

GCSE

German

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J731**

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

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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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

Foundation Tier

Exercise 1

This exercise was, as expected, generally well done, with a few exceptions. For Q.4 some chose B, some chose C. 'Doppelhaus' might have been guessed as 2 floors, or C, thinking it meant 'big house'. For Q.7 a fairly common incorrect answer was B.

Exercise 2

Again, this was tackled well by the majority of candidates. Where mistakes were made, these tended to be due to a lack of knowledge of some fairly basic vocabulary. For example, in Q.9 some chose 'post office', not understanding 'Dom', even though this is a word which is commonly tested at GCSE. In Q.10 many chose 'bus stop', others 'tram stop'. For Q.11 quite a few candidates opted for 'zoo' and, although some went for 'opera' in Q.13, the majority of candidates got this question right. For Q.14 some went for 'tiring', perhaps guessing 'spazieren', having missed 'schön' earlier in the recording, but answers to Q.15 and Q.16 were almost always correct.

Exercise 3

Many candidates struggled on this section. Most common errors were: Q.17 'mixed', 'secondary', 'middle' – the concept of 'Mädchenschule' was very poorly rendered, even though 'Mädchen' is a word which all GCSE candidates should know. Q.18 was answered correctly by very few, and in Q.19 few understood 'Gemüse', the most common misconception being 'music garden'. In Q.20 not many knew 'Kartoffeln', most thinking 'Blumen' was the answer. Several put 'small flowers', obviously confusing 'keine' with 'kleine'! Q.21 was answered well by the majority of candidates, but for Q.22 lots said 'fish and chips', probably guessing from the previous question, and Q.23 was again disappointing. Q.24 was answered correctly by most candidates, although weaker ones went for 'train and/then bus', as 'Zug' is mentioned earlier.

Foundation and Higher Tier

Exercise FT4/HT1

This exercise was generally quite well done at both levels, with Q.25/1 being correctly answered by almost all candidates. For Q.26/2 a few went for F, as Fridays and some Wednesdays were mentioned. For Q.27/3 A was consistent, but many went for L in the second part, either thinking the 'Kino' referred to the weekends, or because they were not familiar with 'Sonnabend' or 'fernsehen'. Q.28/4, on the other hand, was mostly answered correctly by candidates at both levels.

Exercise FT5/HT2

This exercise was fairly well answered by candidates at both levels. Most, even at FT, got a few marks. Popular misconceptions: Q.29/5 'Alpen' was heard and answered instead of 'Strandurlaub'. Q.30/6 caused many a mix-up between this year and last year. Lots heard 'gerechnet' and 'herrlich', and went for C. Q.31/7 prompted numerous crossings out for many candidates – they opted first for 'Fußball', then 'schwimmen', then 'reiten'. Q.32/8 A was consistently accurate, only a few directed to the other options. In Q.33/9 some heard 'gut' first and went for A. Q.34/10 was not well answered – most errors were where candidates opted for C. For Q.35/11 lots of candidates heard 'einmal' and went for C. 'Noch nie' was not well

understood, especially by FT candidates. Q.36/12 was mostly correct, as *'sparen'* appeared to be well known.

Higher Tier

Exercise 3

Most candidates did very well with this section. Many got full marks, and only a few got half marks or fewer. A number of candidates dropped a mark or two by not writing out the whole phrase, even though that is quite clear in the instructions. Common errors: Q.13 very few errors; 'eat' the most common. Q.14 very few errors; 'village' the most common, occasionally 'supermarket'. Q.15 'a skirt' was a regular error. Q.16 'clothing' occasionally. Q.17 'late'; even a few 'in the mornings'! Q.18 'convenient' or 'reasonable' were common errors, usually following an incorrect answer in Q17. Q.19 and Q.20 these last two answers were regularly round the wrong way, and occasionally 'a comedy' was given instead of either one.

Exercise 4

The last two exercises really sorted out the candidates, and only able candidates scored well on them. Common mistakes: Q.21 'could do better' – many candidates didn't really understand, but heard the word *'besser'*, and assumed that that would be the answer. For Q.22 most answers related to Michael's progress, not to his parents' opinion. In many cases, neither *'verstehen'* nor *'einverstanden'* were understood, and so candidates assumed he must already 'be doing his best', as he states in the next section of text. Q.23 provoked lots of guesswork by candidates. Some guessed it related to results, so went for 'good results' but ignored (or didn't know) *'Abitur'*. Some thought *'im Durchschnitt'* related to a German exam. Q.24 was generally answered well, and incorrect answers were normally wild guesses. For Q.25 quite a lot went for 'never home' and some for 'home late'. But generally many candidates scored on this one. In Q.26 *'nur wenig Zeit'* was not well rendered, but 'no time' and 'they never see him' were common incorrect answers. Q.27 resulted in mostly erroneous guesses, with very few correct answers seen by any markers, however Q.28 was then quite well answered. Most elaborated 'job' with either 'part-time' or 'library' or both. Unfortunately a few did not and therefore could not be awarded a mark.

