



GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GERMAN
A LEVEL**

SUMMER 2018

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COMPONENT 1 SPEAKING

General Comments

This was the first year of the new linear A level examination and despite some initial concerns from centres regarding the format of the test, candidates responded refreshingly well. Many of them obviously enjoyed the challenge of researching and preparing their Independent Research Project (IRP) independently, which led to some interesting and varied discussions.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECT (IRP)

The title of the IRP was a reflection of the candidates' research. They recorded their research sources on a pro forma which was sent to the visiting examiner three weeks before the speaking test. This was extremely helpful to examiners, because if the topic was new to them, they had time before their visit to the centre to prepare. The bullet points were also useful as reference during the discussion.

The following assessment objectives were used to assess two minute presentation:

- A02 - reference to research and preparation materials
- A04 - show knowledge and understanding of and respond critically and analytically to, different aspects of the culture and society of German speaking-countries/communities

The following assessment objectives were used to assess the 10 minute discussion:

- A01 - the extent to which questions were answered and the extent of interaction with the examiner
- A03 - accuracy of grammar, range, use of idiom and quality of pronunciation and intonation
- A04 - as above

Although candidates wrote their IRPs independently, centres had the opportunity of sending in their IRP titles to the Board for feedback on their suitability, with particular reference to A04 content. Some of these titles were not suitable as they did not match the requirements. For example they were not embedded in German culture or the topics were too wide, therefore possibly exposing lack of knowledge during the discussion.

Feedback from examiners about the IRP was very positive. Candidates chose incredibly varied topics and it was a refreshing change from discussions on one particular film which had been studied in class, as often was the case for GN3. Many researched their topics well and were able to sustain an interesting and relevant discussion, using a wide range of language, as well as demonstrating their creative and analytical skills.

Examples of good titles

Wie wird das Thema Vertrauen im Film "Barbara" behandelt?
Inwieweit hat sich Deutschland in Folge der Reformation geändert?

Ist "Die Neuen Leiden Des Jungen W" eine Neuschreibung des Original von Goethe oder eine Kritik der DDR?

Helmut Kohl und seine Verdienste werden oft hervorgehoben. Doch, inwiefern ist Kritik angemessen?

Inwiefern ist Deutschland immer noch geteilt?

Inwieweit ist die Bezeichnung "Rabenmutter" für Frauen in der deutschen Gesellschaft nachteilig?

Some candidates who studied a German book or a film did not have enough scope for A04 because they could not relate it to the German-speaking countries. For example, one candidate chose the book 'Tintenherz' and knew a lot about the characters but was unable to answer the question as to why it is popular in Germany.

However, some candidates had not done enough research and chose topics that were unsuitable because they were too wide or failed to show depth and evidence of research and its relevance to German-speaking countries/communities

Examples of unsuitable topics

Das 'Oktoberfest' in München.

Fußball: mehr als ein Spiel?

Deutsches Essen.

Awarding marks for A03 was challenging as three criteria are now assessed in one band. A 'best fit' approach was adopted to decide on the band and then a mark was assigned. For example, if the response was mainly in band 3 but with a limited amount of band 4 content, the mark awarded was at the top of band 3, to account for the band 4 content.

Theme-based discussion based on a stimulus card

Following the IRP discussion, candidates were offered a predetermined choice of two unseen stimulus cards. They had five minutes' preparation time in the examining room with the examiner present to prepare for a five to - six minute discussion. All four assessment objectives were assessed with equal weighting.

The new procedure worked well it made timetabling easier as thirty minutes was allowed for each test and a separate room was not required for candidates to prepare the card. Most centres provided an additional desk in the examination room so they could prepare without feeling overlooked by the examiner. Generally candidates responded well to the cards. However, some needed prompting to ask two questions relevant to the sub- theme, which at times, interrupted the flow of the conversation.

