

Report on the Units

June 2010

HX76/R/10

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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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Advanced GCE German (H476)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE German (H076)

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Chief Examiner's Introduction:

Results for the first full A Level of the new specification were encouraging. The 99% pass rate overall shows that candidates were entered appropriately. The fact that 13.8% of candidates gained A* and 44.6% a grade A or above reflects the linguistic ability and hard work of candidates and the teachers who prepared them so thoroughly for the examination. The new format did not deter candidates from performing well. Examiners were impressed by the fluency of many students, and it was encouraging that so many of them appeared to enjoy their speaking tests and were sorry when the conversation was over. The written units enabled candidates to demonstrate their linguistic and analytical skills over a variety of tasks. Despite the concern expressed by some teachers over the disappearance of coursework and the new challenge involved in preparing candidates for the essay at A2, the performance of candidates overall was not affected.

F711: Speaking

General Comments

For this series candidates had been entered appropriately. The majority of teacher/examiners knew what to expect and conducted the speaking test well by establishing an atmosphere conducive to good performance. Thorough preparation especially of the role-plays is vital. Those teacher/examiners who were inadequately prepared often disadvantaged their candidates. There is a time limit and the use of a timer or beeper is recommended. New technology has changed the method of delivery. A few centres sent their recordings on cassettes (no longer reliable) but most centres sent recordings on CD. The quality was good, but there were instances of errors (faulty transfer, wrong labelling, or damage to the discs - it is not advisable to write in ballpoint on the CD sleeve once the CD is inside the sleeve, as this can corrupt the disc itself). The use of the OCR Repository, where mp3 recordings are uploaded by the centre, has increased and was very successful, resulting in excellent quality recordings. Some centres using this method also uploaded documentation, such as the Working Mark Sheet and the Oral Topic Form for each candidate. Centres sending the documentation by post should do so at the earliest opportunity.

Role-play

The role-play in the speaking test should come as no surprise to candidates if they have had an opportunity to regularly practise with numerous examples in the months beforehand. Teacher/examiners should prepare the Examiner's Sheet and also the Candidate's Sheet and use the same vocabulary as the candidates are expecting to hear. It is surprising when candidates and teacher/examiners address each other as *Sie* rather than *du* in role-plays where they are supposed to be *Briefpartner*, and *du* when in a formal situation.

The four role-plays this series demonstrated no real differences in terms of the standard demanded, all contained easier sections and more challenging ones. The initial two questions at the start of each role-play caused some problems, and a surprising number of candidates tried to rephrase these, usually awkwardly. These two questions are intended as a confidence booster, a straightforward initial way into the test from the candidates' point of view. Candidates do not need to invent complicated synonyms, often a change of word order and/or verb ending is all that is necessary.

Grid A (Use of Stimulus) counts for 15 marks and is assessed using the 15 Key Points (printed with the mark scheme); each point represents one mark. Examiners assess whether each statement in the Key Points has been conveyed successfully, partially or not at all. Many candidates were able to communicate at least half the points for each of the role-plays. It is important for centres to understand that just a brief summary of the text is not sufficient. Those candidates who successfully convey about half of the points can only be awarded about half of the marks. Similarly, marks at the top end can only be awarded if all or nearly all the information is conveyed successfully. Where candidates performed best, they had clearly been taught well to go through the stimulus material systematically and had been encouraged to learn appropriate vocabulary.

Teacher/examiners have a crucial role to play in this part of the examination. One of their chief responsibilities is to exploit the stimulus material to its full within the time limit of 5-6 minutes (assessment stops after six minutes), without using the vocabulary in the stimulus material themselves. To do this, they must be familiar with the Candidate's Sheet, the stimulus material and the Examiner's Sheet. Teacher/examiners who only follow the Examiner's Sheet and take no note of what the candidate is saying, prevent their candidates from getting higher marks on

Grid A. The function of the questions on the Examiner's Sheet is to encourage candidates to provide the information. Good teacher/examiners listen attentively, react to the candidates' responses and use various techniques to elicit more information if necessary. Successful role-plays involve interaction and teacher/examiners are not recommended to wait for the candidates to do all they can before they intervene. It is in the candidates' interests to ensure that all the details in the stimulus material are covered within the maximum time allowed. Some teacher/examiners made no attempt to demand more detail and moved swiftly to the topic after only four and in some cases three minutes, preventing candidates achieving higher marks actively discouraged it.