Exercise 5

This proved to be another taxing exercise. Many candidates only scored one or two marks, and those with 1 mark generally got it for Q.31 or Q.33. Common incorrect renderings included 'turn off the lights' for Q.29. Most incorrect answers were guesses, with 'recycle' the favourite, or 'not drop litter'. Very few candidates were able to score a mark on Q.30 while for Q.31 there were lots of responses of 'get the bus', 'drive his car' and so on, but there were also many answers for this question that scored a mark. Q.32 was more challenging for many, with 'the bus is too slow' the most common misconception – 'cars are better / quicker' was another. Most got Q.33 right, as *'Treibhauseffekt'* enabled some informed guesswork! Q.34 was possibly the most difficult question on the paper (along with no 36), and few got it right. There were very few possible "almost" answers – and candidates either understood or did not. In Q.35 quite a lot got the 'waste of time' part, rather than the 'not worth it' angle, but there were a good number of correct answers to this question. Q.36 was another question which candidates found challenging, with few marks awarded. Occasionally 'most people are not environmentally friendly' came up, but mostly this was without the 'not'. Only one or two candidates attempted to tackle the 'wrong bin' aspect.

A712 Speaking

General Comments:

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

Administration

Most centres did a good job and deadlines for submitting work to moderators were properly observed by nearly all centres. There appeared to be fewer clerical errors than last year – centres should ensure that all arithmetic has been carefully checked or there may be delays in moderating. Centres should also check that the transfer of marks from the WMS to the MS1 form is correct.

The split between centres submitting work via the OCR repository or using the postal moderation option was similar to last year. Most recordings were of a good quality, although centres should check that recordings are loud enough and that background noise does not interfere with the conduct of the examination. Candidates Notes Forms were generally attached and most centres correctly included the signed Centre Authentication form (CCS160) in the material sent to the moderator. There seemed to be an increase in centres not including centre mark sheets (MS1s) with the moderation sample. The centre mark sheets (MS1s) for both tasks should be sent to the moderator. Issues with missing documents were generally quickly rectified.

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

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

Internal Moderation

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

Candidate Performance

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

Notes forms

Many candidates had made good use of them, keeping to the forty word limit. Centres should note that symbols or codes are not allowed. A number of candidates chose not to use any notes.

Timing

Timing begins from when the candidate first starts to speak. Tests are marked until the end of the candidate's utterance at the six minute limit. No credit is given to any material after this

point. Most centres adhered to the recommended timing. In some instances, recordings were too long and resulted in the reduction of marks at moderation. This was often because a range of time frames, opinions and/or justifications were not in evidence before the end of the six minutes. As a result, the upper bands of the mark scheme for Communication and Quality of Language were not available. Centres with this on their report should review their examining technique.

Where candidates do a Presentation and Discussion, the presentation should not exceed two minutes. Lengthy presentations do not allow for spontaneity and candidates are not able to access the top bands for Communication if the task becomes a lengthy monologue with little time left for follow up discussion as candidates need to be able to deal with unpredictable questions. There were more tasks at four minutes or just over this year and candidates could still achieve the full range of the mark scheme, although there were instances where it was felt candidates may have been able to cope with more follow up questions. There is no specific penalty for tasks short of four minutes, however they are often self-penalising as candidates tend not to produce a wide range of vocabulary, structures and tenses in a short space of time.

Tasks

Most centres set a range of tasks which were appropriate and interesting. There were some good Presentations and Discussions, Conversations and Interviews. Candidates were generally given good opportunity to offer more information and develop answers, especially when teachers used more open-ended questions allowing candidates to demonstrate what they could do. Some centres relied heavily on the same task title and asked all candidates identical questions.

