

GCSE

German

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J731**

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

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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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

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 selecting words from a list or producing short answers for themselves, caused problems for many candidates.

As was said in last year's Report, candidates' handwriting continued to cause problems this year. Candidates should be reminded that it is pointless to revise hard for examinations and then throw marks away by failing to write their answers clearly. Although candidates are not penalised for spelling mistakes, they cannot be awarded marks if it is impossible for examiners to work out what they are intending to say. It will also help examiners if, when candidates need to change an answer and therefore write it somewhere other than in the space provided, candidates put an arrow to the new answer or indicate in some other way where it is.

This year there were pleasingly few instances of candidates writing answers in the wrong language, though this did still happen on occasion (despite there being no questions requiring answers in German in this paper). The best candidates had made very good use of their five minutes' reading time – a pleasing number had made quite extensive notes on their scripts. However, there were a number of occasions when candidates appeared to have read the questions too quickly to understand properly what they were being asked; specific examples of this will be highlighted in the comments on individual questions below.

Despite the comments made in last year's Report, examiners commented on the number of candidates leaving a lot of blanks. This happened not only when written answers in English were required, but even for multiple-choice questions. Since no marks are deducted for incorrect guesses, teachers should continue to encourage their candidates to make an attempt at every question.

This year one or two very basic items of vocabulary, such as *rosa* and *Dom*, caused problems for candidates at both Tiers. Teachers preparing candidates for Higher Tier may find that revision of very basic vocabulary close to the time of the examination is very helpful; or they could simply remind their candidates not to forget to cover the very basics in their own private revision.

Comments on Individual Questions

Foundation Tier

General Comments

Overall, the paper achieved discrimination across the range of candidate ability.

Exercise 1: Questions 1-8

This exercise, as would be expected, was mostly answered well by the majority of candidates, with the exception of Q.3, where many appeared to confuse *Freundin* with *Freunde*.

Exercise 2: Questions 9-16

Again, generally answered well by the majority, with the exception of Q.11 in which a few chose either of the two wrong answers, as they both also contained the concept of "late(r)"; and Q.16, with over half answering wrongly, mainly choosing "bottles".

Exercise 3: Questions 17-24

Just the occasional wrong answer in all but Q.23, which was answered wrongly by about half of candidates, who assumed that it was Rolf's own sixteenth birthday; many will probably have been misled by the preceding "his".

Exercise 4: Questions 25-32

This was definitely the most troublesome exercise for Foundation Tier candidates. qq.27, 30 and 32 (albeit the last with some very dubious spellings) were answered relatively well. A common misconception for Q.25 was "how far?" Candidates seemed to struggle with *Straßenbahn*, with many going for "train". The predominant feature of answers to Q.28 was the places offered (in particular "cathedral", which would have been more successful in Q.29!), when clearly a time was required; the most common wrong time was "at the weekend", and there was rarely a correct response to this question at this Tier. This was an occasion when correct reading of the question would have avoided many wrong answers. Fewer than half correctly recognised *Dom* in Q.29, with "dome" predictably the most frequent wrong answer. There was an array of wrong colours in Q.31, including "red" – many examiners commented on being surprised that so few candidates knew some quite simple colour vocabulary.

Exercise 5: Questions 33-40

Although also shared with the Higher Tier paper, this multiple-choice exercise was done markedly better by Foundation Tier candidates than the previous one. In Q.33 a number of candidates wrongly went for answer A, while a smaller minority went for B in Q.40; but otherwise the questions were all well answered.

Higher Tier

The paper achieved discrimination in the range of ability of candidates although, as stated above, some candidates who scored low marks would possibly have been better able to cope with (and thus have been better entered for) the Foundation Tier paper.

Exercise 1: Questions 1-8

This exercise was answered considerably better by Higher Tier candidates, although it did still cause some unexpected problems. Common misconceptions and problems were the same as described for Ex.4 above.

Exercise 2: Questions 9-16

This multiple-choice exercise was done markedly better than the previous one. In fact, the vast majority of Higher Tier candidates coped very well indeed with this exercise.

