

Report on the Units

June 2009

HX76/MS/R/09

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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 syllabus 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 Subsidiary GCE German (H076)

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F711: Speaking

General Comments

In terms of ability, the vast majority of candidates had been entered appropriately, and most had prepared themselves satisfactorily or better for this, the first of the new specification examinations. Most teacher/examiners knew what to expect and many conducted the speaking test well. The speaking test can be a time of extreme nervousness for candidates and its demands should never be underestimated. Good preparation on both sides can reduce the tension. Some teacher/examiners were inadequately prepared, which often disadvantaged their candidates. The increased use of timers has improved timekeeping and is to be applauded. Most centres used cassettes and some used CDs. A minority chose the F711/02 option, where tests are uploaded to the OCR Repository and this worked well.

Role-play

Teacher/examiners adhered to the Randomisation Sheet and as a result role-plays A and C were the most frequently heard. The *Hilfsvokabeln*, printed at the foot of the Candidate's Sheet, are to support candidates with more difficult vocabulary, and candidates generally used these well, although pronunciation of some of these items was not always accurate. The Candidate's Sheet sometimes contains vocabulary which is useful or necessary: some candidates seemed unaware, for instance, that the words *die Gefangenen* (Role-play A) and *Pfarrhaus* (Role-play B) were given and intended for their use. A surprising number of candidates and teacher/examiners address each other as *Sie* rather than *du* in role-plays where they are supposed to be *Briefpartner*. Candidates still find numbers difficult.

Many candidates could do the initial two questions but a sizeable proportion encountered difficulties in phrasing them satisfactorily. These two questions are intended to be a confidence booster, a straightforward way into the test from the candidates' point of view, something they can cope with. Candidates do not have to find synonyms; often a change of word order and/or verb ending is all that is required.

Many candidates were able to communicate at least half the points for each of the role-plays (Grid A: Use of stimulus). With so many marks now awarded to explaining what is in the stimulus material, it is very important that teachers and candidates understand that a brief summary of the text is not appropriate. It is a whole phrase successfully communicated that is required. If candidates successfully convey about half of the points they achieve about half of the marks. Marks at the top end can only be awarded if all or nearly all of the information is conveyed successfully.

Teacher/examiners have a key role to play in this part of the examination: 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. Familiarity with the Candidate's Sheet and the stimulus material itself, not just the Examiner's Sheet, is a must. Examples of really good practice came from the recordings where teacher/examiners listened carefully, reacted to the candidates' responses and elicited further information. They used the questions on the Examiner's Sheet to encourage candidates to provide information, not as a script. They intervened frequently. It is not in the candidates' interests to race through the role-play at high speed: unfortunately, some teacher/examiners were keen to move to the topic after only four minutes.

Grid B (Response to examiner) rewards candidates who are inventive, use their imagination and respond readily. Candidates who understand the questions but respond simply and briefly are likely to be restricted to the middle band of marks. Performances which are imaginative, convincing and full of initiative gain access to the higher bands.

Grid C.1 (Quality of language) rewards candidates who use a consistently accurate range of complex structures. Frequent errors involving subject/verb agreement, basic verb forms and word order did not achieve higher marks. Some candidates seemed intent on translating whole sentences of the stimulus material and reading them out. This is not good practice because candidates then seem unable to respond to questions probing for further information. Candidates who produce a better performance make good use of the stimulus material during the examination and only use notes as an aide-memoire.

Comments on Individual Questions

Role-play A: The Tower of London

The two initial questions were done reasonably well. On Grid A many candidates scored a mark in the middle band in their attempts to convey the information. Some skimmed over the first paragraph and ignored some points. Good examiners tried to elicit the missing parts later in the role-play at an appropriate point. Magnificent was not always expressed correctly and building was often Bildung. Numbers and prices sometimes present problems for some candidates and 1080 / £7.50 / £18 caused difficulties.

The third paragraph was done the least well, with candidates finding difficulty conveying increased / was executed (often war hinrichten) / nearly stolen and misreading the final sentence. Some teacher/examiners encouraged candidates to describe the Beefeaters and their uniforms (with mixed success).

With the final two bullet points, candidates were asked to respond beyond the text. Most responses were sensible, but occasionally, some candidates and some examiners forgot where they were supposed to be and gave unrealistic information.

Role-play B: Brontë Parsonage Museum

This visitor attraction, a suitable suggestion for the penfriend's father/mother, was a good mix of easier and harder items to convey. Many candidates coped adequately with the text, but some tended to avoid expressing details such as: extraordinary literary family / dramatic landscape / inspiration for their writing / restored / appearance / a close family. The final sentence of the second paragraph proved to be the most difficult and ignored by many candidates. Good teacher/examiners tried to encourage them at a later point to express what had been omitted. Numbers (years) were done a little better with this role-play.