Candidates do need to deliver a faultless performance to achieve a top mark for Pronunciation and Intonation and there were some excellent performances. However, a mark of 4 or 5 should not be awarded where there are instances of interference from the candidate's first language sometimes preventing clarity. Common mistakes were the confusion of the *ie/ei* sound and problems differentiating between *werde/würde*, *war/wäre*, *hatte/hätte* and *konnte/könnte*. This can also impede communication when a question is asked in one tense and answered in another. Intonation can also be affected where candidates are too reliant on pre-learnt material or their notes as they can rush their delivery making it hard to pick out what is being said.

A713/01 Reading

General Comments:

The June 2016 Foundation Tier German Reading paper followed the pattern of papers since 2010. Candidates knew what to expect, and had no difficulty in completing the paper in the time allowed.

This year's paper proved quite challenging to candidates, and there were few candidates who scored full marks. Only a handful of candidates scored less than 15/40. Even the very weakest candidate scoring less than 7/40 had completed the paper fully. Some lower-scoring candidates had done reasonably well on the objective items, but had found Exercise 5, where brief responses in English were required, very daunting. This year, exercise 1 proved to be somewhat more testing than exercises 2 and 3

Teachers had done a good job of preparing candidates and entering them appropriately. To improve further, it would be worthwhile teachers checking the Vocabulary list – Alphabetical (on the OCR website) against their teaching materials. For example, page 2 of the Vocabulary list mentioned above there is a list of “prior knowledge” which includes some matters which have arisen in this 2016 paper. The list of prior knowledge includes:

- numbers (ordinal and cardinal)
- days of the week, months of the year and seasons
- towns, countries and nationalities
- feminine and plural forms of the words listed
- prefixes and suffixes of words already listed
- straightforward and common cognates.

There were some comments about poor handwriting this year, though fewer than in recent years. Candidates should make every effort to present legible work. In particular, overwriting an incorrect answer is not always clear. Candidates should cross out answers and write the intended answer clearly nearby.

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 2-4 words. In the event, it proved more demanding than exercises 2 and 3.

Question 1

Most candidates did this well. A few did not recognise *Ich fahre immer Rad*.

Question 2

Many candidates did this well, but some did not recognise *Meerschweinchen*. There is a list of animals in the Vocabulary list – by topic, pages 18/19 (on the OCR website). Those who got this wrong had chosen pictures such as H *Fußgängerzone* or K *S-Bahn*, perhaps because they were long words.

Question 3

This question was often quite well done.

Question 4

This question caused problems for many candidates. F and E were common incorrect answers. Both *Krawatte* and *Schlips* are given together in the Vocabulary list – Alphabetical (on the OCR website)

Question 5

Many candidates did this question well.

Question 6

Most candidates knew *Kleid*. Many of those who didn't chose A (*Schlips*).

Question 7

Fußgängerzone was known by many. However, some candidates chose E (vacuum cleaner), perhaps because it is also a long word in German.

Question 8

Tankstelle was known to most.

Exercise 2, Questions 9-16

This exercise tested the understanding of short sentences. The majority of candidates did this exercise competently, with few errors. Even a word little discussed outside Scotland (*Dudelsack*) did not confuse candidates.

Exercise 3, Questions 17-24

This exercise tested short sentences, and also made reference to the fact that German is used outside Germany, in this case Switzerland. It was surprising to see a blank row on the odd paper – this never scores a mark.

Question 17

Many, but not all candidates spotted *Ich spare* and *Urlaub* and correctly chose Lukas. Stefanie (who was never the correct answer), Richard and Norbert were chosen by those who were not successful.

Question 18

Nearly all candidates correctly identified Inge as the answer.

Question 19

Most candidates spotted *Traumjob* even if they did not know *Feuerwehrmann* and got this right. Stefanie was (perhaps less explicitly) a common incorrect answer.

Question 20

Norbert was correctly chosen by most. Perhaps some candidates thought dancing was likely to be chosen by a female, which explained Stefanie's appearance here.

Question 21

A big majority of candidates spotted *Naturwissenschaften* in Tania's sentence. Those who didn't often went for Peter and Lukas.

Question 22

Most candidates did well to identify *Weltreise* in Gisela's sentence. Common incorrect answers were Lukas and Peter.

Question 23

Not all candidates were able to identify Peter as the aspiring vet, with Tania, Stephanie and Gisela all seen as incorrect answers.

Question 24

Jürgen was correctly chosen by nearly all candidates. Perhaps *gut bezahlt* sticks in the memory.

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 "Lutz", "Pritti" or "Both" was the appropriate answer for each statement. This required close reading of the two passages. Candidates performed noticeably better in on questions 29-32.

Question 25

Most candidates spotted that only Lutz had been on the English exchange. Some, however thought Pritti had also taken part.