Exercise 3: Questions 17-24

Q.18 & Q.19 were answered particularly well, while most also recognised *kreativ* in Q.22. In this, many also added the harmless addition "free", although others made this their sole answer, which was insufficient without "creative". A majority answered Q.17 correctly, although there were several instances of "meeting" and "hanging out with" friends. Although quite a number of candidates managed a correct answer to Q.20, there were many instances of guesses at "poor/no homework" (leading on from Q.19), and also of "poor grades in (class)work, coming 5th". Very few managed "apprenticeship" in Q.21, with a majority being misled by *Lehre* into answering "teaching;" and similarly few candidates managed correct answers to the last two questions, with all kinds of wrong guesses such as "be a doctor/businessman" or "become rich/famous" in Q.23, and "science", "world studies" (from *Betriebswirtschaft?*) in Q.24.

Exercise 4: Questions 25-32

This was another example of an exercise which was dealt with more effectively because candidates were not required to come up with their own answers completely unaided. In Q.25 virtually all candidates appeared to recognise the *faul* component of *faulenzten*, while Q.29 was equally well answered. Common wrong answers in other questions were "occasionally" in Q.26, "lots of money" in Q.27, "has no effect on" in Q.28, "would enjoy" in Q.30, "visit Australia", "fly to America" in Q.31, and "in Germany" in Q.32 – despite there being no mention of either *Amerika* or *Deutschland* (or, indeed, *Australien!*) in the Q.31/32 section.

Exercise 5: Questions 33-40

This was the most challenging exercise for all candidates, and many did not appear to notice exactly where the underlining began to indicate the words to be replaced – thereby not always understanding the nature of the answer required. Perhaps this type of exercise requires more practice during lessons leading up to the listening examination.

Q.33 was generally quite well answered, although predictably there were some answers which took *Geschwister* to mean "sister(s)", for example simply replacing "younger" with "older". The majority of candidates also successfully answered Q.34 with a variety of acceptable responses, and Q.35 was also fairly well answered by the better candidates. Few candidates, however, coped well with Q.36, with a majority only writing who they thought had baked the cake "(family/friend(s)/Mum/ grandparents") without realising that they were also being invited to replace or omit the word "by". Q.37 was well answered by more able candidates, but Q.38 was wrongly answered by a significant minority who thought that the money was from Rainer's birthday, his grandparents, or left over from actually going to the cinema. A majority of better candidates understood *schnell* in Q.38, but there were also many wrong guesses such as "small", "slow", "clumsy", "injured" and so on. Appropriately, the last question, 40, was the most challenging of all for candidates of all abilities, with only the smallest handful (mainly those scoring 36+/40, but not even all of those) understanding the concept required for a mark. Clearly *das Schlimmste* was poorly understood, as many wrong answers centred on the preceding *Krankenwagen* or *Krankenhaus*, or other imagined embarrassing situations involving parents and hugging and kissing! A few others appeared to understand *erklären* but thought it was Rainer's parents who had to do it rather than Rainer himself.

A712 Speaking

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

Administration

The majority of centres did a good job, although there were still some clerical errors. Centres should ensure that all arithmetic has been checked or there may be delays in moderating. Centres should also ensure that the transfer of marks from the WMS to the MS1s is correct for both tasks.

More centres submitted work via the OCR repository this year. Recordings were generally of good quality, although centres should check that recordings are loud enough. The Working Mark Sheets (WMS) were generally completed, although teachers should ensure that they sign them as indicated. Candidates' Notes Forms were generally attached, and most centres correctly included the signed Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) in the material sent to the moderator. Please note that the Task details are not required but should be kept in the centre as stated in the specification. Centre Mark Sheets for both tasks are a requirement and should be included with the material sent to the Moderator.

Centres should note that, when making entries, they can enter only one component (01 Repository or 02 Postal). Centres using Component 01 uploaded their samples to the OCR Repository but generally sent their paperwork by post to the moderator. Centres should note that they can scan WMS, Candidates' Notes Forms and CCS160, and send them to the Repository under Administration.

Centres using Component 02 sent their recordings to their Moderator on CDs. MP3 format is what OCR currently specifies. It is not necessary for there to be one CD per candidate. Centres with 10 candidates or fewer must send all their paperwork and recordings to the moderator at the start of the moderation period.

Internal Moderation

Centres must be sure to rank their candidates in a single reliable order of merit. If there is more than one teacher involved, the centre must carry out internal moderation, and it was obvious that many centres had done this.

Candidate Performance

Candidates take part in a 4-6 minute interactive spoken activity. The topic be chosen by them, and there are regulations about the Notes Form and the preparation of material.