Grid B (Response to Examiner: 10 marks) is designed to reward those candidates who take charge of the conversation and use their imagination and initiative. Performances which are convincing, persuasive, and full of invention, allow candidates to gain access to the higher mark bands. Candidates who understand the questions, but respond simply and briefly, are likely to be limited to the middle band of marks.

It should be reiterated that the final bullet points are extension questions asking candidates to be inventive and imaginative. Good teacher/examiners not only ask the question but also add further ones as appropriate, one of the best being *warum*.

Grid C1 (Quality of Language: 5 marks) rewards accuracy and range. Examiners only expect to hear structures as complex as the task allows. This means that for the role-play, which is shorter than the topic discussion, it is likely that fewer opportunities arise for candidates to demonstrate ambitious language. Consequently, where they do occur, they are rated more highly. Candidates who offer a good range of structures and vocabulary are awarded marks at the top end of the grid. Those attempting some ambitious language with sound basics often get 3 marks. Those candidates with frequent errors involving subject/verb agreement, basic verb forms and word order get lower marks.

It is surprising that some candidates use the preparation time to translate whole sentences of the stimulus material and read these out to the teacher/examiner. This is **not** to be recommended. Such candidates are usually unable to respond well to questions probing for further information. Candidates should use the stimulus material itself during the actual examination. Any brief notes should be an aide-memoire and limited to individual words or short phrases.

Comments on Individual Questions

Role-play A: Wanted! Dresden Tour Guides

The two initial questions were frequently done well, although *dauern* in the first question was often changed to *dauert*. Some candidates wrongly insisted on using the *Sie* form rather than *du*. Many candidates skimmed over the first paragraph and ignored whole sections as well as detail. Good examiners tried to elicit the missing parts later in the role-play at an appropriate point. Some candidates simply misinterpreted what the text stated: "guests from English-speaking countries" tended to be reduced to "from England", and "to act as guides on our bus sightseeing tours" was often "guides on buses". "Tourist Office" was often Dresden Reisebüro". Examiners are not looking for translation but transfer of meaning. The idea of "native speakers of English" can be conveyed with "those with English as their first language", but it is not conveyed with "speakers of English". *Muttersprache* was not always known, and an interest in history was often not mentioned.

Candidates seemed to cope better with numbers with this role-play, although some insisted that the guides would pay 25 euros per hour rather than earn this figure. Not all conveyed the idea of “flexible hours” successfully. Quite often, candidates simply ignored details from the text. When asked where they might be living in Dresden, some conveyed the idea of staying in a youth hostel (a word not always known) but ignored the fact that this accommodation was provided. Similarly, “free return flight” and “if interested” tended to be ignored.

With the final two bullet points, candidates were asked to respond to two questions taking them beyond the text: the advantages of this summer job and possible disadvantages. Many simply repeated what they had said earlier, especially concerning the rate of pay, but some responded with a little more imagination.

Role-play B: Carrington House Hotel

This role-play situation, requiring candidates to describe a hotel, its facilities and location differentiated well. As with many role-plays, some candidates tended to omit considerable detail such as “premier / business traveller / en suite / satellite”. Some found it difficult to convey the idea that the menu changed constantly, or that the food on offer catered for a variety of tastes (a few were able to suggest little beyond *Pizza* or *Pommes frites* when asked what food might be available). “Indoor swimming pool” was not always known, nor was “gym” (often *Gymnasium*). “Quiet tree-lined avenue” caused some difficulties, and some candidates were surprisingly unfamiliar with “3* comfort / ideally located / sea / golden sands / miles / airport”.

The initial and final two questions were done well. Many thought that the weather in Bournemouth in July would be sunny, but warned that this was England, after all. Most suggestions of travel from Germany were sensible.

Role-play C: Sightseeing in York

The standard situation of a German tourist asking for information in a Tourist Office was the basis for this role-play, which was done quite well in parts. The expected *Sie* form of address between both parties was not always heard. For some reason, quite a few candidates changed the tense of the first initial question and asked “*Wann kommen Sie in York an?*” The second question was done better.

The text was a typical mixture of easier and more difficult elements, and candidates managed to express at least half of the points. Some simply ignored large sections of the first paragraph, even though everything in the stimulus material should be attempted. “Middle Ages” was not always known (often *Mitteljahre*). At times, efforts made did not coincide with the text: “the largest church north of the Alps” was sometimes given as “the large church in the north alps”. “Century” caused problems, as did “street full of shops” and the year 1580. The idea of looking into living rooms from the past also caused difficulties. Some ignored “a fascinating combination of everyday life and extraordinary objects”. “Dark” and “smoke-filled” were not always attempted, and “walls” were sometimes *Wände*.