Question 26

Most candidates spotted that Pritti works hard at school. Lutz is silent on this topic.

Question 27

Nearly all candidates got this question right, but a few thought Pritti had been on a ship, too. *Fähre* and *Überfahrt* merit coverage when discussing travel with candidates.

Question 28

Careful reading of the passage was needed to see that both young people had an English test soon. There were a lot of (correctly) amended answers to this question, probably because the word *Klassenarbeit* was lower down the page in Lutz's account. A majority of candidates did not get the correct answer, Both.

Question 29

Nearly all candidates were successful here. Those who weren't thought "Both" was the correct answer, perhaps because that was their own view on the matter.

Question 30

Most candidates were knew *grillen* and *Wochenende*.

Question 31

Almost all candidates knew that *merkwürdig*, *lächerlich* and *sieht unmöglich aus* conveyed disapproval of school uniform.

Question 32

This was almost invariably answered correctly.

Exercise 5, Questions 33-40

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

Question 33

Very many candidates got the right answer, *healthy* (food). However there were guesses such as *junk*, *party*, *lots of*, *seafood*, *restaurant*, *take-away* and even *Austrian* (food), none of which scored a mark.

Question 34

Many candidates got the correct answer, *vegetables*. Some were flummoxed, as there were quite a few blanks left.

Question 35

Many candidates understood that Uschi *did NOT like* birthday cake. Answers saying she *did not want* a birthday cake were accepted. However, there were quite a few incorrect answers such as: *a fruity, a large, has a small, has a special, wants a big, wants no fruit on her, wants a layered, wants hardly any veg on her cake*.

Question 36

Many candidates, but by no means all, gained a mark for this question. A wide range of answers concerning a *band* or a *musician* was accepted. In addition such answers as *bass player, singer, musical performer*, and *music* were all accepted. Answers such as *musical, orchestra, composer* and guesses such as *film / movie* were not accepted.

Question 37

For this question, the expected answer *her boyfriend* was very rarely seen. Perhaps the force of *Freund* or *kann ich ihn an meinem Geburtstag nur bei der Vorstellung treffen* was not clear to candidates, In any event, any person mentioned in the text was accepted, and for many candidates this was just as well. People mentioned who were NOT in the text included *manager, star* and *idol*, and none of these gained a mark.

Question 38

This, surprisingly, was a question where only a minority of candidates was successful. The key part of the text was the instrument played by Margot's boyfriend – *Schlagzeug*. This item of vocabulary was tested in 2015 and remarked on in the Foundation Tier Report to Centres. There is a list of musical instruments in the Vocabulary List – General and Topic Areas 1 to 5, page 38. All sorts of instruments were offered – *saxophone* (starts with s), *keyboard, bass, bass guitar, harmonica, piano, trumpet* and even *triangle*. A common answer was *guitar*, but it did not feature in the text, so gained no mark. Clearly this vocabulary area would repay additional teacher (and especially) candidate attention.

Question 39

Nearly all candidates got the correct answer, *sings*.

Question 40

Many candidates got this right, saying a new tablet was either *practical* or *lightweight*. The most common error was to confuse *praktisch* with *practice*. The other common error was to guess some defect in a previously owned tablet, eg *hers was broken*, or *hers was slow*.

A713/02 Reading

General Comments:

The June 2016 Higher Tier German Reading paper followed the pattern of papers since 2010. Candidates knew what to expect, and virtually all candidates completed the paper in the time allowed.

This year's paper was marginally easier for candidates than the 2015 paper. However, very few candidates scored 40/40. Only a handful of candidates scored less than 15/40. Some lower-scoring candidates had done reasonably well on the objective items, but had found Exercises 2 and 4, where brief responses in English were required, very daunting.

Teachers had done a good job of preparing candidates and entering them appropriately. To improve further, it would be worthwhile teachers checking the Vocabulary list – Alphabetical and the Vocabulary List – General and Topic Areas 1 to 5 (both on the website) against their teaching materials. Even marginal improvements in performance are worth having.

There were some comments from assessors about poor handwriting this year, though fewer than in recent years. Nevertheless, candidates should make every effort to present legible work. In particular, overwriting an incorrect answer is not always clear. Candidates should cross out answers and write the intended answer clearly nearby.

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

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

Comments on Individual Questions:

Exercise 1, Questions 1-8

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

Question 1

Most candidates got this right.

Question 2

Nearly all candidates spotted that Pritti works hard at school. Lutz is silent on this topic.