Notes Forms

Centres should be sure to include Notes Forms for both tasks for each candidate in the sample. Where no notes are used, a blank Notes Form, signed by the candidate indicating that no notes were used, should be submitted. If no notes at all are used in the centre, the teacher should include a signed cover note to indicate this.

Most candidates had made good and honest use of the notes from, keeping to the 40 word limit, and centres are to be congratulated on this.

Task Forms

Centres are not required to send in Task Forms, but are asked to retain them until December of the year of the exam.

Timing

The 4-6 minutes is timed from the end of the teacher's announcement of the candidate. After that point, the examiner may complete a question which has been started, and allow the candidate a brief response. Beyond that point, no credit should be given. In some instances, recordings were too long and this is unfair to candidates and even resulted in the reduction of marks at moderation. This was because, before the 6 minutes were up, teachers had not even begun to ask questions involving a range of time frames, or opinions and justifications. This meant that those candidates could not access the upper bands of the mark scheme for Communication and Quality of Language. Centres with this on their report to centre 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 unable to access the top bands for Communication if their task becomes a monologue. This should be reflected in the marking and will be noted in the moderation. The mark scheme specifically refers to unpredictable questions, so teachers need to ask them so that candidates can show they are able to deal with them and have a possibility of high marks. There were more tasks at 4 minutes this year, and this helps candidates access the full range of the mark scheme. However, tasks short of the minimum of 4 minutes are self-penalising, in that candidates tend not to produce a range of vocabulary, structures and tense, and can rarely fully answer the questions posed.

Tasks

In general, centres set appropriate and interesting tasks. There were some good Presentations and Discussions, Conversations and Interviews. Role-plays were generally conducted with more able candidates, and teachers need to organise these carefully so that the candidate has enough to say to be able to access the top bands for Communication. Candidates do this by giving additional information and responding fully to all questions, while the teacher says relatively little and only supplies options to choose from when the candidate is stuck.

When teachers ask more open-ended questions, this allows candidates the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do, and enables them to access higher marks for Communication and Quality of Language.

The mark for Pronunciation and Intonation is not limited by the amount of spoken material candidates produce. Common mistakes were still the mispronunciation of *weil* as *wiel* and *viel* as *veil* and *mochte* and *konnte* for *möchte* and *könnte*. These items are often used by candidates, so it is important that they are pronounced correctly. Intonation can also be affected if candidates are too reliant on their notes and have not practiced more difficult structures and phrases. Sometimes, it was felt that candidates were mechanical in their delivery of the material.

A713/01/02 Reading

A713/01

General Comments

The June 2014 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.

Only a handful of candidates scored less than 20/40. Their teachers had done a good job of preparing them and entering them appropriately.

To improve further, it would be worthwhile teachers checking the Defined Vocabulary list against their teaching materials. Even in the exam's fifth year of operation there was at least one vocabulary item from it – *preiswert* – which was known only to a few candidates.

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

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 *Straßenbahn*, though the only possible alternative to the correct answer was a bus.

Question 2

Most candidates did this well, *Erdbeereis* being well remembered.

Question 3

Hähnchen was recognised by most as a foodstuff, and was clearly neither *Kuchen* nor *Erdbeereis*.

Question 4

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

Question 5

Mathe was well known to almost all candidates.

Question 6

Almost all candidates identified *Auto* correctly. Perhaps recent VW advertising has helped here.

Question 7

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

Question 8

Kalorien might have helped the diet-conscious here, but some candidates found this question requiring an understanding of *Kuchen* and *Kalorien* challenging.

Exercise 2, Questions 9-16

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

Question 9

Most candidates – but not all – knew *Weihnachten*, but the answer could also be got via *essen wir viel*.

Question 10

The reference to electric cars was spotted by most candidates, but not all.

Question 11

This was well done, *tanzen* being familiar to most.

Question 12

Gas had to be understood as energy. Nearly all managed this.

Question 13

Oma was known to most candidates, as was *Suppe*.

Question 14

Most, but not all, candidates successfully identified *Geburtstag*.

Question 15

The topic of environment was well known to most candidates, and *Flaschen* was no problem either.

Question 16

Ich dusche was successfully identified by many.

Exercise 3, Questions 17-24

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

Question 17

Almost all candidates spotted *Fußballstadion* in this World Cup year.

Question 18

This question was also well done by all.

