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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel International AS Level
in German (WGN04/01)

Unit 4: Research, Understanding and
Written Response

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International A Level German

WGN04 Paper 4

Research, Understanding and Written Response

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Section A – Listening

Question 1 (*Ethik*)

This proved to be a good start to the paper with many candidates scoring full marks. The most common misunderstanding was at (d) where political disputes were sometimes assumed to be clear rather than annoying.

Question 2 (*Arbeit in der Schweiz*)

There was a high level of success in this question. However, some were unable to infer the correct answer at (d) where a common incorrect answer was that perseverance was never necessary later in one's career.

Question 3 (*Das Leben in der Großstadt*)

The choice of adjectives or adverbs to complete the sentences meant that candidates had to think carefully before choosing the correct answer. Some wrongly assumed that the population found the changes to the skyline *preiswert* rather than *erwartet*; often (c) and (d) were interchanged.

Question 4 (*Umweltschutz an der Küste*)

Only short answers are required in this question. Some candidates write long complex responses and occasionally negate a correct answer with some wrong information. Generally, (a), (b), (c) and (d) were answered correctly. Part (e) proved the most challenging: most recognised that a storm was a danger but failed to add some version of *katastrophal* to their written answer. Fewer candidates were able to convey the idea that the dikes might collapse. *Klimawandel* was not accepted since this is a process rather than an event. In (g), the spelling of *abgelehnt* occasionally caused problems.

Section B – Reading and Grammar

Question 5 (*Technologischer Fortschritt*)

As with the first question in Section A, this multiple-choice task was answered well. The most common wrong answer was given at (c). Careful reading of the text was required to infer that society had learned a lesson from the introduction of atomic power.

Question 6 (*Vorbilder*)

Detailed answers as given in the mark scheme gained full marks. However, less successful candidates omitted vital details. For example, at (a) the response *Er spielt Fußball* was not enough without the necessary detail that Joshua Kimmich was skilful. In (b), candidates had to make the fine difference between *Janina Kugel gibt Ideen* and *Sie bringt Menschen auf neue Ideen*. Common wrong answers at (c) were that grandparents had a lot of experience or that they were close-by. Parts (d) and (e) were generally correct.

Question 7 (*Der 1. Mai*)

This longer text about celebrations in the past and present on the 1st May was clearly understood by many, but extracting the relevant detail to answer the questions was not always straightforward. It is particularly important that candidates answer from the evidence in the text rather than from their general knowledge. For example, at (e) many made a wrong assumption that witches were burnt in the *Maifeuer* rather than that they were driven away. The most challenging question was (b). Many assumed that the red flower worn showed why the 1st May was important in the GDR. The correct answer that the GDR was a workers' state eluded often even the most successful candidates.

Question 8

Most candidates understood what was expected of them in this question although only a few were able to score full marks. Some less successful candidates omitted all or part of this section or wrote an interpretation of the original sentence rather than manipulating the grammar as the question required.

8(a): The most common error was to give the wrong adjective ending in the accusative plural.

8(b): This was mostly answered correctly, although some failed to omit *zu* in the new sentence.

8(c): This challenged many. The best answers used the adverbial form *am einflussreichsten*. However, some candidates were unable to provide a suitable superlative adverb or adjective.

8(d): Many candidates recognised the need to provide an infinitive passive construction here and many managed to spell the past participle correctly.

8(e): Although the restructuring of the sentence was often successful, some candidates failed to score a mark by maintaining the original adjective ending on *eigen*.

8(f): The present tense of *feiern* was almost universally known.

8(g): Some candidates began to restructure the sentence with a suitable noun from *eskalierte* but often omitted the final part of the phrase with *(von) der Situation*.

8(h): Both a genitive plural and a dative plural after *von* were acceptable. Some candidates omitted the *-n* on the plural noun when using the dative.

8(i): *Symbolisieren* was generally well-known but some lost the mark by writing *symbolieren* (sic).

8(j): This was a familiar pattern to restructure. However, some confused *beliebt* with *lieben*.

Section C

Marks are awarded in Section C 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). Whilst many can write fluently in German using a wide range of complex structures and therefore gain high marks for Quality of Language, there is often a tendency to resort to narrative accounts which lack incisive critical analysis of the question or a failure to select relevant detail from knowledge of the topic, text or film. Some candidates simply write down everything they know about their chosen work regardless of relevance to the question.

