

Examiners' Reports

June 2011

J031/J131/J731/R/11

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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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Chief Examiner's Report

The 2011 GCSE German saw many innovations in the first full year of the new specification.

These included:

- Controlled Assessment Speaking, centre marked, OCR moderated
- Controlled Assessment Writing, centre set, OCR marked
- Speaking and Writing each weighted 30%
- Listening and Reading each weighted 20%
- Short Course available as Listening and Speaking or Reading and Writing
- Digital recording of Speaking
- Optional use of OCR Repository for Speaking audio and paperwork
- Notes forms and preparation time for Speaking and Writing
- Dictionaries available for Controlled Assessment Writing
- A slimmer Defined Content vocabulary list for Listening and Reading
- New OCR specification, handbooks, sample materials available online

Centres and teachers prepared their candidates well for the June 2011 examinations. Teachers embraced the new technical aspects and prepared their candidates well.

Candidates, too, were able to show what they knew and could do. The new format for Speaking produced some outstanding performances, perhaps because of the reduced length of the assessment at any one time, perhaps because candidates could understand what they needed to prepare. The absolute standard of Writing has also improved.

This is a good start to the new specification, with pleasing outcomes and a promising outlook.

A711/01/02 Listening

General Comments

The papers at both tiers proved to be equivalent to last year's new specification paper in terms of difficulty. There were very few low marks at higher tier, and few very high marks at foundation tier, indicating that the majority of candidates at both tiers were correctly entered.

There was evidence of good preparation by teachers – candidates were very successful at answering objective questions based on a visual stimulus. Questions which required candidates to answer in English, whether by selecting words from a list or by writing short answers, were sometimes more challenging.

In some cases handwriting and spelling was not clear and it was not possible to award marks for some responses.

It was clear that candidates had made very good use of their five minutes' reading time – a pleasing number had made extensive notes on their scripts.

Foundation Tier

Exercise 1: Questions 1-8

The majority of candidates achieved full marks in this exercise. A vocabulary item that seemed to cause some difficulty was *eine Brille*.

Exercise 2: Questions 9-16

In this exercise, questions 9, 11, 15 and 16 seemed to be straightforward and questions 10, 12, 13 and 14 were more challenging. Adjectives and time expressions seemed to cause more difficulty than nouns.

A good technique in this type of exercise is to select an answer after the second hearing, thus minimizing the number of changes that may need to be made.

Exercise 3: Questions 17-24

This exercise was generally done well, indicating that many candidates can deal confidently with the environment topic. Question 23 seemed to cause some difficulty – a common incorrect answer was 'on foot'.

Exercises common to both tiers:

Exercise 4: Questions 25-32, Exercise 1: Questions 1-8

As intended, this exercise was done well by the majority of higher tier candidates, and was a good discriminator amongst foundation tier candidates. Items that seemed to cause difficulty were *Oma* and *gelb*, but nearly everyone knew the word *Handy*.

Exercise 5: Questions 33-40, Exercise 2: Questions 9-16

This exercise proved accessible to most candidates. Question 33 caused some difficulty, possibly because candidates correctly understood that Claudia didn't like school and therefore assumed that she would be talking about not wanting any homework.

Higher Tier

Exercise 3: Questions 17-24

This exercise differentiated well between candidates. Questions 19, 21 and 23 proved to be challenging.

Exercise 4: Questions 25-32

Careful listening was needed for this exercise, as there are distractors at this point on in the paper. Some candidates lost marks because they picked an answer from the list which did not always make sense, for example 'instructor' for Question 31, so that the sentence read 'Bernadett finds the news from the kiosk instructor'.

Exercise 5: Questions 33-40

This was intentionally the most difficult exercise and it discriminated effectively. Items that seemed to cause particular difficulty were *wohl* and, surprisingly, *Noten* in relation to schoolwork – some answered that Anna's 'notes' were suffering because of the problems with her neighbours. Questions 36 to 38 were answered correctly by many candidates, but only a few were able to answer Question 40 correctly.