Question 19

Most candidates got this right. However, those who did not do so generally chose Karolin as the answer, presumably because *Schule* was also in her statement about how she got to school.

Question 20

This was well done by almost all candidates, even though “house” had to be spotted in *Doppelhaus*.

Question 21

Tarik’s habit of playing chess with his father was spotted by almost all candidates.

Question 22

Most candidates were able to identify Christoph as the correct answer here, recognising that *Englisch und Französisch* are foreign languages to German speakers.

Question 23

Chips – even the more tricky *Pommes* – were well known to virtually all candidates.

Question 24

Fernsehen is well known to nearly all candidates, who also recognised *Leichtathletik* as sport, probably having looked at the topic in 2013, the Olympic Year.

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 “Evan”, “Björn” or “Both” was the appropriate answer for each statement. This required close reading of the two passages.

Question 25

“Both” was the correct answer, but only about half the candidates were successful. Eva states: *Ich höre abends immer drei Stunden Musik*, and Björn says *Sonntags höre ich den ganzen Tag Musik*. These are two descriptions of spending “hours listening to music”.

Question 26

Most candidates identified *im Internet* as being a computer.

Question 27

Many candidates spotted that Eva was a drummer in a band. Not all, however, were willing to entertain the possibility that a girl might play rock music. Close reading of the text is required.

Question 28

Nearly all candidates spotted that Björn liked songs in German, even though it need to be extracted from *Lieder mit deutschem Text*.

Question 29

Only about half the candidates successfully identified that both teenagers shopped regularly. Eva goes *jeden Samstag*, while Björn says *Am Wochenende gehe ich immer einkaufen*. Perhaps it was Eva's comment that *das macht mir nicht viel Spaß* which misled those who got this wrong. Again, careful reading of the text is required.

Question 30

Most candidates were successful here. Those who were not so were perhaps surprised that a regular (and female) shopper might not enjoy it.

Question 31

Most candidates got this right. However those who did not had not seen that Eva's tennis *dreimal in der Woche* is "several times a week", while Björn's *manchmal fahre ich Rad* is not.

Question 32

Nearly all candidates knew ...*fahre ich Rad*.

Exercise 5, Questions 33-40

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

Question 33

Nearly all candidates got the correct answer, "1920".

Question 34

Many candidates were successful in identifying Dutch as the correct answer, and allowances were made for those who communicated that this was the language of the Netherlands, but did not know the word "Dutch".

Unsuccessful offerings included a variety of alternatives, including, in alphabetical order, "Finnish, Polish, Scottish, Spanish, Swedish" and "Turkish".

Question 35

Around a third of Foundation Tier candidates were able to identify that “abroad” or “the Netherlands” was required here. Some were misled by *Ausland* and thought it might be Austria, Australia or Iceland. Teachers might profitably have their candidates revisit the German names for countries which border with German-speaking ones.

Question 36

This question depended on the candidate’s ability to extract “teacher” from *Grundschullehrerin*. This proved remarkably difficult for Foundation Tier candidates. Just over a third were successful. The remainder specified the wrong sort of teacher, or were misled by *Ausbildung* into the building trade, or occasionally thinking Trudi wanted to be a grounds keeper. There were also plenty of aspirational guesses such as “architect, vet” or “doctor”, for which there is no justification in the text. It does look as though the topics of education and careers would repay some additional teacher attention.

Question 37

A third of candidates managed to answer this question correctly. Trudi would be able to continue living at home. While *weil ich zu Hause wohnen bleiben kann* is not an absolutely straightforward construction, the vocabulary and concept is. There were many guesses here concerning phoning, visiting or coming home.

Question 38

This question proved difficult for nearly all candidates. *Preiswert* – which is in the Foundation Tier vocabulary list – was virtually unknown to candidates. To repeat advice given above, further improvement will follow if teachers check the Defined Vocabulary list against their teaching materials.

Question 39

Many candidates correctly identified that walking or hiking was the required answer: *wandere ich* being quite well known. Incorrect guesses were life-style inspired, often including travelling and/or lying on the beach.

Question 40

Around half the Foundation Tier candidates identified chocolate or chocolate products as the correct answer. Some were misled by *Fabrik* to give “chocolate fabrics” or perhaps “the chocolate factory”, when the only factory mentioned was a *Kabel-Fabrik*.

A713/02

General Comments

The June 2014 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 handful, 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 and A711. They should also be alerted to the words “Turn over” which always appear on odd-numbered pages if the paper is not yet finished.