The first final bullet point asked candidates to suggest where to get a good meal in York. Some candidates were adept at naming, say, an Italian restaurant where the candidate had eaten before and the food on offer. Some were too brief and simply suggested eating chips. The second final bullet point asked what other town the tourist might visit. Some suggested Sheffield, Leeds or Manchester, but the most popular choice was London.

Role-play D: Sherwood Forest

As with all role-plays, candidates tackled some sections better than others. The initial questions were done well. The first sentence of the stimulus material was sometimes ignored, and some candidates did not know “royal”. Most candidates coped at least adequately with much of the rest of the text, but sometimes avoided vocabulary such as “rich and varied natural environment/exploration/introduction/admire/ancient”. The final section of the text, dealing with visitor centre opening times, parking charges, food and drink were mostly done well.

The final questions, asking candidates about how to get there and what might be done after the visit were done reasonably well.

Topic

Most teacher/examiners know that the topic must relate to the list of AS topics in the specification. A tiny minority of candidates chose a topic not related to this list and thereby incurred a restriction of marks on Grid D. The choice of a topic suitable at A2 but not AS (*Klimawandel/Haydn/die große Koalition*) with an initial thirty seconds of relevance to *das tägliche Leben* followed by nine minutes of non-AS material is unsuitable at this level.

There was a good variety of topics, and many discussions were highly impressive. Candidates were usually well prepared and it was heartening to hear genuine interchange of ideas between teacher and candidate.

Grid D (Ideas, Opinions, Relevance: 10 marks) is awarded for the ability to explore ideas and opinions, backed up by factual information. Reference to a German/Austrian/Swiss context is vital. A few random references to *in Deutschland* are not sufficient. Where there is insufficient reference to a German-speaking country, marks on Grid D are restricted. The FAQs on the OCR website are very helpful in this respect: “The specification states that topics have to be approached within the context of a TL country/countries. Candidates are expected to have researched within this context. Even if the general views they express could equally apply to other countries, they will be expected to be able to quote examples and produce evidence to support their points of view that originate from the TL country. For example, if talking about the growing issue of obesity, a French candidate could quote action taken by the French government to combat this problem, what is done in French schools, the national day against obesity etc.”

Grid E1 (Fluency, Spontaneity, Responsiveness: 10 marks) is awarded for the ability to use German as a natural and genuine means of communication. The inclusion of “can keep the momentum going” in band 7-8 is important when determining marks for this grid. Candidates simply responding to questions but not leading the conversation will not reach this band. The **crucial** function for teacher/examiners is to challenge and react to statements made by the candidate. Teacher/examiners should encourage a discussion based on the headings on the Oral Topic Form. Generalisations (eg *die Deutschen essen Sauerkraut*) should be discouraged.

The discussions should be genuine and spontaneous and this occurs naturally when discussions have **not** been over-rehearsed. Mini-monologue style, over-rehearsed statements from candidates, sometimes fed by cues from teacher/examiners means a lack of spontaneity. Such pre-prepared material is often in written German, using vocabulary which sounds completely artificial in a spoken context. Candidate responses starting with *dazu kommt noch, dass ...* or *nichtsdestoweniger* are highly unlikely to be spontaneous. The descriptor statements “Fluency confined to pre-learnt material (0-2 marks)/Fluency is often confined to pre-learnt material” (3-4 marks) are applied to rote-learnt/parrot-fashion delivery. Thankfully many teacher/examiners and their candidates are successful in presenting an authentic conversation.

Reports on Units taken in June 2010

Grid C1 (Quality of Language: 5 marks). This grid combines accuracy with range. It is very pleasing to listen to candidates using ambitious language.

Grid G (Pronunciation and Intonation: 5 marks). Candidates who had mastered good German sounds were rewarded with high marks.

Conclusion

Variety is important and well in advance of the speaking test, candidates should be encouraged to research a topic with a German perspective that interests them - and for the purposes of the speaking test become an expert in that particular field.

Many discussions this series were extremely interesting and informative. They testified to the impressive standard attainable by students of German only one year after GCSE.

F712: German: Listening, Reading and Writing 1

General Comments

The paper differentiated well, producing responses over the full mark range. Each task had elements that were accessible to all candidates and provided an opportunity for others to show what they could do. Candidates had been prepared well and there were very few rubric infringements. Most candidates appear to have organised their time well.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A – Listening & Writing

Task 1

Candidates were required to complete statements from 3 options. This proved to be a good predictor of performance in the rest of the paper. (g), (i) and (j) were the items which candidates found most challenging.