Conclusion

Overall, the feedback on this new format for the A-level speaking test was positive. Many candidates demonstrated both confidence and maturity in their choice of IRP, which was reflected in their presentations and discussions, as well as in the quality of their supporting evidence. Looking ahead, teachers should feel more confident in their guidance and implementing strategies to improve performance, for example, exploiting A03 criteria; A04 content.

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COMPONENT 2 LISTENING, READING AND TRANSLATION

Component 2 assesses candidates' reading and listening comprehension using a variety of authentic resources. Candidates are also required to demonstrate their translation skills, both into English and into German, in Section C of this component.

SECTION A – LISTENING

Questions 1 – 4 are marked according to AO1 where candidates are required to understand and to respond in writing to spoken language drawn from a variety of sources. There are 30 marks available for this section.

Question 1

This task required candidates to complete the sentences in List A by selecting the correct ending for each sentence from List B. There were 7 marks available. This exercise posed no major problems and the majority of candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the text and accompanying sentence halves. Questions 1(a) and 1(c) proved to be the most challenging. For Question 1(a) *Nur wegen des Kriegs hat Nujeen* many candidates chose the incorrect (j) *letztes Jahr geflohen* as their answer. For Question 1(c) *Pünktlichkeit ist* many chose (o) *unheimlich gut*.

Question 2

This task required candidates to summarise a short passage of spoken German. Bullet points were given to assist candidates. There were 8 marks available. Weaker candidates often fell into the trap of simply transcribing what they heard. Their responses clearly demonstrated that they had not understood the text. By far the most common error in this exercise was the response for Bullet point 2 where many candidates did not make the important point that the *Wurstmarkt* also sold wine. For Bullet point 3 some candidates suggested that the increased security was due to the 600,000 people who were expected to attend the event. However, the text makes it clear that the increased security is due to the increased threat of terrorism. For Bullet point *“eine Weinprobe im Riesenrad”* is not a valid answer as this is not a new attraction.

Question 3

This task required candidates to select the correct word/s from the list given to complete the missing gap in the sentences. There were 5 marks available. Question 3(d) proved to be the most challenging, as many candidates incorrectly chose the verb *erregen* to complete the sentence. Candidates are expected to write their response in the gap provided and not simply circle their choice.

Question 4

This task required candidates to answer the questions set in German. There were 10 marks available. Full sentences were not required. Indeed, sometimes a short phrase or even just one word was all that was required for the candidate to achieve the mark. Candidates who copied exact sentences from the spoken text were not awarded the mark. The rubric clearly states *“Du darfst Wörter vom Hörtext benutzen. Du darfst aber ganze Sätze nicht kopieren”*. It became quickly apparent that some candidates struggled with the meaning of some question words and, in particular, *Was für...?*, which then made it impossible for them to give a correct response. It was surprising how many students did not know how to spell *Wende*. Indeed, many candidates spelt this *Wände*.

SECTION B – READING

Questions 5 – 8 are marked according to AO2 where candidates are required to understand and to respond in writing to written language drawn from a variety of sources. There are 30 marks available.

Question 5

This task required candidates to find the synonyms for the words given in the written text. There were 5 marks available. Although many candidates performed well in this exercise, too many candidates lost marks because they didn't give the exact synonym. For example, for *“ergriff die Gelegenheit”*, some candidates gave incorrect responses such *“die Chance nutzen”*. The candidate is required to give the exact synonym to achieve the mark. Many candidates did not know the word *“einstellen”*. Indeed the synonym given for 5(b) *“jemanden als Arbeitnehmer aufnehmen”* was often *“Arbeitgeber”*. For 5(d) many candidates wrote *“schwerbehindert”*, which was of course also incorrect.

Question 6

This task required candidates to summarise a short passage of spoken German. Bullet points were given to assist candidates in this task. There were 5 marks available. This exercise was completed well and most candidates were able to demonstrate that they had understood the text well.

Question 7

This task required candidates to identify which statements were true and which false. If the statement was false, candidates were required to correct the statement to achieve the mark. There were 10 marks available. If a candidate identified the false statement, but did not correct it appropriately, then no mark was awarded. Most candidates lost marks in this task as a result of the attempted corrections, rather than an inability to recognise whether the initial statement was true or false. Question 7(6) proved the most challenging, as few candidates were able to correct the sentence correctly.