Question 3

Most candidates got this right.

Question 4

Careful reading of the passage was needed to see that both young people had an English test soon. There were a lot of (correctly) amended answers to this question, probably because the

word *Klassenarbeit* was lower down the page in Lutz's account. However, a majority of candidates did get the correct answer, *Both*.

Question 5

Most candidates got this right.

Question 6

Nearly all candidates knew *grillen* and *Wochenende*.

Question 7

Most candidates knew that *merkwürdig*, *lächerlich* and *sieht unmöglich aus* conveyed disapproval of school uniform.

Question 8

This was almost invariably answered correctly.

Exercise 2, Questions 9-16

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

Question 9

Very many candidates got the right answer, *healthy* (food). However there were guesses such as *junk*, *party*, *lots of*, *seafood*, *restaurant*, *take-away* and even *Austrian* (food), none of which scored a mark.

Question 10

Nearly all candidates got the correct answer, *vegetables*.

Question 11

Most candidates understood that Uschi *did NOT like* birthday cake. Answers saying she *did not want* a birthday cake were accepted.

Question 12

Many candidates, but by no means all, gained a mark for this question. A wide range of answers concerning a *band* or a *musician* was accepted. In addition such answers as *bass player*, *singer*, *musical performer*, and *music* were all accepted. Answers such as *musical*, *orchestra*, *composer* and guesses such as *film / movie* were not accepted.

Question 13

For this question, the expected answer *her boyfriend* was very rarely seen. Perhaps the force of *Freund* or *kann ich ihn an meinem Geburtstag nur bei der Vorstellung treffen* was not clear to candidates. After discussion, any person mentioned in the text was accepted, and for many candidates this was just as well. People mentioned who were NOT in the text included *manager*, *star* and *idol*, and none of these gained a mark.

Question 14

This, surprisingly, was a question where only a minority of candidates was successful. The key part of the text was the instrument played by Margot's boyfriend – *Schlagzeug*. All sorts of instruments were offered – *saxophone* (starts with s), *keyboard*, *bass*, *bass guitar*, *harmonica*, *piano*, *trumpet* and even *triangle*. A common answer was *guitar*, but it did not feature in the text, so gained no mark. Clearly this vocabulary would repay additional teacher (and especially) candidate attention.

Question 15

Virtually all candidates got the correct answer, *sings*.

Question 16

Many candidates got this right, saying a new tablet was either *practical* or *lightweight*. The most common error was to confuse *praktisch* with *practice*. The other common error was to guess some defect in a previously owned tablet, e.g. *hers was broken*, or *hers was slow*. Others simply invented answers like *it would be fun*.

Exercise 3, Questions 17-24

This passage on a TV cooking show required careful reading. Scores as low as 2/8 were seen for this exercise, and very many candidates lost a couple or three marks.

Question 17

The correct answer, *a programme a day*, was chosen by most candidates. However, some were misled by the figure 10 in *10 episodes a week*, while the notion of the studio audience was attractive to others.

Question 18

Most candidates chose the correct answer *cook with a professional chef*. The other two options attracted some candidates, with weaker candidates going for *go to Berlin to practise*. Others were misled by *Er gibt natürlich Tipps*, which does not imply swapping.

Question 19

A majority of candidates gave correct answers.

Question 20

This question depended on who was doing the shopping. The paragraph *Nichts darf Studio-Boss Tim Rach vergessen. Er hat eine ellenlange Einkaufsliste!* makes it clear that the studio provides the ingredients. Candidates needed to be able to ignore the word *ellenlange*, which they were unlikely to know, but might guess means something to do with *long*.

Question 21

Only a minority had the correct answer to this, based on *ist im Voraus bestens geplant*. Perhaps an exaggerated concern with safety or the mention of knives and kitchen machinery led candidates towards *handled with care*, or perhaps they could not work out the meaning of *Was ... dem Koch zufällig unter der Hand liegt*.

Question 22

The correct answer, *are quickly sorted out*, was spotted by most, but not all. However the plausible answers *are frequent* and *can cause long delays* – neither of which had any support in the text – were chosen by those relying on guesswork.

Question 23

A majority of candidates chose *never show signs of stress*, which is correct, based on *Aber das Kamerateam bleibt immer ruhig*. However there were takers for *like a quiet audience*, based on *bleibt immer ruhig*. Others went for *get upset if there is a rush*. They read *Hektik kann es schon geben, wenn es nicht viel Zeit gibt* without spotting *Sie kennen das alles. „Nur die Ruhe“, heißt es*.

