



Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2020

Pearson Edexcel International A level  
In German (WGN04)  
Research, understanding and written response



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## WGN04 Paper 4 Research, Understanding and Written Response

### Principal Examiner's Report

Despite a small entry for this paper, there was a relatively wide spread of marks. It remains the case that whilst most candidates cope reasonably well with the comprehension questions in Section A and Section B, Question 8 (grammar) poses a challenge for some and the final essay question scores high marks only when the candidate can give evidence of an ability to go beyond basic description of the topic, literary work or film.

### Section A – Listening

*Hörtext 1 (Adoption in Deutschland)* was generally answered correctly. Candidates had to listen carefully to the recording to pick up subtle details. For example, less able candidates often failed to recognise that *Es kommen im Schnitt sechs Bewerberpaare für jedes Kind* implied that there were *mehr als genug Erwachsene*, the correct answer for (d).

*Hörtext 2 (Gleiche Löhne)* required similar careful listening. The most common wrong answer was at (d) where some did not make the link between the publication of salary levels in the job advertisement with the fact that salaries in Austria were clear from the outset as indicated in option C.

*Hörtext 3 (Aktiv im Alter)* posed few problems for the majority of candidates. However, it should be noted that the answers rely on what is stated in the recorded extract rather than on supposition. A small number of candidates simply assumed that older people should lose weight (*abnehmen*) before undertaking a fitness programme, rather than talking to their doctor about the most suitable exercises.

*Hörtext 1 (Privatschulen)* presents a longer interview with questions about the content in German. It is important for candidates to be familiar with a range of interrogative forms so that they answer the question which is being asked rather than the one which they imagine they are reading. Often short answers secure the marks, rather than longer rambling accounts which may include extraneous and sometimes irrelevant material or may become confused. Parts (a) and (b) caused few problems. At (c), some candidates failed to score a mark because they assumed that individual students could choose to take the test, confusing *Schulen* with *Schüler*. In parts (d) and (e), it was necessary to be precise and succinct in the answers. For example, some candidates stated in (d) that school fees were high which is not stated in the extract: only the fact that fees had to be paid at all was the correct detail. In (e), the concept of school as a *Sprungbrett* was an insufficient response without the important detail of *für ein internationales Studium*.

Answers in German are credited both in the listening and reading sections of the paper are marked for communication only. Grammatical errors do not necessarily mean that the candidate will fail to score the mark unless the error conveys a

different meaning. However, it was noted that many responses to questions in German showed a high level of fluency. Marks tend to be lost because of lack of detail.

## **Section B – Reading and Grammar**

Question 5 (*Umweltprobleme an Rhein*) was based on a topic which is clearly familiar to all candidates and words within the topic area such as *Dürre* and *Sauerstoff* were no barrier to comprehension. As in the listening section of the paper, some candidates find it difficult to pick out subtleties. For example, the correct idea that swimming in the river was inadvisable (*nicht ratsam*) was often consumed with *streng verboten* which was not stated in the text.

Question 6 (*Jugendliche und die Politik*) was best answered with short precise answers. For example, for (a) the single word *überrascht* scored the mark and the best answer to (d) was simply *Sie lügen*. The most common error in this question was the assumption in (c) that all, rather than some employers had a negative attitude towards job applicants in a wheelchair.

Question 7 (*Vorbilder*) required careful reading and even the most fluent of German speakers need to take time to reflect on the exact detail required by each question. In (a), the crucial detail was that parents rather than students needed to have more contacts in companies and universities; and that role models should come from the public domain rather than simply be good role models. In (d), it was necessary to identify the correct section of text from which to extract the answer and to phrase the answer with a negative: unsuitable role models did not have the same cultural background or had not achieved anything in their lives. It was not true, however, that Esra specifically thought that role models should be *erkennbar*, a fact which was mentioned in the next paragraph. In (e), most candidates were able to identify that the siblings rapped in two languages, but often missed out the topic of their discussion (*Integration*) with young people and, therefore, often scored only one mark. The most challenging question was (f) which required a subtle understanding of the context with a response such as *Sie waren anderer Meinung*, rather than an explanation of what they said.

Question 8 was a challenge even for some clearly fluent speakers of German. Candidates should ensure that what they have written fits into the original text.

8(a): the transfer of meaning from an infinitive clause with *um/zu* to a subordinate clause with *damit* was only successful when the verb at the end of the new clause was correct.

8(b): this was generally correct.

8(c): some candidates failed to spot the comma at the end of the new stem and therefore failed to produce the required relative clause with an adjective with no ending.

8(d): this proved taxing for even the best with only a minority of candidates able to produce a comparative adjective such as *bedeutungsvoller* to form a new sentence.