Teachers had done a good job of preparing their candidates and entering them appropriately so only a handful of candidates scored less than 15/40.

Further improvement will follow if teachers check the Defined Vocabulary list against their teaching materials. Even in the exam's fifth year of operation there was at least one vocabulary item from it – *preiswert* – which was known only to a few candidates.

Details of 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, teacher might consider reviewing simpler 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 "Evan", "Björn" or "Both" was the appropriate answer for each statement. This required close reading of the two passages.

Question 1

Both was the correct answer, and around two thirds of the candidates were successful. Eva states: *Ich höre abends immer drei Stunden Musik*, and Björn says *Sonntags höre ich den ganzen Tag Musik*. These are two descriptions of spending "hours listening to music".

Question 2

Most candidates identified *im Internet* as being a computer.

Question 3

Many candidates spotted that Eva was a drummer in a band. Not all, however, were willing to entertain the possibility that a girl might play rock music. Close reading of the text is required.

Question 4

Nearly all candidates spotted that Björn liked songs in German, even though it need to be extracted from *Lieder mit deutschem Text*.

Question 5

Around three quarters of candidates successfully identified that both teenagers shopped regularly. Eva goes *jeden Samstag*, while Björn says *Am Wochenende gehe ich immer einkaufen*. Perhaps it was Eva's comment that *das macht mir nicht viel Spaß* which misled those who got this wrong. Again, careful reading of the text is required.

Question 6

Almost all candidates were successful here. Those who were not were perhaps surprised that a regular (and female) shopper might not enjoy it.

Question 7

Nearly all candidates got this right. However those who did not do so had not seen that Eva's tennis *dreimal in der Woche* is "several times a week", while Björn's *manchmal fahre ich Rad* is not.

Question 8

Candidates knew ...*fahre ich Rad*.

Exercise 2, Questions 9-16

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

Question 9

All candidates got the correct answer, "1920".

Question 10

Over two thirds of candidates were successful in identifying Dutch as the correct answer, and allowances were made for those who communicated that this was the language of the Netherlands, but did not know the word "Dutch".

Unsuccessful offerings included a variety of alternatives, including, in alphabetical order, "Finnish, Polish, Scottish, Spanish, Swedish" and "Turkish".

Question 11

Around two thirds of candidates were able to identify that "abroad" or "the Netherlands" was required here. Some were misled by *Ausland* and though it might be Austria, Australia or Iceland. Teachers might profitably have their candidates revisit the German names for countries which border with German-speaking ones.

Question 12

This question depended on the candidate's ability to extract "teacher" from *Grundschullehrerin*. This proved remarkably difficult for candidates. Just over half were successful.

The remainder specified the wrong sort of teacher, or were misled by *Ausbildung* into the building trade, or occasionally thinking Trudi wanted to be a grounds keeper. There were also plenty of aspirational guesses such as "architect, vet" or "doctor", for which there is no justification in the text.

It does look as though the topics of education and careers would repay some additional teacher attention.

Question 13

Two thirds of candidates managed to answer this question correctly. Trudi would be able to continue living at home. While *weil ich zu Hause wohnen bleiben kann* is not an absolutely straightforward construction, the vocabulary and concept is. There were many guesses here concerning phoning, visiting or coming home.

Question 14

Around a quarter of candidates were able to answer this question correctly. *Preiswert* – which is in the Foundation Tier vocabulary list – was little known to candidates. To repeat advice given above, further improvement will follow if teachers check the Defined Vocabulary list against their teaching materials.

Question 15

Many candidates correctly identified that walking or hiking was the required answer: *wandere ich* being quite well known. Incorrect guesses were life-style inspired, often including travelling and/or lying on the beach.

Question 16

About three quarters of the Higher Tier candidates identified chocolate or chocolate products as the correct answer. Some were misled by *Fabrik* to give “chocolate fabrics” or perhaps “the chocolate factory”, when the only factory mentioned was a *Kabel-Fabrik*.

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 was spotted by about a third of candidates. Most of the rest thought that the date in the passage was the answer, not realising the significance of *seit dem* before the date.

Question 26

The expected answer: "headteachers" was given by about a quarter of candidates only. Many other candidates had difficulty in finding a suitable equivalent for *Schuldirektoren* and offered many alternatives, including answers including school office staff, and the “bored [sic] of directors”.

