

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

International GCSE German
(4GN0) Paper 3

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Speaking

A significant proportion of candidates who entered for this Specification in this summer's session took the optional speaking component. Examiners were pleased to listen to some very proficient speaking tests sympathetically conducted which evidenced a pleasing standard of candidate performance.

Candidates are expected to participate in 3 conversations on 3 different topic areas, that is to say, on three of the topic areas from the five topic areas detailed in the specification. It is not appropriate for the teacher examiner conducting the test to select two different subtopics from the same topic area. Each conversation must be based on a totally different topic area.

It should be remembered that the technique used by the teacher examiner can have a great effect on the outcome of the oral test. It is very important that the guidelines on length and the type of questioning are adhered to. More comments on this will be made during the report.

The candidate's presentation on the photo/picture must be for a maximum of one minute. The conversation must relate to the picture but may also include some questions prompted by the picture the candidate has chosen.

The first conversation, following on from the presentation, should last for 3 minutes maximum. For conversations 2 and 3 the maximum time is also time 3 minutes and examiners will stop assessing after this time.

Section A: Presentation and discussion based on a single picture.

For this part of the Speaking test candidates must select a picture. It is very important that candidates choose this picture wisely since it should allow adequate exploitation to enable candidates to demonstrate their speaking proficiency.

This is probably the section of the test which caused the most problems due to a choice of an inappropriate picture or inaccurate length of the presentation and/or the discussion. It is very important that a picture is chosen as described below and that the whole section does not last beyond 4 minutes.

Examiners were impressed by some of the chosen pictures or photographs but there were others which did not allow the interviewer easy access to a range of follow up questions. Such poor pictures would be, for example, photographs of two members of a family with little else happening in the picture or a picture of a snow scene with a couple of figures in the distance.

Far better pictures had a lot happening in them. Good examples may be busy street scenes, a busy railway station or shopping centre, a birthday party with lots happening or a classroom scene with many students

enjoying an interactive lesson. These pictures will enable the candidate to present lots of information and ideas and the teacher examiner should have lots of material to exploit.

It is very important that the candidates are only allowed to give the presentation for the appropriate amount of time. After a minute, the teacher examiner will need to interrupt but it is strongly recommended that candidates practise the presentation in advance. If the picture has not been carefully chosen it is possible the teacher examiner will then struggle for questions. A better picture should offer much more to exploit.

It should be emphasised that the questioning in this section must relate to the chosen picture, not to topics which are only slightly connected. As an example, if the picture relates to a holiday in Spain, the teacher examiner should not immediately ask about the candidate's holidays. The questions should possibly ask about other people in the picture or things happening in the background.

It is more profitable to ask a candidate to describe only one person in the picture rather than all of them. This would then allow time for a wider range of questions to be posed, for example:

*Was hat diese Frau vielleicht eben gemacht?
Warum steht dieser Mann hier?
Was wird wohl bald passieren?*

Teacher examiners should ensure their candidates have the opportunity to fulfil the requirements of the assessment criteria, namely express and justify opinions, give extended responses to a wide range of question types, and use an appropriately wide variety of structures and lexis, including a full range of tenses. Such performances would allow candidates access to the full range of marks. Often, very good candidates were not able to access the full mark range as they had not been given the opportunity to use a range of tenses.

Centres are reminded of the need to send the candidate's picture to the examiner, along with the oral cover sheet and the recording. Centres should also be sure to copy the new mark scheme which is on two pages. Many centres either used the old one or only copied the first section of the new scheme.

Section B: Two conversations

In this section, candidates are required to take part in conversations with the teacher examiner on two separate conversation topics chosen by the teacher examiner.

Centres are advised to read page 8 of the specification which states explicitly that the teacher examiner should choose the topics discussed in conversations 2 and 3, not the candidate. The candidates should not know in advance of the test which topics they are going to be asked questions on in conversations 2 and 3.

The transition between the conversation topics should be made plain to help both the candidate recognise that the conversation is moving on and the examiner identifies the two discrete topic areas being discussed.

The most popular topics in this section were Education and Employment and Home and Abroad. However, it is not in the spirit of the examination to ask all candidates the same list of questions. On some occasions, exactly the same question in the same order and with identical answers was noticed. This can only lead to a limitation on marks for spontaneity. It is also very important that the teacher examiner encourages the candidates to use a range of tenses and grammatical structures. Candidates also need to be encouraged to take the initiative and develop fairly lengthy answers. Teacher examiners should try to avoid interrupting candidates where not appropriate as well as not correcting grammatical mistakes.

Teacher-examiners should again adhere to the timings laid down in the specification, namely a maximum of 3 minutes for each conversation topic which in total makes a total of 6 minutes for this section. In general, longer conversations were self-penalising as candidates began to struggle to find things to say and incidence of error increased.

Teacher examiners should try to avoid asking closed questions and questions giving some sort of a choice such as *Wohnst du in einem Haus oder in einer Wohnung?* A much better question would be *Wo wohnst du? In was für einem Haus wohnst du?*

In the first question the candidate is simply able to lift the answer from the question, in the second and third they need to use their own language.

General

Centres' attention is drawn to page 9 of the Specification where it is stated that 'in order to achieve grade C and above, candidates will be expected to express opinions and use past, present and future tenses.' This should be demonstrated in all 3 conversations. Teacher examiners did not always give candidates the opportunity to use a wide range of verb forms, use past, present and future tenses or express opinions.

Candidates cannot access the full range of marks if they do not fulfil these criteria.

Teacher examiners are to be commended on their sympathetic and encouraging conduct of the speaking tests. Most were clearly attempting to put candidates at their ease and trying to get them to produce their best. There were many clear examples of an obvious respectful and positive relationship between the candidate and teacher-examiner.

Centre administration for the speaking tests was generally good, although several centres forgot to enclose the whole of the mark sheet or used the one from the old specification. A few centres forgot to send the candidates' pictures to the examiner. If there has been an agreement with Edexcel that the pictures are not to be sent this needs to be stated to the examiner.

The quality of the recordings remains very variable. In some instances candidates were virtually inaudible due to either extraneous noise or poor quality recording hardware.

Examiners are happy to accept candidates' speaking tests on either cassette or CD. It has to be said that those recorded on a CD are of a much better quality and, where possible, CDs would be encouraged. Orals recorded in audio file or mp3 formats are also acceptable.

Many thanks to all centres for the work undertaken to make this year's International GCSE German speaking tests successful.

Grade Boundaries

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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