



GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GERMAN
A LEVEL**

SUMMER 2022

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Annual Statistical Report

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Unit	Page
Component 1	1
Component 2	3
Component 3	8

GERMAN
GCE A LEVEL
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COMPONENT 1

General Comments

After the hiatus of 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was a huge relief to return to normal examining. The vast majority of centres chose to have the exams conducted in person, and we were very pleased that there was no disruption caused by Covid to this series of the oral exams.

Independent study has been particularly necessary during these past two years of disruption to education, and most candidates notably applied these skills to the Independent Research Project (IRP). This format fits well with candidates' other interests and the discussion part of the exam is always highly interesting. The overall oral standard was good, and most candidates were very well prepared. Some gaps were evident, however, in some GCSE-standard vocabulary, which reflects the disruption to learning during the pandemic. Also, the level of candidates' nerves was noticeably high this year, which reflects their lack of exam experience.

On a logistical note, the late Easter date meant the window for scheduling A level oral exams was smaller and particularly challenging for centres with large numbers of GCSE oral exams to organise as well. We appreciate the efforts that centres make to facilitate the smooth running of the oral exams.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Most candidates were good at timing their IRP presentations and not exceeding the allotted time. Many understood the need to structure their 2 minute talk to make it clear a range of sources had been used.

To score top marks on AO2 it is necessary to demonstrate understanding of the topic drawn from a wide variety of sources. Being too superficial or narrating facts or plots makes it harder to achieve AO2 marks. Similarly, candidates who were able to explain the significance and relevance of their topic to German-speaking countries scored more highly on AO4. Sometimes when the IRP was about a novel or film, the candidate found it harder to put the subject in question into the context of German culture or society. To score well on AO4 candidates need to do more than explore characterisation or themes of a book or film. It is important to show how the topic enhances knowledge and understanding of aspects of German culture or society.

It is also essential that the topic has its origins in the German language; it is very evident when candidates have done their research mainly in English or even studied an English novel that happened to be translated into German.

Sporting clubs are also a popular topic. Again, for higher marks on AO2 and AO4, It is important that candidates avoid simply narrating facts, and try and explain their significance in German-speaking culture.

With its emphasis on independent research, the IRP is an excellent introduction to a taste of later academic life, and those centres embracing and encouraging their candidates' independence approach the IRP in the spirit in which it is intended.

A good IRP title was often a question, and it was clear that many candidates felt passionately about their research and could have spent much longer than the allocated time discussing it. A modern language sits well with any A level, and the IRP really gives candidates the opportunity to explore a subject linked to a German-speaking country in much greater detail than a taught aspect of the syllabus. It was evident that students were going on to study history, politics, art, architecture, music or medicine from the variety of titles presented. Here is a flavour of the range of topics:-

- Brutalist architecture
- Turkish *Gastarbeiter*
- The German health system
- *Der Blaue Reiter* movement
- Women's rights (during the Third Reich; also in the GDR)
- German football fans
- *AfD*
- The German pharmaceutical industry
- The German fashion industry

Although not allowed to discuss the IRP, those centres with a foreign language assistant noticeably gave their candidates the benefit of regular speaking sessions, as they were particularly well prepared for Task 2, the stimulus card.

The stimulus card led to some high-quality discussions, in some cases at an impressively sophisticated level. Most candidates were ready to ask a couple of questions as per the requirement of the mark scheme. It is important that candidates spend some of their 5 minute preparation time considering two relevant and interesting questions they could ask. The quality of these questions is considered when marking AO1.

The immigration topic was a popular choice, as was festivals. Many candidates were well prepared with statistics about marriage trends in German-speaking countries when discussing the card about weddings. Many were able to express mature views about the importance of reading and the impact of technology on young people's lives.

Summary of key points

Judging from most candidates' level of preparation, the overall state of German teaching appears to be as excellent as ever. It is encouraging that so many are working hard to advance the cause of learning German.