Question 24

This was almost invariably correct.

Exercise 4, Questions 25-31

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 is 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

This question was based on *Jetzt fühle ich mich hier total zu Hause*. Only a minority of candidates managed this. Others talked about the nice house, pool and garden, or sunshine, none of which answered the question *How does Nicole feel?*

Question 26

Nearly all candidates managed to gain a mark for mentioning water sports. It was decided not to insist on the notion of *trying* watersports. For most this was just as well.

Question 27

There were two marks for this question, which were only rarely both achieved. The notion that Nicole was not **allowed** to walk to school was missed by most. The notion that her Dad always drives her to school was spotted by more candidates. Fortunately for them it was decided not to penalise the idea of him driving there at high speed. (*Ihr Vater fährt sie sicherheitshalber schnell mit dem Auto ...*) The notion that the school was 300 metres away on the street she lives in did not answer the question how she gets to school.

Question 28

A good number of candidates spotted that not all houses in Mfuleni have a water supply. Answers about hot running water gained no credit.

Question 29

Almost all candidates spotted that Sivuyisiwe's room was shared with her sister.

Question 30

The expected answer, that by no means all children in Mfuleni were **allowed** to go to school, was seen only rarely. Fortunately for many, it was decided to credit *a long journey to school*. Guesses with no basis in the text (though doubtless with some basis in reality) were not accepted. These included lack of money, and less plausibly, being home schooled.

Question 31

Very few candidates scored a mark for this question. The key notion here was *Hochschulabschluss*. Living in Europe is Sivuyisiwe's dream, but she knows *dass das höchstwahrscheinlich nur durch eine gute Bildung mit Hochschulabschluss verwirklicht werden kann*. *Hochschulabschluss* was most often interpreted as something to do with high school grades. Others were led astray by *Bildung*, which they linked to *buildings*. Guesses with no basis in the text (though doubtless with some basis in reality) were not accepted. These guesses included going to study (at university) in Europe, being funded to study by Europeans, working in a hospital, and money. *Hochschulabschluss* is included in future study and jobs in the Vocabulary List – General and Topic Areas 1 to 5, page 52, and *Bildung* is on page 50.

Exercise 5, Questions 32-39

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, but were not unknown. The layout with nine paragraphs, one each for the example and the 8 questions, guided candidates through the exercise. However, the standard required of those aiming at top grades is a high one, and good marks on this section represented quite an achievement.

Question 32

The correct answer, *sehr viel mehr als bei Augsburg*, tested understanding of *Aber bei Dynamo Moskau bekomme ich mehr als dreimal so viel*. Many candidates managed this. For those who weren't successful, A was the most popular option.

Question 33

Many candidates managed the correct answer, B, for this question, correctly interpreting *man kann hier gut wohnen*.

Question 34

The correct answer required various clues to be picked up from paragraph 4. Successful candidates had picked up *Trainingsmöglichkeiten*, *erstklassig* and the reference to the high standard of Augsburg's training facilities being referred back to in *Aber der wird hier noch getoppt*.

Around half the candidates managed this difficult task and chose C, with the remainder roughly equally divided between A and B.

Question 35

The correct answer, A, had various indicators – *Er lobt auch die russische Liga, Die Erfolge ... beweisen, wie gut sie ist*. A majority of candidates managed this. Most of the rest chose option B.

Question 36

Candidates found this question the most difficult of the exercise, with only about a third getting the correct answer, A. Understanding of the whole paragraph was needed to conclude that the players would do their best. There is no mention of guaranteed success, as in the most popular option, C

Question 37

Around half the candidates chose the correct answer, B. The key word *stören* is in the Vocabulary list – Alphabetical, and is a fair test of *Das ist aber nicht so schlimm* at this level. The other options were chosen in roughly equal numbers.

Question 38

Many candidates understood that *fließend* was rendered by *hat sie keine Probleme* and chose option C. Those who were not successful chose the other options in roughly equal numbers.

Question 39

Many candidates understood that the Russian football season does not operate in the winter months, and chose the correct option, C. Others were incorrectly attracted by winter sports or playing football in the gym, neither of which were mentioned in the text.