Task 2

This task required candidates to choose the ten statements which matched the information they heard about Udo Kier. Most candidates performed well with few gaining less than 7 out of a possible 10 marks.

Task 3

Most candidates respond well to questions and answers in English. There were no reports of candidates attempting to answer in German (for which they receive no credit). The text was understood by the majority of candidates but some were not sufficiently precise in their answers. For example, in (f) where they were required to give information about the prices for food and beer, marks were not awarded if they did not make it clear what information referred to beer and what to food. Question (e) proved to be challenging; there had to be some rendering of 'austrinken'. 'Krug' was sometimes interpreted as 'coke'.

Some candidates had problems with numbers so the 1.63 million places to sit in (g) became 1.36 or even an improbable 63 million.

Task 4

In this task there are 10 points for communicating the meaning. This is not a precise translation task and there are usually ways to express an unknown item of vocabulary: 'Public transport' seemed to cause problems but any two examples (Bus, Bahn, Straßenbahn) adequately conveyed the idea. Similarly, 'accommodation' could be conveyed by 'to stay the night', even though 'Unterkunft' was in the listening text to which this task is related. However points for communication are lost for failing to include All elements of the message must be included to get marks for communication. Items sometimes not included were 'organise', 'in advance' 'airport', 'hire' and even 'bikes'.

10 marks were available for Quality of Language and the assessment of accuracy was a good differentiator of candidates.

Task 5

Most candidates identified the majority of the speakers correctly and scored well in this task.

Task 6

This task discriminated very effectively. The questions required the candidate to fully understand the text in order to provide a direct answer. Some did this very well, for example, in (b) where a conversion from 'seit' to 'vor' was necessary, and (d) and (g), where, for example, a pleasing number of candidates converted 'ökologisches Bewusstsein' into 'umweltfreundlich'.

There are 10 marks awarded for Quality of Language in this task and questions are intended to encourage candidates to manipulate language and discourage the lifting of entire phrases and sentences. Some answers are short by design as in (e) where 'Elefantenrollschuh' was adequate to gain the mark. Lifting longer sections of text, however, is rarely successful and those who answered (f) with 'wegen ihrer Geschwindigkeit Angst erregten' did not gain credit for communication or for language. For the Quality of Language mark an attempt to use different words and manipulate the language of the text are credited.

Task 7(a)

Candidates understood the general idea of the devil and the angel and there were some good summaries where the material had been logically structured. It was a topic they were able to identify with, which sometimes created problems because they could not resist adding their own perspective instead of concentrating on communicating the contents of the text. Some candidates summarised too much and did not get full credit for comprehension.

Most candidates knew that they were expected to manipulate the vocabulary and structures from the text.

Task 7(b)

The topic was intended to be within the experience of candidates, but surprisingly, some seemed to have difficulty in answering the two questions and continued the 'devil' versus 'angel' argument. It is important that candidates consider carefully what opinions are being sought, as they cannot be credited for ideas that are not relevant.

There was some variation between the techniques of learning for exams and the occasional brave candidates who admitted their failures on this front. Almost all candidates thought that exams were important but pointed out the downsides. The more imaginative ones cited the examples of Richard Branson, Alan Sugar and various footballers who did not owe their success to exams.

It was pleasing to see that more candidates are organising their ideas into a coherent essay. Some time spent thinking before starting to write is probably well spent, not only because it avoids the use of asterisks to include afterthoughts elsewhere on the page but because it avoids repetition for which no credit is given. The majority of candidates had enough sufficiently developed and relevant ideas to obtain at least half marks but there were only a small number of original and insightful essays.

Quality of Language

Grids C.2 (Accuracy) and F.2 (Range) are used to award marks globally for Quality of Language over both 7(a) and 7(b). Many candidates seem to be aware of the criterion in the 7-8 band of Grid F.2: "A positive attempt to introduce variety" and it is pleasing that they take the opportunity to use structures and vocabulary they have learnt during their AS course. For some candidates, however, there were difficulties in the application of capital letters, singular/plural verb agreement, the gender and plural form of common words and the basic use of case and prepositions.

F713: German Speaking

General Comments

This was the first series of the new specification unit F713. As it followed the general format of the equivalent legacy paper, it was clear that those Centres who have been with OCR for several years found few problems in adapting, and Centres new to the Board also appeared, with very few exceptions, to comply with the requirements. The general feeling amongst OCR's team of examiner-markers was that this first year of F713 was a successful one. Virtually all candidates and teacher-examiners were well aware that the test consisted of a text, chosen from a selection of three to suit the interests and skills of the particular candidate, to be discussed in detail for about six minutes following 20 minutes of preparation, and a conversation of about 12 minutes around a German-related topic of the candidate's own choice.