One positive aspect of the disruption caused by Covid is that online experience of Germany has been embraced. For example, with virtual tours of German sights, museums, art galleries and memorials having to replace actual visits, this method of exploring German-speaking countries has become more habitual and normal to learners of German. Continuing these habits will only benefit candidates, seeing and hearing German in a variety of interesting contexts.

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Summer 2022
COMPONENT 2

General Comments

Component 2 assesses candidates' reading and listening comprehension skills 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.

Comments on individual questions/sections

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.

- Q.1** In Question 1 candidates were required to listen to the radio report about bullying and then complete each sentence by choosing one of the three possible endings given. This first exercise was done extremely well. Indeed, there were 8 marks available, and the average mark for this question was 7/8.
- Q.2** In Question 2 candidates were required to complete a summary of *Hörtext 2*, a report about Florian Schneider-Esleben, who was the founder of the German band *Kraftwerk* and who had recently died. This was a gap fill exercise, where candidates had to fill in the missing words in the text, choosing each word from the 16 possible answers given. The mean score for this question was 6/8.
- Q.3** For this question candidates were required to summarise the second half of the listening text about *Kraftwerk*. Bullet points were given to assist candidates in the task. This exercise was again completed well, and the mean score was 3/4.
- Q.4** *Hörtext 3* was a listening text about a new nursery app in Switzerland. This was a *Question and Answer* type question. Full sentences were not always 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. Candidates should be reminded that if they use an English word in their response, then no mark will be awarded either. In Question 5 many candidates were unable to achieve the 2 marks available because, although they answered the first part of the question *Wie haben die Erzieher früher den Eltern Informationen gegeben?*, they did not then answer the second part of the question *Warum war das nicht so erfolgreich wie die App?* It is apparent that there are some candidates, who continue to struggle with the meaning of some question words. These candidates have no chance of answering a question accurately, if they do not know what the question actually means in the first place. It is vital that all candidates know the meaning of all question words. The average mark for this question was 7/10.

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.

- Q.5** For Question 5 candidates were required to read a newspaper article about Ena Ringli and her shoe manufacturing business. Candidates then had to complete the sentences in List A by selecting the correct ending for each sentence from List B. There were 10 marks available. This exercise posed no major problems, and the majority of candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the text and were able to match the two sentence halves accurately. Indeed, the average mark for this question was 8/10. Question 8 proved to be the most challenging, as to complete *Die Yep Herrenschuhe werden* many candidates chose the incorrect (*m*) as their answer, instead of the correct (*j*) *in der Schweiz produziert*.
- Q.6** 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 available. If a candidate has identified the false statement, but has not corrected it appropriately, then no mark is awarded. This question too proved to be very accessible to all candidates and the average mark scored was 6/8.
- Q.7** This task required candidates to find five synonyms for words taken from an extract from the literary text *Und Morgen am Meer* by Corinna Bomann. Candidates often lose marks in this question because, although they are able to identify the synonym in the text, for some reason they don't then give the exact word required. In question (*d*), for example, some students gave the answer as *plaudern* instead of *plaudert* and so the mark was lost. This question proved to be quite challenging for many candidates and scores were generally lower here.
- Q.8** This task required candidates to answer questions in the target language about a text on the German speaking people, who live in Belgium. 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 text were not awarded the mark. The rubric clearly states "*Du darfst Wörter vom Text benutzen. Du darfst aber ganze Sätze nicht kopieren*". Most candidates performed well again in this question and the average score was 5/7.

SECTION C – TRANSLATION

- Q.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. The translation into English is divided into 20 sections with one mark allocated per section.

It was pleasing to note how many candidates this year 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 *jede Menge*, *Nachhilfe*, *gewisse*, *Werbung*, *unterbrochen*, *stundenweise* proved to be problematic for some candidates. Only some candidates were able to express *kann er sich wenden* accurately in English. A particularly common error is that some students fail to translate every word in the text and, as a result, then lose the mark for the section where a word has not been translated. Adverbs, in particular, continue to be regularly ignored. As an example, *dann* in the phrase *und können dann die unterschiedlichen Lernangebote* was regularly not translated by candidates. Similarly, some candidates ignored the word *auch* in the sentence *Erklärvideos gibt es auch auf YouTube*. The word *live* was often omitted in translations given by candidates in Section 12. Candidates should be reminded of need to be accurate when translating from German into English, taking particular note of the tenses of verbs. As an example, in this particular translation many candidates lost marks in section 18 because they translated the *könnten* as *can* instead of *could*. The mean score for Question 9 was 13/20.