A714 Writing

General Comments

The Guide to Controlled Assessment (Writing) document should be carefully read by all teachers before preparing candidates for this Unit. Procedures and clear rules for preparation and the supervisory conditions and regulations for final writing up of tasks are set out here in detail. The document also includes advice for scheduling, as well as an extensive bank of task suggestions and ideas. These have been usefully differentiated according to candidate potential, and are linked to the GCSE Specification Topic Areas. Teachers are particularly encouraged to consider for their more ambitious candidates the “Possible adaptations” task ideas within each Topic section. These are intended to be motivational in offering wider scope and more opportunity for originality of content. More able candidates interested in devising their own adaptations should be allowed to do so, once approved by the teacher.

This year again some excellent individual work was submitted. There were also some all too obviously generic pieces from a few centres, where task responses showed very little authenticity, or writer-ownership of content. Candidates “saw the sights”, for example, or “went on excursions” on a holiday visit, without any elaboration; likewise many a family member was simply dismissed as a *Nervensäge*. There was often no attempt to contextualise tasks or to give them any real purpose. Indeed, quite frequently the ‘Task Purpose’ requirement appeared to be irrelevant, when in fact it can be very effectively exploited by a candidate. This is the point of this requirement.

Approach to Tasks

It is a good idea for candidates to practise the “Controlled Assessment experience” at an earlier stage of the two-year GCSE course, but only a very few will have “ownership” of a wide enough range of linguistic material and ideas in the first year of study. Greater writing proficiency and scope are normally to be expected in the course of the second year. The submission of early work has very often exposed a focus on structures simply for their perceived linguistic merit, rather than on candidate understanding. It is not appropriate to focus only on the Quality of Language mark scheme, at the expense of the Communication mark scheme, when both carry the same weighting of marks, namely a maximum of 15.

The disproportionate teaching emphasis on structures is all the more evident when tasks set are over-suggested, with too much content direction given. Candidates are left with no room or need for their own ideas and opinions. Naturally most will take the teacher’s ideas as the best – and easiest – course of action. It is extraordinarily difficult for candidates to present ideas effectively when these are not their own. Some even end up manifestly contradicting themselves, in the belief that they should include everything the teacher has mooted. It is a good idea to encourage some general class discussion – in English – on ideas and approaches for a given topic, before candidates settle down to applying their own language knowledge to their task. For Examiners, their assessment procedure relates only to the task title, any context that may have been given to it, and the stated purpose. Examiners are required to ignore the Teacher Information Form, if this happens to be included with candidate submissions. (NB: Teachers are again reminded that these should NOT be included, but must be retained on file at the centre until December following the examination session.)

Tasks set show little variation from year to year from certain centres. This suggests a reluctance to explore new, and perhaps more interesting angles of approach to teaching content. Favoured topics are predominantly Holidays, School and Home Life and Locality. These may seem suitable on grounds of a solid base of ‘safe’ factual resource material, but the commonality of

content discourages much individuality of ideas and points of view, and therefore access to the higher mark bands. Task titles set on the Environment are rarely differentiated according to ability, and without differentiation are clearly too challenging for weaker candidates. This is a difficult topic to master effectively in a foreign language, given the complexity of vocabulary and ideas that are needed. Tasks which invite ‘free imagination’ via suggestions, also do not help weaker candidates, who clearly find it difficult to sustain logical and clear development of ideas which are not their own.

Over-provision of content by teachers seems to be a clear reason why many candidates are writing too much. This should be strongly discouraged. It is hardly surprising that candidates will try to include as many teacher suggestions as they can without further regard for organisation. The outcome in such cases is often a lack of coherent structure and convincing development. Overlong items risk being structurally repetitive, the impression is one of “padding”, a loss of focus or point, and loss of “effectiveness”. Communication marks are awarded for organisation and development of content, for ideas and their justification – that is, their point and their relevance. “Effectiveness” is a notable pillar of the Communication mark scheme. Candidates have sixty minutes only for writing up what they have prepared. Part of the test is how “effectively” they can express themselves, how coherently and concisely, as well as with what measure of individuality over a recommended number of words; indeed, this amounts to how well they have prepared on their own. The fact that no definitive upper word-limit is imposed is deliberate, and is designed to offer a little individual freedom and leeway. This is a measure of trust for candidates that they appreciate the recommendations of 200–300 words per item if targeting the higher grades. It also clearly spares examiners the additional task of counting words to a cut-off limit. Candidates should therefore be strongly encouraged to provide word-counts as a means of self-control and discipline. Excessive length items of 400+ words, and certainly when more, raise the obvious question of proper adherence to the regulations, and thus ultimately of Malpractice. It is clearly unreasonable to expect examiners to spend significantly more time on some candidates’ submissions than on others.