The two initial questions and the final two bullet points were done well. Most thought sensibly that two hours or so would be a reasonable time to spend at the museum. How to get there from the candidate's house was mostly conveyed successfully but suggestions such as mit der U-Bahn / mit der S-Bahn were deemed to be not quite so successful.

Role-play C: Tour Guides – Frankfurt Airport

This was a role play based on a job advert. Some candidates misinterpreted the situation and tried to promote the job as one suitable for the examiner rather than themselves so it is important that candidates read and check the rubric carefully.

The text was accessible and many candidates were successful in expressing at least half of the points. Pronunciation of Reiseführer (often Reisführer / Riesenführer) was not always good. The sentence “applicants must have English as their mother tongue” was a good example of how some candidates were too easily satisfied with an incomplete statement, simply offering Bewerber müssen Englisch sprechen. Many successfully conveyed when in the week they would have to work but not the flexible hours. Not all details of the shops were given in many cases. “Perfumes / electronic goods” were often ignored.

Details of the tours themselves were conveyed well, but the first line of the fourth paragraph was frequently omitted. Candidates often expressed “take off” (given in the Hilfsvokabeln) but not “land”, and very few attempted “very close by / a Jumbo travelling at 300km/h is an impressive sight”. Some candidates confused Flughafen with Flugzeug, and even Tiere was not always known.

The first final bullet point asked candidates to suggest the advantages of this summer job. Many offered sensible suggestions. The second final bullet point about possible accommodation was less well done and some answers (living at the airport, staying in a hotel, no problem as the airport is in the city centre) lacked some sense of realism.

Role-play D: Trekking in Ladakh

The initial questions were done satisfactorily, but not all candidates understood that the holiday was for themselves, not the examiner, despite being told that the examiner intended to go to Spain or Italy.

As with many role-plays, candidates did some sections better than others. Some insisted Ladakh (often pronounced Ladkha) was in Tibet rather than India. Many avoided the last sentence of the second paragraph and very few were able to explain why the roads might only be open in the summer (a question to be asked only if the candidates had stated this beforehand – asked in isolation, it made little sense). “5-6 hours” was frequently 5-6 Uhr, and not many could explain successfully about luggage being carried for you / daypack.

The final bullet points, asking candidates about the length of the holiday and fitness, were done reasonably well.

Conclusion

The style and function of the role-play have been carried forward from the legacy to the new specification. The role-play is a good test for candidates across the ability range and creates opportunities to produce genuine and in most cases spontaneous language. Candidates perform at different levels; some express a minimal amount of information in generally accurate, simple sentence structures, some use imagination and initiative, and consistently accurate complex language structures.

Grids A and B require candidates to convey as much of the stimulus material as possible, and respond fully to the examiner’s questions. For teacher/examiners, listening attentively to candidate responses and encouraging the inclusion of omitted detail from the stimulus material are crucial in securing an effective candidate performance.

Topic discussion

Many candidates were well prepared and performed effectively on this section of the speaking test. Unfortunately, however, some candidates had been prepared for the legacy specification format of the topic discussion and were disadvantaged by this.

There were some very good choices of topics with candidates discussing a sub-topic of their choice from the list of AS topics in the specification, explaining facts and ideas as well as expressing relevant opinions and justifying points of view. However, some topics were more suited to A2 (such as historical personages / political issues / the environment etc.). It must be stressed that candidates whose topics do not relate to the AS topic list will not be able to access the full range of marks for Grid 1D (Ideas, opinions and relevance).

A number of teacher/examiners expected or demanded an uninterrupted presentation when there is, in fact, no initial presentation. The topic discussion is based on the five headings listed by the candidate on the Oral Topic Form: candidates organise their plan of the way they wish the conversation to go. It is possible for the candidate to make a brief introductory statement to set a context, but the key element is discussion. Most of the headings on the Oral Topic Form should be covered by the end of the discussion, but not at the expense of good timing. It is good practice to set the timer for 16 minutes after the role-play introduction of *ich glaube, du hast ein paar Fragen an mich*, change from role-play to topic discussion after six minutes, and finish the speaking test soon after the timer beeps. Oral Topic Forms should be in the candidate's own handwriting and submitted for assessment together with the Working Mark Sheets (WMS), the recordings and the Attendance Register.