Discussion of Article

The three texts this year seem to have worked well and all produced some very interesting conversations. No text appears to have been perceived as "more difficult" than the others. Most candidates found the factual information in the texts reasonably easy to deal with. What caused slightly more difficulty was the need to comment and evaluate and to infer meaning without necessarily being prompted. The ability to achieve all this was, of course, the mark of the best candidates.

Evaluative questions to stretch and challenge the better candidates are suggested for all texts, though of course they do not have to be used and can be replaced by something similarly, less, or more demanding, according to the candidate's ability as perceived by the teacher-examiner. Examples of these in this paper were: "Ist es wichtig, *die kleinen Dinge* zu schätzen?" and "Glauben Sie auch, dass Schulen *ein Spiegel der Gesellschaft* sein sollten?" Some extremely interesting answers resulted, though in the case of the first of these questions, it would have been a good idea for some examiners to ask for the candidate's definition of "die kleinen Dinge" before starting a discussion about them, and for the second, the importance of the "sollten" was often overlooked. Schools may well reflect society, but should they? The best examiners noticed this. Good examiners also noted that this sort of question might not be appropriate to use with every candidate.

Comments on Individual Texts

Text A: Freiwilliges soziales Jahr im Ausland

There were lots of straightforward details in the first two paragraphs, and it was a good strategy by examiners to probe to get the candidate to cover most of them.

The last paragraph caused more difficulties and the contrast between the "luxurious" life in Germany and the more basic existence in Brazil was not brought out very well. Some candidates showed considerable initiative by attacking the "stretch and challenge" question and there were some excellent responses on the importance of valuing the "little things in life", often without the examiner even having to ask the question.

Text B: Drogenprävention in der Schule

In the second paragraph it was important for candidates to distinguish between what happens to people who are caught with drugs and who *later* want to get a driving licence and what happens to those who are already “am Steuer” when caught. This distinction was often missed. The details about the young drivers being stopped and tested were sometimes misunderstood,. In the third paragraph it needed to be made clear that the “stop and search” referred to pedestrians. The details of Mareike Klaaßen’s reaction to the drugs being demonstrated in her school were sometimes not understood and the policewoman’s important final comment was often overlooked. But the difficult question about fair or unfair restrictions on personal freedom was very well handled.

Text C: Spirale der Gewalt

In paragraph one it was important to understand that there were *two* different statistical sources being talked about. In the second paragraph the biggest misunderstanding was to think that knives *were* brought into the school not that it was “more of an exception”. “Hausmeister” was sometimes misunderstood as “House Master”. Some of the details of the project in Hamburg schools were glossed over and the reasons for judo being on the timetable needed to be explained more clearly. The best candidates could explain, often on their own initiative, that perhaps schools do reflect society, but that may-be they should offer something more than that.

Some of the vocabulary items in the texts which caused the most problems of interpretation were:

- Zivildienst
- Deutsch beigebracht
- selbstverständlich
- Armutsviertel
- am Steuer sitzt
- angewidert
- eklig
- sich durchsetzen
- Bedrohung
- Tatverdächtige
- überproportional hoch
- Hausmeister
- eher eine Ausnahme

Numbers caused some problems. For example, the “girl” in Text A was often 70 years old. Genders were sometimes a problem. The same girl, “eine 17-jährige” was sometimes referred to as “er” as was Kerstin Schneider, despite her rather obviously feminine name, and the fact that she was a “Polizistin”.

Teachers may find the following points useful for future series:

- On Grid K (Understanding of and Response to Text) it is essential, for high marks, to be able to *infer meaning, develop ideas and justify points of view*, one’s own as well as those in the text
- On Grid L (Understanding of and Response to Examiner) the ability to deal with *unpredictable elements* has to be evident to achieve a high mark, as well as the familiar *taking the initiative*.
- Grid F1 (Range) requires a *positive attempt to introduce variety* of vocabulary and structures, in both parts of the test. On the text this would include the sensible use of the candidate’s own words rather than continually quoting the text itself

Topic Conversation

There was an excellent variety of topics chosen this series though some were marginally “German”. The title can often reveal the danger that the topic might become too “general” in nature. For example “Gentechnik” or “Klimawandel”. It is not sufficient simply to add “Und wie ist es in Deutschland?” at the end of a long discussion of the general issues. Another positive feature, commented on by examiners, was the spontaneity of candidates in their topic “conversation”.