- Q.10** The translation into German is marked according to AO3 where candidates are required to manipulate the language accurately in written form, using a range of lexis and structure. The translation into German is divided into 20 sections with one mark allocated per section.

As in previous years many candidates found Question 10 the most challenging aspect of Component 2. Having said that, this year there were a good number of students who performed extremely well in the translation into German task. Given the inevitable disruption this cohort of students will have inevitably experienced to their studies during the Covid pandemic, it has heartening for examiners to be able to read the excellent German translations offered by a good number of candidates, even in these difficult times.

The topic for the translation into German this year was Migration. A small number of students do not know enough key vocabulary to be able to complete the translation to a good standard. Students should remember that the translation will always focus on one of the topics listed in the specification. Words, which caused particular difficulty this year, included *threatened*, *persecution*, *neighbouring country* and *according to the law*. In Section 6 some candidates used the verb *kreuzen* instead of the correct *überqueren*. A surprising number of candidates were unable to translate the phrases *on foot* or *by boat* in Section 7. Students should also remember that if they offer a translation, which is not exact, but nevertheless conveys the same intended meaning (and the German is accurate), then they will be awarded a mark. This is always preferable to simply leaving a gap. As in the translation into English task, some candidates still fail to translate every word. As an example, candidates did not always translate the words *often so* in *The situation for refugees is often so dangerous ...*

Some candidates still struggle with some aspects of grammar, which they would be expected to know at this level. For example, in the first sentence the possessive adjective *his* proved challenging for some candidates. Even if they were able to select the correct *sein*, many were unable to then use the correct ending of that possessive adjective after *aus*. Although examiners generally ignore minor slips in gender and minor spelling errors, provided there is no ambiguity, mistakes with common verbs and tenses are not considered to be minor errors. Marks are, therefore, never awarded when such errors occur. As such, candidates, who were unable to conjugate a verb accurately, were not awarded marks for those sections where the verb was incorrect. Only the most able candidates were able to accurately translate the more difficult *cannot be sent back*, *would be* and *had expected*. Accurate word order is also considered important and, for that reason, if a candidate was unable to use the correct word order after subordinating conjunctions such as *weil*, *dass* or *wenn*, no mark was awarded in those sections either. The mean score for Question 10 was 9/20.

Summary of key points

Candidates sitting Component 2 of A Level German in the future are offered the following advice:

- In Section 1 and Section 2 candidates should ensure that they know the meaning of all question words including, *Wer? Mit wem? Wie? and Woher? Wovon? Woraus?* Examiners regularly see cases where the candidate had not completely understood the question, probably because they have not known the exact meaning of the question word.
- When answering *Question and Answer* type questions, candidates should always ask themselves whether they have given a response, which actually answers the question set. Candidates should also remember that, although a sentence may be required, there are some occasions where a short phrase or even a single word might suffice.
- In Section 1 and Section 2 candidates should always check how many marks have been allocated by the examiner for each question. They should then ensure that they have given enough detail in their response to be able to access all the marks available for that question. Some questions have two parts, which require two responses to access the two marks available for that question.
- In *Question and Answer* type questions candidates must not lift whole sentences from either the reading or listening texts. Material from the texts used in a candidate's response will always need to be manipulated. No marks are awarded for responses which have been completely transcribed from a text, be it listening or reading. The rubric clearly states "*Du darfst Wörter vom Hörtext benutzen. Du darfst aber ganze Sätze nicht kopieren*".
- When translating from *German into English* in Section 3 candidates should remember that it is often not possible to translate word for word from the original German text. It is essential that once they have completed their translation candidates re-read what they have written to ensure that it reads naturally in English. When proofreading their translation candidates should also ensure that all words from the original text have been translated. If a candidate fails to translate a word, for example, an adjective or an adverb, no mark will be awarded for that section

- When translating from *English into German* candidates should remember that they should check their verbs, their word order and their case endings carefully. An incorrect verb form is considered a major error, as is incorrect word order. In these cases, the mark for that section will be lost.