The maximum length of the topic discussion is ten minutes. and candidates may take into the examination notes to support the discussion, limited to one side of A4.

Grid D performance

Candidates are required to develop a range of ideas and justify points of view in reference to a German context; they are expected to be able to quote examples and produce evidence that originate from an appropriate German speaking country or community to support their points of view. Many candidates did this well and had been clearly well prepared for the requirements of the task. In contrast, some candidates treated the topic globally, with only a few passing references to Germany and although some candidates were able to explain ideas, this was with little and sometimes no evidence from a German context. In these cases they were not able to access marks in the higher bands.

Grid E.1 performance

Marks are awarded for the ability to use the German language as a natural means of genuine communication. The inclusion of "can keep the momentum going" in band 7-8 is an important criterion. A candidate who responds to questions (reactive) but does not lead (proactive) will not reach this band.

The examiner must encourage a discussion based on the headings on the Oral Topic Form but should also challenge and react to statements made by the candidate. Generalisations (*die Deutschen spielen Fußball*) should be discouraged and replaced by a focus on specific information researched by the candidates.

Topic discussions should show a good deal of genuine spontaneity. The best discussions (and there were many of them) are those where much genuine interchange takes place between candidate and examiner. This occurs naturally when discussions have not been over-rehearsed. A series of over-rehearsed statements from candidates fed by cues from examiners with no interaction means there cannot be spontaneity. Unfortunately, some centres allowed too many

pre-rehearsed mini-monologues to take place where there was little and sometimes no spontaneity. Simple questions such as warum / wieso can break up the pre-learnt flow and encourage candidates to speak naturally. The assessment criteria "Fluency confined to pre-learnt material (0-2 marks) / Fluency is often confined to pre-learnt material" (3-4 marks) clearly indicate that rote-learning / parrot-fashion delivery cannot gain marks in the middle or high bands. This is supposed to be a genuine conversation so congratulations to the majority of teachers who make it so.

Grid C.1 performance

Marks are awarded for both accuracy and use of complex structures. Listening to good candidates using ambitious language is a rewarding experience and OCR examiners reported on hearing the whole range of language ability.

Grid G performance

Candidates sounding German were rewarded with high marks, those who had not mastered German sounds and/or whose efforts sounded English could not gain access to the higher marks.

Conclusion

Some discussions this series were extremely impressive and informative. They bore witness to the excellent standard which can be reached by young learners of German. It was very pleasing to hear candidates from the same centre offering a range of topics for discussion. Candidates perform at their best when they speak spontaneously about a topic of personal interest which they have researched in depth and have become expert in. Unusual topics such as die Zürcher Drogenpolitik and umweltfreundliche Verkehrsmittel in Deutschland reveal how inventive candidates can be.

F712: Listening, Reading and Writing 1

General Comments

This is the first series of this new unit, which because it combines many features of two AS units of the legacy specification produced a pleasing range of candidate performance over the full mark range and differentiated well. There were elements of tasks that were accessible to all candidates and opportunities overall for the high-flyers to show what they could do. The standard of German was generally impressive, nearly all candidates completed all the tasks and rubric infringements were rare.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A - Listening & Writing

Task 1

Candidates were required to complete statements from 3 options, based on the listening text. The text was well-understood by the average candidate and no items caused particular difficulty except perhaps (d).

Task 2

A gap-fill task is always a demanding test-type and this one produced effective differentiation. Many candidates succeeded in identifying 'meisten' in (a) but (g) and (h) proved to be very effective discriminators. A surprising but recurring error was the choice of 'Leitungswasser' for (j), which, although the gap clearly needed a noun, produced the not entirely logical notion of solid tap water.

Task 3

Questions and answers in English are a new test type for candidates at this level, and most responded well. Only one or two candidates attempted to answer in German. Questions were straightforward and some required 2 or 3 items of information from 3 or 4 items available.

In (b) 'Unterhaltung' caused some problems and was confused sometimes with 'Unterkunft' (a logical interpretation given the context). In (e) nearly all candidates understood what a 'Parkhaus' is, but not all could express it correctly in English: park house was not accepted as an answer.

In (f) 'metal bunk beds' rather than just 'metal beds' was the required answer and not all candidates gained the mark. Rather than mentioning 'functional' many candidates went for the 'entrance hall' as one of their 3 details and failed to put in enough detail to gain the mark.

In (g) a translation of 'Ausrüstung' was necessary to gain one of the marks; it was also essential to point out that the communication was between the guests.

Although many candidates got 2 marks in (h), there was a surprising number who had problems with 63. It is important to note that a price expressed in Euros is acceptable.