Candidates would do well to look for answers to questions near where they found the previous one. Questions are set in the order in which the answers occur in the passage.

Question 27

Over a third of candidates were able to spot that a shortage of staff (*Personal*) was the problem. Guesswork included a lack of phones, not having parents' phone numbers, or misinterpretations about staff making personal calls.

Question 28

The small number of candidates who succeeded had done well. They had to combine three elements: "lots of pupils, absence" and "flu" or a related illness, all to be found in *wenn sehr viele Schüler zur gleichen Zeit an Grippe leiden*.

Most of the remaining candidates guessed, using their knowledge of school offices, a popular misconception involving lots of pupils being late or truanting. Lateness is not mentioned in the text.

Question 29

Two answers were possible:

- (a) Nikola Lachmann thought the rule good.
- (b) It deters / warns off people skipping school.

A third of candidates were up to this task. Most of the rest used inaccurate guesswork based on their own school experience.

Question 30

Only a few candidates were successful in answering this question. They had understood that parents would ensure truanting was not repeated. However most candidates reported erroneously that parents would be angry, and gave a sorry picture of relations between schools and parents. This paper was set before fines for unauthorised absence were introduced in the UK, but the fines issue featured in candidate guesswork.

Question 31

A small number of candidates were able to answer this question correctly. They were able to produce the notion of protecting students against a stupid mistake. Unfortunately the words *vor einer großen Dummheit* misled many into saying how stupid either the school or the rule was.

Question 32

About half the candidates were able to spot that Michael's father was angry. This interpretation of *total sauer* was very creditable.

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 text gave an accessible introduction to recruitment speed dating, so it was clear what the event was about.

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 was in the text, and was found by over a third of candidates. Katja Königberg's age was not given, and the 7 minutes allowed per conversation was clearly stated.

Question 34

The correct answer depended on understanding of *wie seine Chancen auf einen Ausbildungsplatz stehen*. Well over a third of candidates were successful.

Question 35

Almost half the candidates succeeded in spotting that *können positive Qualitäten demonstrieren* was correct.

Question 36

Half the candidates located the correct paragraph, which started with *Asha* and they selected that she was hopeful, which was correct.

A very small number of candidates failed to turn over to Questions 36-40, losing 4 marks.

Question 37

Frau Braun's opinion of Asha was correctly summarised by *eine angenehme Persönlichkeit*. Well over a third of candidates spotted this.

Question 38

Answering this question correctly required understanding of the whole of the sixth paragraph. Gratifyingly, half the candidates succeeded in doing this.

Question 39

Cornelius was well signalled in the 7th paragraph. Only those who spotted *hat er sich auch vorher im Internet gut über seine Ausbildung informiert* were successful, choosing option C.

Question 40

Almost a half of candidates were successful. Bruno had learnt that *Autohaus Fiedler* had training places. He would enjoy his summer holiday in Spain *wenn er jetzt einen bekommt*. This was quite a complex question, well done by many.

A714 Writing

General Comments

All teachers are urged to closely consult the Guide to Controlled Assessment (Writing) document before preparing candidates for this Unit. Procedures, rules and recommendations are set out there in detail, and the document also includes an extensive bank of task suggestions and ideas related to the GCSE Specification Topic Areas. Much time and anxiety may be saved by planning ahead at the start of the course, and so the Guide also offers various planning suggestions.

Some excellent work was submitted again this year, although less assignment originality was noted, with tasks given scant context and the 'Purpose' requirement quite often unexploited. The sample task ideas in the CA Guide may provide new or renewed inspiration and a broader stimulus for candidates of different ability and interests, particularly as target-differentiated suggestions are also routinely included. Also offered for each Topic Area is a "Possible adaptations" feature with alternative ideas for tasks. These latter may well be of greater interest to more capable candidates, in that there is more scope for originality of content. Teachers could perhaps consider allowing candidates separate reference to these resources.

Approach to Tasks

A small number of centres this year submitted as the first candidate task an assignment completed as early as the first term of year 10. For individual candidates this may be understandable on grounds of poor attendance or later performance weakness, but as a general rule this approach would seem to limit candidates' potential. Candidates' writing abilities should improve with practice, and hence it may be that only one further CA opportunity is in fact being given to them at a later stage. This is a pity. Some tasks set are also over-orchestrated, with an excess of content guidance given. This was evident from some Teacher Information Forms included with candidate submissions (NB: these should be retained at the centre; they are not consulted for assessment purposes). Detailed suggestions about content amount to a translation exercise for the candidate, who also feels an inappropriate obligation to include each and every point; they obstruct the candidate's ability to include and organise material in an individual way, and so often set them at a disadvantage. It is more difficult for candidates effectively to present and link ideas that are not their own.