Question 8

This task required candidates to answer the questions set in German. There were 10 marks available. Full sentences were not required. Indeed, sometimes a short phrase or even just one word was all that was required for the candidate to achieve the mark. Candidates who copied exact sentences from the spoken text were not awarded the mark. The rubric clearly states *“Du darfst Wörter vom Text benutzen. Du darfst aber ganze Sätze nicht kopieren”*. For Question 8(d) many candidates wrote *“Sie haben niemanden gesagt, dass sie fliehen würden”*. Whilst true this does not actually answer the question set. Too many candidates clearly do not know how to use personal pronouns or possessive pronouns, which then causes them to lose marks, despite the fact they have probably understood the text quite well.

SECTION C - TRANSLATION

Question 9

The translation into English is marked according to AO2 where candidates are required to understand and respond in writing to written language drawn from a variety of sources. There are 20 marks available.

It was pleasing to note how many candidates were able to produce very good translations, which not only revealed a good knowledge of vocabulary and grammar but also displayed an ability to write in fluent, accurate English. Credit was always given to translations, which conveyed the meaning of the German in acceptable English. Those candidates who did struggle with this translation task simply lacked knowledge of even the most basic vocabulary. Words such as “*Ausreiseantrag*” and “*Fluchtwilliger*” proved to be problematic for some candidates. “*Widersprüchlich*” and “*Zuversicht*” were generally not known. Teachers should continue to stress to candidates the need to be accurate, which means taking note of all tenses, pronouns and other important aspects of language. Some students failed to translate all the words or phrases and, as a result, lost marks. Adverbs, in particular, were often ignored. *Sofort*, *zunächst*, *auch*, *dort* and *schließlich* are all examples of words, which were regularly not translated by candidates.

Question 10

The translation into German is marked according to AO3 where candidates are required to manipulate the language accurately, in spoken and written forms, using a range of lexis and structure. The translation is divided into 20 sections with one mark allocated per section.

The case system, word order, adjectival endings, prepositions, infinitive clauses were some of the aspects of grammar tested in Question 10. Although there were some high achieving candidates, too many candidates performed badly in this task due to both a lack of vocabulary and extremely poor grammatical knowledge. This task, in particular, differentiated between high and low achievers at this level. Very few candidates knew that the verb *leiden* should be followed by the preposition *an*. It was pleasing to note how many students, who did not know the word *Schlafmangel*, were able to convey the same meaning by saying for example, “*schlafen zu wenig*” and thereby achieved the allocated mark. Many students confused *aufwachen* with *aufstehen*. Some candidates are still experiencing difficulty differentiating between *das* and *dass*. Similarly, some candidates are unable to use *wann* and *wenn* correctly. Examiners will ignore minor slips in gender and minor spelling errors, provided there is no ambiguity. However, mistakes with common verbs and tenses are not considered minor errors and, in the case of these errors, marks are not awarded.

Given that this was the first time candidates had sat the examination of the new specification it was pleasing to note how nearly all candidates were able to attempt most questions and that there were very few questions unanswered. It was also pleasing to note the high proportion of candidates who have a good command of the German language at this level.

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COMPONENT 3: CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL RESPONSE IN WRITING

Introduction

This report provides some general remarks about the paper and how students tackled it. Feedback then follows on candidate performance and suggestions for improvement.

General Comments

Candidates tackled a wide range of questions on films, books and plays in this new specification, and overall the standard was high with some very interesting essays. What was especially good to note was that strong candidates often demonstrated in their essays that they were able to make links with other areas of study in their two years of A level German study (e.g. the themes and sub-themes covered). Moreover many candidates did well in both of their essays.

