on its own, without *gern*, will not necessarily communicate clearly and logically at all. Other instances of “block” conditional tense usage seemed on occasions to be little more than a deliberate demonstration exercise of the far from difficult routine verb forms - *wäre*, *hätte*, *gäbe*, with these repeated, as though listed, several times.

Inversion, it is important to reiterate, is a fundamental feature of idiomatic German, important at all levels for stylistic effectiveness, even if the absence of it does not always prevent comprehension. It should be regarded as a “common idiom” in mark-scheme terms (band 8-9). The subordinate conjunction *obwohl*, should not be used to introduce a stand-alone main clause, in place of ‘though’ in the sense of ‘but’/ ‘however’ in English. Whilst this may work in conversation through tone of voice, it is misleading on paper. There is some increasing tendency curiously to omit prepositions: examples this year included..... *wir sind Amerika gefahren; ich bin Campingplatz geblieben; ich hoffe einen Freizeitpark zu fahren*. Such unexpected omissions again raise doubt that the candidate understands what s/he is writing. Whilst comprehensibility may not be seriously challenged, the sequence is rendered ‘odd’, and simple ‘effectiveness’ of Communication is affected.

Legible handwriting is essential. Examiners do not have the time to work out what a word is supposed to be. Spelling seemed to have deteriorated this year, and approximate spelling cannot simply be ignored or accepted. Far too many quite good candidates, for example, routinely write *in der Zunkunft./Zunkuft - even Zuzuft*. The absence of *Umlaut* on *würde*, *könnte*, *möchte*, *schön* etc is by no means a minor spelling error. It changes meaning substantially, and also sounds quite different from the form of the accented word. Examiners are required to ‘sound out’ lexical items for Communication purposes where the written item is problematic or incorrect. It is obvious that *ich singe leider* is quite different in meaning from *ich singe Lieder*, and also sounds quite different. Similarly, mis-spellings *blieben* for *bleiben*, *triebe/treibe*, *Riese/Reise*, etc and, for example, *denn*, *den* and *dann* will reduce or confound comprehensibility. The worst offenders remain without doubt two of the most commonly used – namely, *leibe*, *Leiblings-* for *liebe*, *Lieblings-*. The *das/dass* distinction on the other hand, may not sound different, but the grammatical difference is a significant one, and must be considered under Quality of Language.

Punctuation continues to be something of a stumbling-block for some candidates. This again may owe its problems to a candidate not understanding what s/he is writing, as in: *ich komme gut mit meinem Vater, aus wenn er gut gelaunt ist*. A misplaced full-stop can equally easily confound a structural sequence. Good organisation and clarity will be impeded by poor punctuation, and this again is where well-spent preparation time significantly aids candidates, meaning that the final writing up exercise need not be written either hastily, or carelessly.

Candidates and teachers are reminded that only a bi-lingual dictionary, the Teacher Information form and the candidate's own 40 word maximum Notes form are permitted resources for the final writing-up exercise. Supervising teachers are expected to check that these regulations are correctly observed. Candidate Notes forms are mandatory, they should be signed and dated by candidates and must be submitted with each item of work. A candidate's complete submission should be prefaced with the required Coversheet and collated with a treasury tag.

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