It is worth impressing upon future candidates that length is not credited for its own sake. There were some unnecessarily long items this year, where length became sufficiently counter-productive to deny the writer the degree of achievement for "effectiveness" that a shorter, more structured version would probably have earned. Communication marks are awarded for organisation and development, for ideas and their justification in the wider sense - not for quantity. The Communication mark-scheme for band 7-9 indicates that at and by this level "some ideas and points of view, sometimes with justifications" are expected. Lengthy narratives with simple impressions do not meet these criteria. It is not unreasonable to expect 15 and 16 year old pupils to hold their own points of view on the social issues which they meet in their own lives and about which they are learning. Justifications need not always be of the 'because' variety, but can often be effectively conveyed by illustration and example. Assessors recognise and appreciate the effectiveness of 'justification' in all manners of expression. Too much use of *weil* risks becoming intrusive.

In terms of 'Purpose' there were more "Letters" noted this year. This is encouraging, and some of the items submitted where candidates had clearly 'thought themselves into the role' were most convincing and very well delivered indeed. For letters, some candidates may need reminding that they will, essentially, be role-playing. It is important for effective achievement that

candidates bear in mind their role and their purpose. Candidates must therefore have practised the different forms of address for formal and informal letters or emails, not least to enable them to distinguish between *Sie* and *sie*, *Ihr* and *ihr*, *Ihnen* and *ihnen*. If this writing distinction is not observed, the message will likely be ambiguous and may therefore mislead.

A few fantasy items were again submitted this year. Whilst on the one hand these bring originality and a more exciting dimension to what may otherwise be considered a routine task, these are undoubtedly very demanding in a foreign language. Teachers will know which candidates to encourage and which to discourage in this respect, but should also point out that not all Assessors will be equally familiar with the fantasy characters and roles of the latest film cults and internet games. A good idea here for aspiring writers in this vein would therefore be to briefly explain the context of the piece, either on the Notes form, or in English at the top of the page.

Quality of Language

As suggested above, quality should take precedence over quantity, provided that the recommended lengths for targeted grades have first been appreciated. There is no value in repeating structures such as *ist*, *es gibt*, *(ich) liebe* and *man kann* (+ infinitive) again and again. The purpose of the preparation time is to allow candidates to plan their response logically, carefully and coherently. It is thereby hoped that this will eliminate as far as possible untidy omission marks and marginal additions at the final writing-up stage, which can make the development of an item hard to follow.

Candidates should avoid an over-use of subordinate clauses for their own sake. Admittedly in German teaching these are always given a very high profile, because of the word order requirements. However, it should be remembered that the same Language mark-scheme also serves French and Spanish, where this particular demand is much less significant. It therefore follows that “varying / a range of clause types” (bands 10 – 11 and 12 – 13) refers to extended and less “straightforward” structures, which complements the “ideas and points of view... justifications” of the Communication mark-scheme. Subordinate clauses used correctly and with variety of tense and conjunctions will clearly enhance a piece of writing in terms of structure, but these constructs must also have point (relevance) and make sense. The ‘staple’ conjunctions – *weil*, *obwohl*, *dass* and *wenn* are very well-established, and almost all candidates can produce at least one or two simple examples of these. Perhaps thought could now be given as to how to prompt more variety, eg: relatives with prepositions, as well as *wie*, *wer*, *wann*, *warum*, *bis*, *es sei denn*, *ob*, *als ob*, *zumal* etc. Whilst the majority of candidates may not feel secure in extending their range significantly further in this way, the best linguists could certainly be interested.

There was increased usage this year of good justifying links with adverbial words or phrases such as *daher*, *darum*, *deshalb*, *deswegen*, *infolgedessen*, *dadurch*. It should be noted that *aus dem Grund*, *dass.....*, whilst a valid construction, is considerably ‘heavier’ in meaning and emphasis than these, and hardly merited in the simple statement *ich bin ins Bett gegangen aus dem Grund, dass ich müde war*. In general, adverbial links and other connectives such as *außerdem*, *immerhin*, *trotzdem*, *zwar*, *letztlich* etc were often used to good effect to enhance the development of ideas and points of view. The English justifier ‘so’ is, of course, a ‘false friend’ for German, and candidates should be made clearly aware that this is a different type of link, meaning *auf diese Weise*. It does not explain cause or reason, but rather manner, and is therefore not a synonym for *weil* or *denn* or even *also*.