8(e): although many managed to rephrase this using *indem*, some were hampered by an inability to produce the correct present tense form of the verb.

8(f): as a sign of the times, both genitive plural and dative plural were accepted after *wegen*. However, the endings on the adjective and noun had to be correct to secure the mark.

8(g): the comma in the stem gave the clue to the fact that the sentence had to be rephrased with an infinitive clause with *zu*. Most candidates managed this.

8(h): this was a more demanding manipulation of language which was only successful when candidates started the new relative clause with *man*.

8(i): the passive required in the relative clause was achieved only by the best. Although *entwickelt wurde* or *entwickelt worden war* was the desired outcome, the statal passive with *war* was also accepted.

8(j): while most candidates managed to produce an appropriate verb form at the end of the new clause, the manipulation of *Türschlosses* caused problems for less able candidates.

## Section C

It is crucial that candidates understand the nature of what is expected in the final essay. Since marks awarded for Content and Communication (out of 15) and Critical analysis, Organisation and development (out of 20) as well as for Quality of language (out of 5), it is important that some examination time is spent planning the response to the specific question asked. While some candidates clearly have been trained to do this, others write fluent essays in German of a very high quality which score low marks for the other two categories because their response lacks relevance or is simply a regurgitated version of everything they know about the topic or work.

Most importantly, candidates should realise that the thrust of the questions set is mostly in the second part. The descriptive first part is simply a *Sprungbrett* to allow them to show relevant knowledge resulting from their reading or research. To access the higher mark bands they must engage in an analysis of the issues. Essays which relied too much on description and less on evaluation fared poorly.

The best essays are written in clear paragraphs with a main sentence to introduce the paragraph, followed by several examples. A final evaluative sentence then often refers back to the essay title in some way.

## Geografisches Gebiet

Since this is a topic which has been researched by the candidate, it is assumed that there will be relevant supporting evidence for the points made in the essay in the form of relevant statistics, anecdotes or case studies. There were some good

responses to 9(a) when a clear link was made between tourism and the positive and negative effects on the region. However, some candidates simply described what the main tourist attractions of the region were: this was not required by the question and, therefore, had an effect on the mark for Communication and Content.

### **Geschichtliche Studien**

As mentioned in previous reports, an essay about a historical period should focus on a German-speaking country or area, rather than take a universal perspective. For example, a response to 10(b) taking the origins of the First World War as the *Ereignis* often lacked relevance when the candidate focussed on the many international influences at play. This affected the mark for Communication and Content. It is vital that the candidate has done enough research to be able to select information which is relevant to the essay question.

### **Literature**

It is not necessary to introduce the essay with general information about the genesis of the work. In fact, this produced a poor start when it appeared. Better candidates provided an opening paragraph which identified the issues to be addressed in the essay with direct reference to the essay question set.

The most common text studied was *Der Besuch der alten Dame* with most candidates choosing 11(a). The best responses referred to the negative influence of money in a variety of contexts within the play, including the effect of Claire's offer, how money has distorted her view of the world, Ill's use of money to bribe the witnesses in the paternity suit and the final chorus in the play in which the townspeople highlight the horror of living in poverty. Candidates who simply retold the whole plot scored low marks for Communication and Content because of lack of relevance to the question and for Critical analysis, Organisation and Development because of a lack of a clear argument in the essay.

### **Film**

The most popular choice was *Almanya - Willkommen in Deutschland* with an even spread of answers between 10(a) and 19(b). For both titles, there were some excellent responses showing detailed knowledge of the film and an ability to select relevant information to support a well-structured argument. In particular, there were some good evaluative responses about the role of the female characters and their will-power in comparison to the men in the film. These evaluated social expectations in Turkey and Germany, the difference between the generations and the women's ability to be a positive force in the family despite social and cultural expectations. Those candidates who wrote about the role of the grandfather in the film mentioned his expectations as a Gastarbeiter, his dealings with his family and his wife and his reasons for taking the family back to Turkey on his last journey. It was clear that many candidates identified with the issues raised in this film and enjoyed writing about them.

## **Conclusion**

To prepare for success in this paper, candidates should:

- familiarise themselves with all topic areas listed in the specification
- develop as wide a range of vocabulary as possible
- practise reading and listening to passages of German with a view to extracting the most important information and become used to rewording the details in the written or spoken text succinctly
- become familiar with German grammatical usage, concentrating on complex verb forms and the fine details of declension of adjectives and nouns
- study their chosen topic, literary text or film in detail
- practise the skill of planning and writing an essay which focuses on analysis rather than on narrative.

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