A note of caution – a few candidates seem to have used a substantial proportion of their 20 minutes’ preparation time to scribble down excessive notes on the text, which they then delivered in a rather mechanical fashion in the form of “ready-made” answers and comments. Neither memorized material nor the reading of notes is highly rewarded in the mark-scheme, as true spontaneity is lacking and the ability to deal with the unexpected is not revealed.

Again, the following points may be useful for future series:

- Grid M for the Topic Conversation is entitled Development of Ideas. The ideas must of course be based on factual evidence, itself based on some clear preparation or research, but the ideas have to be explained and (for a higher mark) *justified*
- It is clearly stated in the Spontaneity and Fluency grid (Grid E2) that there can be a penalty if fluency is apparently confined to *pre-learned material*, which is interpreted as material that sounds like written language being “read” or regurgitated
- The Accuracy Grid (Grid C1) - grammar is assessed in the discussion of the text and in the Topic Conversation

Conclusion

The following list of “helpful hints” may prove useful to teachers when preparing candidates for Unit F713:

- Choose a suitable text for each candidate, you can use the same text two or three times
- Discourage candidates from writing down extensive notes during the preparation period, as written German always sounds artificial during an oral test and marks may be lost for not *dealing with the unpredictable*
- Get candidates to practise reading numbers out loud so that they get used to saying them. In Text A the girl mentioned was sometimes seven, sometimes seventeen and even occasionally seventy years old
- Practise reading out unfamiliar names such as *Mareike* or *Dithmarschen*.
- Candidates should follow the clues and not refer to “Die Polizistin” as “er” Cover each paragraph of the text in the discussion. There are always four and each must at least be “visited”, otherwise marks are lost
- Do not rely exclusively on the suggestions for possible questions. Follow-up questions will always be required to explore and check comprehension, otherwise good candidates, particularly, will not have exploited the full possibilities of the text
- Make sure that your conversation, whether on the text or on the topic, consists of interaction between the candidate and the examiner.
- Stick to the time limits. The maximum recommended is 18 minutes and the minimum 15 minutes. No marks are gained by going on for longer, in fact they can be lost as the candidate tires. Too short normally means too shallow
- Encourage candidates to use their own words and not read out portions of the text Discourage candidates from using only prelearned material during the Topic Conversation. A spontaneous discussion on well-prepared material gains higher marks than an over-rehearsed or memorized performance.

Reports on Units taken in June 2010

- Encourage each candidate to choose an individual topic of their own interest, preferably based on some independent research. This is preferable to the situation where all candidates talk about a similar or same topic.

F714: Listening, Reading and Writing 2

General Comments

There was a wide range of marks, indicating that the paper discriminated well, nearly all candidates were able to finish and it was evident that most of them used their time wisely. There was, however, a very small number of candidates who perhaps wasted precious time by writing out rough drafts first (of the “Transfer of Meaning” task and the essay), by counting the words of their essay or by writing far too much in their essay. This time would have been better used in reading the questions carefully (in all sections), planning the essay and checking work through. Some candidates had clearly been trained well in examination techniques, as was evident in the underlining of key points in the questions and the identifying of the paragraphs that needed to be referred to for answers.

Comments on individual questions

Section A: Listening and Writing

Task 1

A small number of candidates answered in German, which meant an automatic loss of ten marks.

This text was accessible to the majority of candidates but examiners noted that some candidates had little knowledge of this period, despite the fact that it is an important part of Germany's heritage. Some candidates seemed to confuse it with the re-unification. Some appeared not to understand the concepts of dictatorship and democracy.

- a) This mark was rarely lost.
- b) This question required understanding of specific vocabulary items, and only some candidates were successful and got all 3 marks. The most common errors were ‘freedom’, which is not quite the same as ‘liberation’, and ‘peace’ (for Freude). There were numerous guesses as well.
- c) There were a number of details for candidates to choose from for their answer, and those who had heard of resistance groups and the Gestapo managed to get a mark.
- d) Very few candidates gained this mark. ‘Zone’ clearly presented problems. Many thought she had gone to America, sometimes to sell old cars. The understanding of ‘kreuz und quer’ was necessary for the mark.
- e) ‘Leidenschaftlich’ was often not understood. Nevertheless, candidates were usually able to get the sense of it from what followed.
- f) This was straightforward. Some candidates lost the mark by confusing ‘dictatorship’ with ‘dictation’. Some omitted the idea of ‘again’. A few thought that she wanted to set up a dictatorship.
- g) ‘sich einmischen’ was often misunderstood as a ‘mission’, whereas the other part of the question was usually successfully conveyed. Marks were lost by answers that were too imprecise.