Geografisches Gebiet

In response to option (a) there were some interesting descriptions of the importance of various companies in Switzerland and Germany. Some candidates referred to the challenges posed by a changing workforce, the pandemic, global competition and increasing costs. To gain marks in the upper mark bands for Knowledge and Understanding it is necessary to give detailed information, for example by backing up ideas with statistical evidence gained from research. Not all candidates managed this.

Option (b) essays were successful if candidates were able to give evidence of satisfaction with the quality of life in their chosen region. Less successful essays simply listed the benefits of living there without any detail: for example, that the air quality was good or that there were plenty of cycling paths.

Geschichtliche Studien

It is important that the period of historical study refers to a German-speaking country. Essays about Russia in the early twentieth century or the USA in the post-war years cannot be credited.

Popular periods studied were the Nazi era, the immediate post-war years leading to the *Wirtschaftswunder* and the DDR regime. Both options (a) and (b) were popular and essays often showed evidence of research by including precise statistics about the disadvantages of daily life or the characteristics of the period. Some candidates would have benefited from a deeper analysis in their essay by weighing up the pros and cons. For example, in question (b) the word *inwiefern* suggests that they might evaluate the positive influences against the negative. When this was done well the response was able to access the higher bands for Critical Analysis, Organisation and Development.

Literatur

The most popular choice of literary text was *Der Besuch der alten Dame*. Clearly candidates know the play well and engage with the content, although some refer to it as a book or a novel rather than a play and in one instance it was thought to be by Brecht. However, many cannot resist the temptation of relating details about the first performance which is normally irrelevant and this gives a poor impression at the beginning of the essay. Others fall into the trap of relating the whole pre-story before actually addressing any of the issues in the question. Many did not see the crucial difference between telling the story of the relationship and describing its qualities. Few were able to give details about the relationship within the action of the play itself, perhaps referring to the crucial tense scenes in the *Konradswellerwald*. Only the most successful came to a strong conclusion which referred to the strength of character which Alfred gains in the course of the play weighed up against Claire's innate strength of character which has become distorted.

Option (b) was the less popular choice, but some candidates managed to describe the various types of guilt which are included in the play: eg legal, moral, personal, collective. Some essays drifted aimlessly without a firm argument and therefore scored low marks for Critical Analysis, Organisation and Development; others managed to marshal their evidence to produce a more coherent account.

There were only a handful of essays on the other texts available for study. These showed similar trends as mentioned above. When an essay reverts to narrative rather than analysis, it is difficult to award high marks, no matter how well the candidate knows the work.

Film

A good selection of essays was presented on all five films.

In response to question 16, essays on the roles of the two trainers focussed on their moral values and saw the clear distinction between the two men; essays on Marie were often based on the historical background rather than on the film itself and sometimes details given were wrong.

Essays on *Barbara* showed a good knowledge of the film but often failed to address the second part of the question effectively. For example, in response to (a) candidates were able to tell Stella's story and to include accurate detail from the film, but this was not always presented in a way which evaluated Stella's influence on Barbara herself, apart from a fleeting mention that it causes her to give up her freedom to escape to the West.

Candidates clearly engage with the contents of *Die Fälscher*. Option (a), the more popular choice, was often well-answered and candidates picked out relevant details to show how Sorowitsch and Herzog were similar and how they were different. Candidates who chose option (b) were often confused about what actually happens in the Monte Carlo scenes at the beginning and end of the film and often lost marks for Knowledge and Understanding because of this.

The films by Samardeli and Weingartner were by far the most popular. In both instances the essays from option (a) were more successful. Candidates found it more difficult to process the information from the film to analyse the themes of tradition or protest as presented in the works, and many did not address two sides of the argument as suggest by the interrogative *inwiefern* inherent in the question, However, in response to option (a) there were some very positive responses which showed an ability to analyse rather than narrate. Paragraphs were often devoted to Hüseyin's influence on each of his family members showing how his influence displayed a different character trait in each cause; or essays about the *Alpenhütte* often dealt with Hardenberg's influence on each of the three young people.

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, considering various aspects in the course of their studies
- practise the skill of planning and writing an essay in paragraphs which focuses on analysis rather than on narrative.

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