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COMPONENT 3

General Comments

Component 3 assesses candidates' abilities to analyse and respond in writing to a literary text in German and/or a film as outlined in the specification. In the exam they need to write two 300-word essays, at least one of which must be on a written text, the second one can be on either another literary text or a film. For each work there are two possible questions, and candidates need to select one of these for each of the works they covered in class. As in previous years all centres chose to teach a written work and a film.

The essays are marked according to two attainment objectives:

- A03** Candidates need to manipulate language accurately, using a wide range of lexis, grammatical structures and idiom, doing so in an appropriate style.

A neat summary of this is: grammar, lexis and style. The mark scheme highlights "basic errors" e.g., incorrect verb conjugation/ position in the sentence.

- A04** Candidates need to show knowledge and understanding and respond critically and analytically to a literary work or film.

This means making points with reference to the work studied in line with the question selected, supporting the points by using evidence and forming all of this into a discussion/argument.

Of the literary works, the most popular proved to be *Der Vorleser*, perhaps because there is also a film version which greatly aids teaching. However, teachers would be advised to take care and not focus too much on the film adaptation as it differs from the literary text in some important respects.

The most popular film studied by far was *Good Bye, Lenin!*

For each of these works there are plenty of resources (especially online) to support teaching and learning.

Overall, the standard of essays this year was quite good and largely in line with the previous series. Candidates were clearly well prepared by teachers. Many essays exceeded the 300-word guide limit, which carries no penalty in itself. However, candidates should be reminded that spending too much time on one essay may leave too little time for the second essay. The questions are designed for a 300-word answer and that word allocation should be enough.

Linguistic observations

Before moving to the questions themselves it would be useful to point out the following observations on language used in the candidates' work. The following examples are taken from a range of candidates across a variety of centres and in response to a range of the questions.

vorschlagen – many candidates used “vorschlagen” incorrectly e.g. to say “the director does this to suggest the *Datsche* scene was important”. Here a correct alternative could have been “darauf hindeuten, dass” (to suggest in the sense of imply, or indicate)

darstellen (to represent) and **meinen** (to mean, e.g., in “es ernst meinen”) were also often incorrectly used. Teachers would be advised to give students particular guidance in the correct use of these verbs.

umgehen – when used to communicate the idea of “being about” (e.g. the book is about....), this is an impersonal verb. So “Im Buch/Film geht es um.....” is good, idiomatic German. Many candidates used “geht um” after “der Film/das Buch”, which is inaccurate.

Some candidates made minor errors by not making connections between the wording of the question, and the gender of nouns in particular, and how they used them in their essay - e.g. in Q. 1a. “die Erzählerperspektive” sometimes became “die” or “das” in the respective essay and the second part of the compound often lost its final -e in the essay itself, which results in a different word altogether.

General observation

The above comments relate to A03. Regarding A04, many essays deviated from set questions. For example, Q.3 calls for an evaluation of the bell motif in *Der Besuch der alten Dame*. Some essays dealt with this motif very briefly and then spent the main part of the essay writing about other motifs. Some comparison with other motifs is potentially relevant as a supplementary point, but only once the main motif has been dealt with fully.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 Franz Kafka *Die Verwandlung*

Many centres tackled this short work by Kafka. Most of the essays were written in response to question 1b. There were some very insightful essays on the effect on the reader of the author's only supplying two names, and that Gregor the main character indeed loses his name, being referred to as “es” towards the end. Some students picked up well on the importance that being named in the story has and conversely on the significance of characters being defined by their function – in the family (Der Vater) or work role (Der Prokurist).