Many candidates wrote essays on “old favourites”, especially *Good Bye Lenin!*, *Der Besuch der alten Dame* and *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei*. On the other hand it was a pity that there were no essays attempted on Böll's *Das Brot der frühen Jahre*, Brecht's *Leben des Galilei* and Dörrie's *Kirschblüten Hanami*. It was however pleasing to see that *Lola rennt*, had been tackled by a small number of centres. All four are important works in different ways, and would be very worthwhile for students to study.

Essay writing

Some general points need to be made about the essays with a view to helping candidates perform better next year.

Handwriting was at times an issue. Candidates must bear in mind that the main focus in essay writing is communication to someone who unlike their regular teacher, is unfamiliar with their handwriting style. Another point is that candidates need to write in complete sentences (e.g. a sentence needs at least one verb). At times lower and upper case lettering was also an issue. This is not optional in German (or in English), there is a difference for example between “sie sprechen” and “Sie sprechen” when it appears midsentence.

Planning and checking are also very important. The highest scoring essays tended to be the ones that showed evidence of good planning. Such essays generally have clear structures and “direction of travel”. They generally communicate more and do so in a more effective way. Checking is also a feature of good essay writing practice and candidates should allow time for planning and checking as part of their preparation for component three. Both should be seen as integral parts of good essay writing.

Last but not least is essay length. Some essays gave the impression that the candidate wanted to say as much as possible (relevant or not) about the chosen work. Although the recommended 300 words is only a guide, essays that went beyond this tended to drift into irrelevance. Marks are awarded for the work as a whole meaning that irrelevant sections cannot be ignored.

Assessment Objectives

This section of the exam is marked against two sets of assessment objectives.

For **AO3** candidates needed to demonstrate that they can “manipulate the language accurately, in written forms, using a range of lexis and structure”. It has three strands relating to grammatical accuracy, range of lexis and structures and then overall style and register. Below are some comments on the first two of these:

Strand one especially distinguishes between “errors” and “basic errors”. The main focus here was the verb, as the most important element in any sentence. Verbs needed to be formed and positioned well in order for the candidate to score a high mark. Some candidates not only did this well but even showed the ability to use compound verb constructions accurately (e.g. “would have done”). As regards strand two, many candidates were also able to show that they had a good vocabulary and could use this effectively to express themselves at times with some nuance. Often this involved using specialist vocabulary that they had learned while studying specific works.

On the other hand there were some often recurring problems with certain words, which are briefly mentioned below:

“*both*” – very often candidates did not distinguish between adjectival use e.g. “*beide Charaktere*” and adverbial use e.g. in the construction “*sowohl.....als auch*”. N.B. also pronominal use of “*beide*”.

“*when*” – very often candidates did not distinguish between “*wenn*” and “*als*”.

“*obwohl*” – this contrastive conjunction was often misused.

“*überall*” – this was often misused as a way of summing up e.g. to translate the English “*overall*”

For **AO4** candidates are required to “show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically and analytically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries / communities where the language is spoken”. A simplified view of the mark scheme could be that higher marks were awarded for showing a “critical analytical appreciation” of the book/play or film, and lower marks awarded for showing “knowledge” of the work. The highest marks were awarded if this critique was done in detail with a lot of relevant supporting evidence

Showing a relevant critical and analytical appreciation is moving beyond the plot of the film/book/play and discussing the significance of events or aspects contained within it. Being able to comment on the plot of course implies a certain amount of retelling the story, but the balance has to be on giving some kind of critique of the plot in order to attain higher marks.

Exam Questions - some pitfalls and comments

Question 2a) – Many candidates talked about König’s overall style in a superficial way and not at all in relation to what the question asked for (the flashback from chapter one), and this meant they attained a lower mark for AO4.

Questions 2b) and 3a) – where these were answered successfully, candidates went beyond merely describing examples of resistance and betrayal respectively, but also gave some kind of critique of them.

Question 7b) – As with question 2 the more successful essays moved away from simple physical comparisons of the two households, to the significance of these differences.

Concluding remarks

I hope that teachers will find these observations and suggestions useful when preparing students for next summer’s examination.



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