Task 2

Examiners felt that all but a few candidates found this text accessible. All candidates answered in the correct language.

- a) A common answer was 'Polizist', which was not a characteristic. 'Ehrenhaft' was the adjective most frequently missed or misspelt. The ability to remove the adjective ending was often an indicator of candidates who would gain a higher Quality of Language mark.
- b) Despite inaccurate language, many candidates understood this.
- c) There were three possibilities to choose from and many candidates gained two marks.
- d) Although some candidates expressed this in incorrect German (können + the infinitive was required), they understood what was being said.
- e) The mark was lost if candidates were unable to convey 'He is sorry' clearly. Some candidates cleverly got round the linguistic hurdle by writing 'Er sagte, "es tut mir leid", which gained them the mark.
- f) This answer required a verb, such as 'he feels' or 'he wonders' for it to make sense.
- g) Marlboro was clearly not always known and therefore quite general answers were accepted for this particular point, although candidates still needed to understand that he was addicted to cigarettes, and that he must take the responsibility himself.
- h) This required straightforward transcription, and many candidates gained both marks.
- i) Many candidates gained these two marks, but there was confusion with pronouns, which sometimes changed the sense. Candidates who missed the first mark possibly did so because the word 'Verbrechen' was not understood.
- j) The key point was 'die Freiheit'

For a few answers clear transcription of phrases or words was required, as in (j), but most answers required the manipulation of the language because of the way questions were phrased. This ensured that it was possible to award a full range of marks for Quality of Language.

Section B: Reading and Writing

The majority of candidates were able to access the language and content of both texts and demonstrated understanding of their general meaning.

Task 3

Most candidates were familiar with this type of non-verbal task. Questions (a) to (c) were usually answered correctly and (d) to (g) were found to be more challenging. A few candidates did not get any marks, because they did not do what they were asked, the most common misunderstanding being that they thought they had to define the expressions. Some marks were lost because candidates put in too many words, whereas the exact equivalent was needed, as emphasised by the word 'GENAU' in the rubric. It was also important to identify the paragraphs the answers were to come from.

Task 4

Some candidates were unable to make the jump and use their own language for some answers. For (d), for example, 'Vormarsch' was a common answer. Good candidates gained the mark for (h), where they really had to show that they had understood the text. This was intended to be a stretch and challenge question.

Task 5

A number of candidates gained 10 marks for this task, which was very pleasing, as the text was quite dense and it was necessary for candidates to work through it methodically to find the answers. Some candidates made a helpful mark under question (d) to show that this was where the paragraph break was. Some candidates did not answer the questions directly, but simply copied out material from the text, which gained them neither comprehension nor language marks.

- a) This was intended to be a stretch and challenge question, and it was pleasing to find that many candidates rose to the challenge. Where one mark was lost, it was usually because of the omission of 'sich' with 'verkaufen', conveying the idea that women should become better at selling things.
- b) There was possibly a confusion between 'Vorurteil' and 'Vorteil'. Sometimes the mark was lost because candidates used the pronoun 'Sie' without making it clear to whom it was referring.
- c) Although 'dominieren' distracted some, the sense was generally understood.
- d) Some candidates did not write a direct answer to the question. 'Größere berufliche Ambitionen' was a common answer.
- e) This was a straightforward answer. Again the mark was lost if the question was not answered directly.
- f) Most candidates gained these marks. Referring just to 'Mädchen' was not accepted.
- g) This was usually understood, although there were some extremely wordy answers. Some candidates lost the mark by simply writing 'Die Partner', which was not sufficiently clear.

Task 6

The general sense of this paragraph was clear to most candidates, the main stumbling blocks being 'schlau', 'leichfertiger Umgang' 'vor allem' 'sich vermehren' and 'Herausforderung'. Often the exact meaning of 'in ihrer Bekämpfung' was not conveyed, even by those who knew the noun. The most common error in the passage was that rats are getting faster.

Task 7

- a) The phrasing of the question ('Was machen...?') was intended to elicit actions rather than just the list of nouns from the text. Verbs were therefore required in the answer. The verb 'put' caused some difficulties, 'putzen' featuring quite regularly. Various items ended up on the compost heap, such as 'Imbissbuden'.
- b) Most candidates gained at least one mark unless they completely misunderstood. A mark was lost if candidates failed to notice the tense in the second part of the question.
- c) This was generally understood.