A712 Speaking

This year was the first full year of the new specification. The new requirements for Controlled Assessment of speaking, marked by teachers and moderated by OCR, were a major change for centres. A small number of candidates did the Controlled Assessment for this specification in 2010, but for most, this was the first year of using this type of assessment. Many centres and teachers successfully produced what was required.

Administration

Centres carried out the administration very well. Recordings – for the first time in digital format – were clear, and the Working Mark Sheet (WMS) completed as required. Candidate's Notes Forms were nearly always attached. Most centres correctly included the Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) and the Centre Mark sheet (MS1) in the material sent to the moderator. Very occasionally there were errors on the WMS and on the transfer of marks from the WMS to the MS1s.

Timing

The 4-6 minutes is timed from the end of the teacher's announcement of the candidate. After 6 minutes, the teacher/examiner may complete a question which has been started, and allow the candidate a brief response. Beyond that point, moderators do not continue to assess a task. Tasks short of the minimum of 4 minutes may be self-penalising in that candidates are not able to include a range of vocabulary and structures, including tenses or fully answer the questions posed.

Tasks

There was a range of task types: Presentation and Discussions; Conversations; Role Plays; Interviews. The most typical task was Presentation and Discussion. The most successful presentations lasted about 2 minutes and were followed by a 4 minute discussion. In this way there was a good balance between the presentation and the discussion, there were opportunities for candidates to produce information spontaneously, respond to open-ended questions and develop and justify ideas and points of view – all of which allowed candidates to access the full range of marks available for Communication.

Successful role plays were carefully organised so that the candidate said much more than the teacher/examiner, and open-ended questions were used to get the candidate to develop ideas and points of view and thus avoid *Ja* or *Nein* responses.

Candidates achieved higher marks when Pronunciation and Intonation was generally accurate, when the frequently used *weil*, *viel* and *möchte* were pronounced correctly, when they did not rely too much on their notes and when they had practised more difficult structures and phrases enough to be able to use them spontaneously.

A713/01/02 Reading

General Comments

There was a range of performance on the Reading paper across both tiers and candidates seem to have been entered for the appropriate tier and coped well with the tasks set. Successful candidates based their answers exactly on what they read rather than trying to apply common sense or existing knowledge to their answers.

Comments on individual questions

Foundation Tier

Exercise 1

This was intended to be straightforward. Most candidates gained full marks.

- Question 3 focused on the time rather than the meal.
- Question 4 focused on *Schulbus* rather than the time.
- Question 6 was about *Mittagessen*.
- Question 7 was mostly done correctly.
- Question 8 depended on separating the elements of *Erdbeereis*. Many candidates managed this.

Exercise 2

This tested the understanding of mainly sentence length statements. Most candidates gained full marks.

- Question 12 required candidates to extract *Schule* from *Gesamtschule*.
- Question 13 required them to associate *Gitarre* with music.
- Question 14 was more challenging, as *Supermarkt* was not always considered a shop.
- Question 16 required candidates to understand swim from *Ich schwimme wahnsinnig gern*.

Exercise 3

This exercise began to discriminate. Successful candidates showed understanding of the German sentences and had read the questions carefully. A few candidates answered in German and so were not awarded marks.

- Question 17: Many could connect *Tagesausflug* and weekend.
- Question 18: Almost all candidates knew *zum Neujahr*. But there were some incorrect responses of 'every week' or at the 'weekend'.
- Question 19: The leisure centre and variants were accepted but not responses that were clearly guesses, for example 'shopping centre', 'town centre', 'school' and 'work'.
- Question 20: Many knew swimming pool, though some thought it was outdoors.
- Question 21: Many put 'grandmother' or a synonym which was accepted.
- Question 22: Various reasons for Hugo's travel abroad were credited – see the mark scheme for further details.
- Question 23: Many correctly wrote 'mother' or a synonym. No mark was available for anything in German.

Question 24: The answer required was that the barbecue was in a wood or forest. Less precise locations such as 'outside' and guesses such as 'in the garden' were not credited. There was some misinterpretation of *Wald*, with answers such as 'in the village of Wald', and also 'in the wild'.

Exercises common to both tiers

Exercise 4 (Exercise 1 in Higher Tier)

This discriminated well. The most difficult questions were questions 28 / 14, 29 / 15, 31 / 16 and 32 / 17.