Q.2 Karin König *Ich fühl mich so fifty-fifty*

This work was studied by a number of centres. It fits in well with other themes contained in the specification and can enhance students' appreciation of German unification (especially from an East German perspective). Most candidates opted for question 2b concerning the relationship between Sabine and her father and how it changed throughout the novel. The highest scoring essays moved beyond the descriptive to analyse this relationship and to conclude whether it had improved, by detailing reasons for this improvement.

Q.3 Friedrich Dürrenmatt *Der Besuch der alten Dame*

This work remains a popular choice for centres. Essays written in response to 3a) at times seemed to lack an awareness of “motifs”. The specification makes it clear on p.11 that “the form and technique of presentation of the work” are aspects that candidates need to be aware of, meaning they can appear as exam questions. Most candidates opted for 3b) and showed good ability in carefully analysing the significance of Ill’s words in this scene in Act One of this work. Many identified Ill’s hypocrisy and were able to link this with other parts of the play.

Q.5 Bertolt Brecht *Leben des Galilei*

Only a few centres opted for this play.

Essays focussed on 5b which was essentially about Galileo’s character. High scoring essays were able to make good assessments of the degree to which Galileo was a hero or a villain and give good reasons why.

Q.6 Bernhard Schlink *Der Vorleser*

The vast majority of candidates opted for question 6b, on the significance of Hanna’s suicide. Many essays focussed on its significance for Hanna herself, and the degree to which her killing herself represented the sense of responsibility and maturity afforded by her now found literacy. They also wrote about its significance for Michael and the wider significance of the suicide of a war generation woman for the post war German generation.

Q.7 Wolfgang Becker *Good Bye, Lenin!*

Both essay questions drew many responses. A minority of candidates misunderstood question 7a and concluded that they needed to draw a comparison between the *Datsche* scene (i.e. the one right at the beginning of the film) and the final scene in the film (when Christiane’s ashes were transported into the sky in an improvised firework). This misunderstanding underlines the importance of reading the question carefully.

High-scoring essays made good links between themes and ideas presented in the *Datsche* scene (i.e. the one towards the end of the film) and their wider significance e.g. lies and the reasons for lying.

Many candidates offered pertinent answers to question 7b. Candidates often picked up on the humour and irony in some of Alex’s comments (e.g. describing singing by Bundeskanzler Kohl and other politicians and dignitaries as a classical concert), and on some of the more serious, poignant things he said.

Q.8 Dennis Gansel *Die Welle*

Most candidates chose question 8b, which was about young people’s lack of a sense of belonging and community. Many of these essays were quite narrow in focus and rather descriptive, focussing on one or two individual characters and assessing to what extent this quote applied to them.

Q.9 Hans Weingartner *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei*

Fewer centres taught this in comparison with previous years. Most essays were written on question 9b where the task was to write about the significance of the *Edukators*’ plot to blow up a TV transmitter. Many candidates were able to grasp the significance of this ramping up of scope of this group’s activity in comparison to their earlier actions.

Q.10 Florian Henckel von Donnersmark *Das Leben der Anderen*

Both of these essay questions produced quite a large number of essays. In question 10a candidates had to comment on the relationship between the two Stasi officers. The less successful essays talked about these characters as individuals, and often became quite descriptive. Higher scoring essays focussed on their relationship, and how and why it changed during the course of the film. Some candidates provided some fascinating insights.

Question 10b asked candidates to consider a quote by Stalin. One or two candidates even commented on the irony that Hempf, Minister of Culture didn't seem entirely sure of the origin of the words he was quoting. Again, many essays contained some very interesting and considered thoughts on the importance of these words in the context of the film. The main focus had to be on writers ("Dichter"), so although music and its transformative power could be included this could only come after written art forms had been discussed.

Summary of key points

Candidates sitting Component 3 in the future are offered the following advice:

Candidates need to be thoroughly aware of the two attainment objectives which form the basis of marking essays

Candidates need to focus particularly on potential major errors (verbs) while writing and checking their essays

Candidates especially need to focus on the relevance of what they are writing and can do this by reading the questions very carefully

Candidates should be mindful of word count and aim to limit their essays to the advisory word limit

After finishing their essays candidates should check their work thoroughly for accuracy of language as well as content and focus on the question set



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