Quality of Language

The equal status of the two mark schemes for Language Quality and Communication is emphasised above. Reference to both mark schemes also indicates quite clearly why they should not be seen as separate. The ‘clarity’ and ‘effectiveness of message’ elements of the Communication mark bands is picked up in the Quality of Language descriptors:

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

Following on from how tasks are approached (above), it is therefore important that candidates should understand what they are writing, and that they should also “own” it. Accordingly, a ‘good’ performance is by no means a regurgitation of selective ‘good’ language ideas.

In general, knowledge and application of the different forms of ‘you’ and ‘your’ in German remain poor. “Effective” and “clear” delivery of a letter, an email, an interview as well as a blog requires the correct form of address and its consistency throughout. A number of submissions again this year started with the ‘du’ form of address and ended with the ‘Sie’ form (letters, emails); and in the case of blogs this was often reversed, with the ‘ihr’ form perhaps initially, but ‘du’/‘dein’ or ‘Sie’/‘Ihr’ – or even ‘sie’ – confusions at the end. Awareness and differentiation of the forms of address are fundamental to successful learning of the target language.

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

In German teaching, subordinate clauses are always given a high profile, because of word order requirements. The demonstration of these for their own sake and in excess quantity will not necessarily enhance a piece of work and will likely be intrusive. The mark schemes also serve French and Spanish, where this particular aspect has more general significance. Subordinate clauses used correctly and with variety of tense and conjunctions need to have point (“relevance”) and to make appropriate sense in context. The ‘staple’ conjunctions – *weil, obwohl, dass* and *wenn* are very well-established, and almost all candidates, regardless of capability otherwise, can produce at least one or two minimal examples of these with simple opinions. More consideration should be given as to how to extend this basic range – e.g. relatives with prepositions, as well as *wie, wer, wann, warum, bis, es sei denn, ob, als ob, zumal* etc. Whilst some candidates may not feel secure in exploring the greater sophistication of ideas that these will support, the best linguists could certainly be interested. Relative pronouns also tend to be used only by the best candidates and generally remain under-exploited, with the exception of the straightforward *der/die/das...heißt...*

Alternatives to the popular *weil*, such as the adverbs *deshalb, deswegen, dadurch, daher*, etc. are starting to be more widely applied. Prepositions *wegen* and *durch* can also function appropriately for justifying purposes. In general adverbial links and other connectives such as *außerdem, allerdings, trotzdem, zwar, letztlich* etc are also being used more effectively to personalise ideas and points of view, and thus to consolidate credibility and more convincing “ownership” of content.

The English justifier ‘so’, a “false friend” for German, remains difficult to eliminate in this target language. Candidates should be made clearly aware that German *so* is a different type of link, meaning *auf diese Weise*. It does not explain cause or reason, but rather ‘how’ or manner, and is therefore not a synonym for *weil* or *denn* or even *also*. Likewise, *so dass* shows consequence and not purpose. Another “false friend” still frequently noted is the misuse of *überall* for ‘overall’ or ‘above all’. And 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. This may work in conversation through tone of voice, but it is misleading (“not effective”) on paper.

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

Inversion, it is important to reiterate, is a fundamental feature of idiomatic German, important at all levels for stylistic effectiveness, even if the absence of it does not always prevent comprehension. It should be regarded as a “common idiom” in mark scheme terms (band 8-9).

Legible handwriting is essential. Examiners do not have the time to work out what a word is supposed to be. Spelling showed some improvement this year, but approximate spelling cannot simply be ignored and accepted. Far too many quite good candidates, for example, routinely write *in der Zunkunft./Zunkuft - even Zuzuft*. The absence of *Umlaut* on *würde, könnte, möchte, schön* etc is by no means a minor spelling error. It changes meaning substantially, and also sounds quite different from the form of the accented word. The difference between *nicht* and

nichts is not merely one of spelling. Examiners are required to 'sound out' lexical items for Communication purposes where the written item is problematic or incorrect. It is obvious that *ich singe leider* is quite different in meaning from *ich singe Lieder*, and also sounds quite different. Similarly, misspellings *blieben* for *bleiben*, *triebe/treibe*, *Riese/Reise*, etc. and, for example, *denn*, *den* and *dann* will reduce or confound comprehensibility. The worst offenders remain without doubt two of the most commonly used – namely, *leibe*, *Leiblings-* for *liebe*, *Liebings-*. The *das/dass* distinction on the other hand, may not sound different, but the structural difference is a significant one, and must be considered under Quality of Language.

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

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

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