Exercise 5 (Exercise 2 in Higher Tier)

This also discriminated very well. The title *School and Holidays* referred amongst other things to the topic *School life in the UK and in the target language country or community*, which is Area 5 in the new specification.

Question 33 / 9: Exact understanding of *Klassenarbeit* was required to get a mark here.

Question 34 / 10: Nearly all candidates got this correct. However *Deutsch* was not credited.

Question 35 / 11: Understanding of *das Schuljahr wiederholen* was required. Candidates who answered 'she might fail (German)' were given a mark.

Question 36 / 12: Most candidates got this right, but some erroneously gave the opposite answer.

Question 37 / 13: The correct answer was 'ice cream café'. There were guesses, including 'the beach', 'at her friend's house', and 'at school'.

Question 38 / 14: The idea of *an einem See* proved to be a challenge. 'The seaside' could not be credited.

Question 39 / 15: Nearly all were able to give a version of 'sailing' which was credited.

Question 40 / 16: Most candidates got 'boat' or 'sailing boat'. Those who included *flottes* and interpreted it as 'floating' or 'inflatable' were not penalised.

Higher Tier

Exercise 3

This exercise was done well by many candidates. Most candidates circled their choice, but some wrote it in the space. Both methods were accepted.

Question 17: Nearly all candidates correctly chose 'his mates'.

Question 18: Most candidates, by careful reading, correctly chose the third option. Some chose 'the pitch is good'.

Question 19: Most candidates chose 'to impress a special girl', but a few chose 'when any girls are watching'.

Question 20: A majority gave the correct 'made a solo attack', but the other two options were chosen by some.

Question 21: Nearly all correctly chose 'a dog stealing the ball'.

Question 22: Only isolated candidates did not choose 'on his backside'.

Question 23: Many candidates correctly chose 'Everyone there'. Those who didn't nearly all went for 'Just the girls'.

Question 24: Nearly every candidate chose the correct 'embarrassed'.

Exercise 4

This exercise was intended to discriminate amongst high achieving candidates and did so effectively.

Question 25: Candidates needed to understand that the Bianca's husband was looking forward to a barbecue at home with the immediate family only and cooking outside.

Question 26: The notion of being in charge of the fire was the most obvious answer. However, being in charge, or being the cook were both accepted.

Question 27: The answer required was about the risk of him burning himself, rather than his clothes. Answers about the look of his clothes got no credit.

Question 28a: Required a rendering of *gestreift*. This proved to a very effective discriminator and correct answers were few here.

Question 28b: Required a rendering of *saftiges*, and again was an effective discriminator.

Question 29: Candidates found *mit den Kindern spielen* very accessible.

Question 30: Required a response about Bianca either doing a lot, or feeling unthanked or unappreciated.

Question 31: *Seriously* was the required response, and this also was an effective, discriminating question.

Exercise 5

This multiple choice exercise with the options in German was a new feature of the examination.

Question 32: There was a misprint in option B, *Partnerschaften*. An erratum notice was sent to all centres. This item was the key, and many candidates got it right.

Question 33: Careful reading was required to choose the correct answer. The distractors *Schlange* and *Kaffee* both appeared in the text.

Question 34: Careful reading was again required to get the correct answer.

Question 35: The correct answer B required candidates to understand that the Kunstaussstellung was inside the Kunstmuseum, while the tea in the garden was drunk a while later. That Sarah would find Mark's opening gambit *frech* was clear.

Question 36: The correct answer was A. There was nothing *neutral* or *vorsichtig* about her repost.

Question 37: This required knowledge of *nebenan* and *Nachbarn* – an appropriate demand at this point in the paper.

Question 38: This was often answered correctly. It hinged on *mit ihren Vätern tanzen sollten*.

Question 39: This demonstrated that *ob ich mit ihm tanzen wollte* was not out of reach of all candidates.

Conclusion

These Reading papers had something in every exercise that most candidates could do but they were still appropriately challenging. At the end of Higher Tier, the absence of having to write in German helped many candidates demonstrate pure reading comprehension.