Task 4

Many candidates performed well on this task and marks for communication were generally high. Marks were lost for failing to include elements of the message; most commonly 'programme' in the first sentence, 'some time' in the second and 'earn' in the third. Most candidates had knowledge of sufficient vocabulary to communicate either directly or with an alternative but valid phrase. 'Konzept' was in the Listening text (with gender) but 'Idee' was an equally successful alternative (gender mostly unknown). There was occasional interference from French in conveying 'spend' (passen, verpassen). Some candidates confused going to university in Germany with studying German at university. 'Staff' and 'available' were not well-known but were paraphrased effectively. 'Either/or' could be omitted for communication purposes but its inclusion was required for the Quality of Language mark. 'Experience' could be conveyed by 'Ich habe schon in einem Hotel gearbeitet' but 'Erfahrung' was quite widely known, also acceptable was 'Erlebnis'. A pleasing number of candidates knew 'bewerben' but 'wie ich einen Job bekommen kann' was acceptable. 'Beruf' however was not considered to be acceptable.

For Quality of Language, only a small number of candidates achieved under half marks. Prepositions and conjunctions caused the most problems: 'at university', 'before', 'apply for' and most commonly 'would like to know if': 'wissen, ob' appeared much less frequently than 'wissen, wenn'. Genders and cases were often randomly applied but word order and verbs were generally quite sound.

Task 5

This two-part task was not as straightforward as it seemed and discriminated very effectively. There was no particular pattern to the errors.

Task 6

Responding to questions on a text in the target language is a task new at this level and again was a very effective discriminator.

It was not always clear that candidates had understood the gist of the text and some got confused between the Schumacher brothers. Some seemed to have selected bits of the text at random and some candidates left blanks.

Ten marks awarded for Quality of Language and questions were intended to encourage candidates to manipulate language, for example in (a) (i) the 'Mit dem Rücktritt ...' of the text needed to be converted to 'Der Rücktritt ' for the answer. Phrases copied from the text were accepted for the comprehension marks as long as they directly answered the question but were disregarded for the Quality of Language mark. The most common errors were: overlooking the 'beinahe' element in (g), not communicating the idea of unfulfilled promise in (i) and thinking that (k), as the last answer, had to come from the last line of the text. There was a good correlation between candidates' marks for the Quality of Language here and in Task 4.

Task 7

7(a) Most candidates clearly understood the gist of the text; sometimes they missed some details:

- 'Seit etwa drei Jahren' was commonly misunderstood as the age of the children
- there are two different scenarios: in the 'Kindergarten' and the 'Grundschule',
- a foreign language is now compulsory at primary level
- auf Kosten von Deutsch' has nothing to do with money

but many managed to convey over half of the points.

7(b) This section of the task gave a very positive performance and many candidates relished a topic that was very clearly within their own range of experience. It is encouraging that so many candidates appear to be studying more than one foreign language and can give reasons for doing so. Some had more to say on the importance of language than the age at which you should learn, or vice versa, but this did not affect the marks which are allocated for the whole response. Many made similar points about the educational and career advantages, which knowledge of a foreign language can give, some pointed out the problems caused by English being a world language and many acknowledged the difficulties involved in learning a foreign language compared to other subjects. Most agreed that language learning is easier when you are younger for various valid - and less valid - reasons. Many candidates organised their ideas into a coherent essay but some appeared to jot down their thoughts in a random way. It would be of benefit to train and prepare candidates for this particular task so that they are able to present a coherent response.

Grids C.2 (Accuracy) and F.2 (range) are used to award marks for Quality of Language for both 7(a) and 7(b). Most candidates had sufficient vocabulary to express their ideas. 7(b) provided opportunities for candidates to use a variety of complex sentence structures but some experienced problems with accuracy in areas that should have been mastered for GCSE. The level of language was occasionally uneven between the two parts of the task: some candidates were good at manipulating the language of the text in (a) but were less confident in their use of German when they had to improvise, others found the text challenging but could then express their own ideas quite fluently. Very few candidates overstepped the 5 word lifting limit but some went to extreme lengths and tried to change every single word, which is not necessary; candidates are expected to manipulate phrases and not to reinvent entirely.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced Subsidiary GCE German (H076) June 2009 Examination Series

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
F711	Raw	60	46	41	36	31	27	0
	UMS	60	48	42	36	30	24	0
F712	Raw	140	111	98	86	74	62	0
	UMS	140	112	98	84	70	56	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
H076	200	160	140	120	100	80	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
H076	30.2	49.5	68.3	83.9	94.1	100	650

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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