Inversion, however, is a fundamental feature of idiomatic German, and very important at all levels for effectiveness, even if the absence of it does not necessarily prevent comprehension. 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. The effective use of differently introduced infinitive clauses with *zu*, for example, could be more effectively exploited, as well as other strategic usage of adverbial connections, such as *trotzdem*, *deswegen*, *darum*, *doch*, etc, prepositional structures, and certainly the whole range of modal verb application. But summarily, and most importantly, candidates should know that it is not the inclusion of particular individual lexical items or structures (including tenses) alone which provide good, qualitative communication, but the ‘effectiveness’ of their application within the overall intended context.

It is essential that candidates take care with the accuracy of their writing, as Assessors cannot be expected to guess what a word or words are supposed to be. The absence of *Umlaut* on *würde*, *könnte*, *möchte*, *schön* etc is by no means a minor error. It changes meaning substantially, and also sounds quite different from the form of the accented word. Assessors are required to ‘sound out’ lexical items where the written item is problematic or incorrect. It will be obvious that *ich singe leider* is quite different in meaning from *ich singe Lieder*. Similarly, misspellings *blieben* for *bleiben*, *triebe/treibe*, *Riese/Reise*, etc and, for example, *denn*, *den* and *dann* will reduce or confound comprehensibility. The worst offenders this year were without doubt two of the most commonly used – namely, *leibe*, *Leiblings-* for *liebe*, *Lieblings-*.

The importance of punctuation in any writing exercise is clear. Misplaced full-stops can easily confound a structural sequence and suggest that candidates do not understand what they have written. Good organisation and clarity need the underpinning of correct punctuation, and with careful exploitation of the preparation time, nothing in the final exercise need be written either in haste or carelessly.

Dictionary use is a skill that needs direction and support, for the dictionary is not of course a first resource on the day. A very minimum of one early lesson on dictionary use for parts of speech identification and abbreviation interpretation should be an essential part of the GCSE language course. But having a dictionary to hand when writing up should still be considered valuable and could well help to reduce some of the careless and serious spelling mistakes mentioned above. However, there seemed to be less misuse of dictionaries this year, and this is promising.

Finally, it is again worth stressing that candidates should be taught to think for themselves and to think what they mean when they are creating - from what they have learned – their own most effective response to the task title and the purpose it is given. This is why different abilities will need different guidance and tasks with different demands. Specific lexical items or structures are stepping-stones for guidance towards that end, but assessment is a response to the individual application and outcome.

Administration

The deadline 15th May submission date for work to Assessors was properly observed by all but one or two centres. Some submissions were despatched earlier, which was extremely helpful. It is important to attach Coversheets, as their absence adds considerably to the Assessor’s work load. Notes and written work should be properly collated, and in the correct order – ideally and logically with the earlier item first. Treasury tags are by far the preferred system for ease of reference and keeping sheets together. Plastic wallets are impractical, making extraction and re-insertion unnecessarily time-consuming.

It is good practice for candidates to include word counts. They should be aware of how much they have written and what their target word count is. It is both good discipline and a useful guide for Assessors. There was some laxity in this respect this year.

The Teacher Information forms, with suggested task details, are not required. Teachers will not advantage their candidates by submitting the forms, as each item is assessed as it is presented, as a complete piece of work with a title. These forms should be retained at the centre until the December following submission. Notes forms, however, are mandatory, and these should be properly headed, and must be signed and dated by candidates, even if otherwise left blank. A maximum of 40 words is permitted over 5 bullet points, without pictures or any form of code. Crossings-out, etc, if still legible, must be included in these 40 words. Teachers are required to check that these rules have been correctly observed. The signing of the Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) is a confirmation of compliance with these and all Controlled Assessment regulations.

The (Writing) Centre Authentication form (CCS160) must be included with the entries. Without this, marks for the Unit concerned will not be released. The OCR Attendance Register should also be included with the scripts and allows the Assessor to verify that all expected candidates' work has been included in the package.

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