A714 Writing

General Comments

This first full year of the new specification produced some excellent candidate work. Teachers seem to have adapted their schemes of work to the new format of assessment with ease and effectively. The new specification offers teachers significant opportunities for task differentiation, and for candidates there is considerable freedom for variety in what they write.

Approach to Tasks

There was no difficulty in organising tasks to fulfil the “different purposes” requirement, and, whilst some form of direct narrative – a report, a blog, an article – was the preferred delivery, a good number of teachers proposed the letter or extended email format, and also the different narrative stimulus of a competition entry. This latter has the potential for greater creativity of content. Where the letter or email purpose was selected, most candidates used the appropriate letter conventions.

Topics tended to be the more conventional ones of *Schule*, *Stadt/Umgebung*, *Urlaub*, *Freizeit*, and *Arbeit*. A note of caution about the first two of these because whilst they are appropriate for the specification, they are somewhat less appropriate for encouraging individuality of content as candidates inevitably draw on the same largely descriptive materials. It is therefore important to allow each individual candidate to show what s/he can achieve by the effective differentiation of task titles and suggestions for development.

The contextualisation or scene-setting of tasks is a particularly useful means of encouraging a more personal response, and some excellent extended ideas were seen this year as transcribed on some of the Candidate Notes Forms. In the OCR Controlled Assessment Guidance Booklet, there are a number of suggested task situations and ideas for differentiation. It is worth emphasizing in this regard that the task “suggestions” are no more than this, and that candidates need not address all, or indeed any of them. In fact, one or two points sufficiently detailed and developed are likely to be far more effective than a series of isolated paragraphs corresponding to each suggestion. In Communication, relevance is assessed in relation to the task title or situation and the purpose for which the task is set. It is in the assessment of Quality of Language that the coherence and overall effectiveness of each task is determined, not in relation to the task suggestions.

Many candidates wrote tasks of an appropriate length within the maximum limits but some candidates wrote at considerable length. This is not necessary, and length should not be regarded as an effective substitute for quality. The suggested word lengths are the maximum recommended for the most able candidates, given the 60 minute maximum writing-up time. The sixty minute writing-up period is not itself intended to stretch candidates significantly beyond the thought and research already given to the task in the permitted preparation time; but it does allow candidates the opportunity to consider once more their final delivery, to enhance the presentation details of ideas and, and to make checks on what they have written, all without undue pressure of time.

Quality of language

A good number of candidates were able to demonstrate excellent and highly proficient tense structures this year through the relevant and effective contrasting of different time frames, sometimes serving a single theme.

It's important to remember, however, that for this new specification candidates do not need to show tense competence for its own sake; evidence of three tenses or time-frames is no longer a requirement for the C grade in this new Specification – see *Grade Descriptions* on page 42 of the specification. Tense variation and range is still relevant to the overall quality of the language produced, but this should not be at the expense of other significant linguistic features. Specifically tense-focussed paragraphs do not enhance the piece of writing at all, if they are not integrated logically and coherently into the response.

Many candidates also offered a wide variety of interesting and effective vocabulary and idiomatic sequences. Simple adverbs, such as *außerdem, immerhin, trotzdem, zwar* and *auf jeden Fall* and various adverbial phrases were often used to very good effect, and their value as particularly useful connectives was well appreciated by a number of candidates. Explanatory idioms such as *das liegt / lag daran, dass....; aus diesem Grund...; im Vergleich / im Gegensatz zu* etc also offered good variation from the routine *weil* and *obwohl*.

Administration

The administration of this new controlled assessment Writing unit proved easy to operate, and almost all centres submitted candidates' work correctly collated with headed Coversheets and Candidate Notes forms by the 15th May submission date.

Some centres got their candidates to write in the standard examination booklets, and this worked well. Alternatively, uniform size A4 paper also worked well.

Neatly presented work, written in a dark colour (black or dark blue) is a must as examiners can only assess what is legible.

Candidate Notes Forms were generally well utilised and appeared to have been helpful.

As this is an externally-marked controlled assessment unit and the written tasks are final examination material, there is no need for teachers to write on candidate scripts.

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