- d) Answers had to demonstrate an understanding of 'unbekannt' and some failed to do this, copying something from the text without manipulating it to suit the question.

Task 8

Candidates appeared to find this task quite straightforward, although their language was very mixed in quality. The main difficulty was with (c), where the word 'Tod' was not always expressed clearly.

Task 9

This task required an understanding of the meaning of the phrases in the context of the text.

- a) Good answers were: "alles, was sie brauchen"; ideale Bedingungen". Some tried to describe paradise in a too literal and biblical way, which was not always successful.
- b) Most gained this mark. Occasionally 'Nahrung' was not understood.
- c) The context made it quite clear that this refers to predators, but not many candidates conveyed this, the majority of answers saying something like 'Jemand, der Ratten nicht mag' or 'Leute, die Ratten hassen'.
- d) Answers to this were mixed, but a number had to be rejected because candidates did not know 'laufen' and used 'fahren' or 'reisen' instead, conjuring up images of rats driving around or clutching suitcases.
- e) This was straightforward if candidates understood 'Mangel'.

The Quality of Language mark was assessed across all the reading tasks. Candidates who answered clearly and accurately, attempting to get their verb endings and cases right, omitting 'zu' when it was not needed, using subordinate clauses correctly in Task 9, perhaps even considering a subjunctive for 5(b), gained good marks.

Section C: Writing

Almost all candidates made a good attempt at writing an essay, and there were very few indeed who wrote nothing or very little. The most popular topic areas were 'Die Gesellschaft' and 'Die Umwelt' and there was evidence that teachers had covered a good deal of material when preparing their students. It was pleasing to see how many candidates succeeded in demonstrating good topic-specific knowledge as well as commendable language skills. There was very often, although not always, a correlation between the marks for the essay and those for the rest of the paper.

Success came from:

- reading the question carefully
- taking a few minutes to think about a plan
- selecting carefully from material prepared in class and thinking about relevance
- referring clearly to the question in the opening paragraph and making it clear how the essay would be answering it
- the inclusion of relevant material, most of which related to a German speaking country to back up points of view
- a careful structure with linking between paragraphs
- leaving time for a conclusion
- writing succinctly, without the need for extra answer sheets.

Reports on Units taken in June 2010

When candidates did not get high marks, this was because they:

- did not answer the question or part of a question
- wrote out a pre-learnt essay
- included facts without considering how they were relevant to the question
- did not seem to have made a plan
- did not know about the subject
- did not refer to a German speaking country

Sadly, even candidates who had demonstrated good skills in Sections A and B, sometimes got low marks for grids N and O for the above reasons.

Q10 This was a popular title. There was much knowledge displayed about unemployment in Germany. The more successful candidates were able to focus on the title, which required knowledge and ideas about the solutions.

Q11 It was disappointing that the majority of candidates who chose this title ignored at least one aspect of it. Few pieces read as newspaper articles, although one or two did at least have a title, and whereas most addressed the advantages of a multicultural society, the advantages of immigration for a particular town were ignored. Candidates who chose a town, such as Berlin for instance, were able to include some factual examples and did better.

Q12 Not all candidates appeared to have read the question correctly, which required them to select ONE major problem and address concrete solutions. There were numerous essays on the environment in general, and candidates did not get high marks because they did not select and organise their material appropriately.

Q13 There were many essays that were not written as a letter, and where candidates were unclear about which alternative energy source was the best. The non-discursive titles demand of the candidates that they take up a certain position and not all candidates were able to do this. Some candidates wrote about nuclear energy as an alternative energy source but this was not penalised.

Q14 Candidates who chose this title usually wrote relevantly. A common problem, however, was in choosing examples that were relevant to a German speaking country, rather than globally relevant. The innovations most commonly chosen were computers, the Internet, MP3 players etc.

Q15 Unfortunately few candidates knew enough about Germany's position on genetically modified food to be able to answer this well.

Q16 Surprisingly, this title was rarely chosen. 'Goodbye Lenin' featured in one or two essays and fitted well. There were essays on Brecht and 'die Verwandlung'. Again ONE work needed to be identified rather than an artist in general.

Q17 This title was not popular. The one or two candidates who did choose it had clearly not prepared the topic of politics or political parties as they displayed little knowledge.

Examiners were impressed by the linguistic skills of many candidates, who, despite errors that may well have been slips under the pressure of the exam conditions, had good topic-specific vocabulary and were able to write fluently and express complex ideas.

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