



Pearson

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In German (4GN0)
Paper 3: Speaking

edexcel 

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Summer 2017

Publications Code 4GN0_03_1706_ER

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International GCSE/Edexcel Certificate German Paper 3 Speaking

General Comments

Although the vast majority of centres used the correct mark sheets to accompany the oral tests, a few were still using the old form which was withdrawn about 5 years ago. The contents of the exam have changed significantly and this old form is **not** fit for purpose. **All** mark sheets **must** be signed by the candidate **and** the teacher. Occasionally this didn't happen and a signature had to be requested by the Pearson Edexcel examiner. This can lead to a delay in the marking of the tests. Teachers are advised to make sure sheets are signed before the candidates leave school on study leave or at the end of term.

Candidates are expected to participate in 3 conversations on 3 different topic areas, one for Section A and two for Section B. These three topic areas should be chosen from the five areas detailed in the specification and each topic area may be covered **only once**. If a topic area is repeated, the second one will receive no marks.

All tests were submitted either on a CD or on a USB memory stick. In most cases there were no problems, although a number of the recordings were rather faint or had quite a lot of noise in the background. It is accepted that some of this is unavoidable, such as traffic noise, but it would certainly be helpful if the microphone were to be placed closer to the candidate than the examiner. In a few cases markers discovered that the CD/USB stick was blank or that some of the recordings would not play. It would be useful if centres could check the recordings before sending them away as this can cause a significant delay in the marking process.

Most CDs and memory sticks were correctly labelled with permanent marker, but some still arrived with no markings and no protective case.

The timing of the test is very important.

The specification states the following:

The presentation should be up to one minute.

The discussion on the picture should be up to three minutes.

Each of the conversations should be up to three minutes.

Markers will stop listening and marking after the 1 minute / 3 minutes have elapsed.

Tests which are too short are unlikely to contain the full range of structures, vocabulary and ideas expected. Examiners should try to ensure that the discussion and the conversations are all between 2 minutes 40 seconds and 3 minutes in length.

It is not appropriate to time the two conversations together. The two conversations should be of similar length, not one of about 4 minutes and one of 2. This would result in one containing 1 minute of extra material which would not count in the assessment, and the second would not contain enough material.

Most examiners did time the tests correctly. However, some discussions on the picture were far less than 1 minute. Some centres felt the whole of Section A needed to be 4 minutes and if the presentation were short, then the discussion should be lengthened. This is not the case.

Please note that the timing of each section begins when the **candidate** begins to speak.

Examiners should **not** use the suggested questions as a prescribed list. These questions are there to give the examiner some ideas. Questions should follow on from what the candidate has previously said to produce an actual **conversation**. Sometimes markers have the impression that examiners are not listening to the candidate's answers.

Candidates should **never** have prior knowledge of any of the questions in the test and should not know which of the two topics will be tested in Section B.

Answers sometimes seemed to have been pre learned. This does not enter into the spirit of this examination.

Examiners should **avoid closed questions** which elicit one word answers from candidates and they should also refrain from asking several questions at once. This confuses candidates. Examiners should also refrain from providing vocabulary for candidates, correcting them or answering for them.

On a number of occasions, the examiner was not familiar with the format of the examination and conducted the test incorrectly. One potentially good candidate was asked no questions on his picture and his whole oral lasted under 5 minutes. Good examiners sympathetically re-phrased questions for candidates and varied the type of question that they were asking. They also interrupted if a candidate started to recite a pre-learned monologue. It is very important for candidates to use a range of tenses and good examiners elicited past, present and future tenses in both sections of the exam.

Section A

In the first part of the examination the candidates choose a **single** picture which they then introduce as a presentation, without interruption from the examiner. This is followed by a discussion based on the picture lasting **up to** 3 minutes. The picture chosen **must** be linked to one of the 5 topic areas in the specification, and this topic area may **not** be chosen again in Section B.

There were a lot of pictures of family meals and pupils in classrooms, but by far the most popular were family holidays. Most of these pictures showed many people and lots of action so that there was plenty to talk about leading to good presentations and discussions. Cartoons continued to feature this year. Presentations/discussions for which the students had chosen a busy cartoon in which there were lots of different characters doing different things (for example at the beach) worked really well. One student had also chosen a cartoon illustrating several environmental issues which was very effective. Another great photo showed students leaving the candidate's primary school. Several groups of students could be described, their uniform, the school bus, the school facilities, sports. Some students were in PE shorts and carrying tennis racquets, one student was eating, a teacher was also to be seen etc.

Most centres had given their students plenty of vocabulary relating to the description of a picture (*im Vordergrund / im Hintergrund*) and it was also a good idea for them to include in their presentation what picture they had chosen as this meant that straight away they used some past tense.

Generally, the suitability of the pictures this year was good. Some candidates used general beach holiday scenes from the Internet about which they had made up a story. These didn't always work as well as they often sounded very stilted and sometimes a little unrealistic. When a candidate has a picture of the Simpsons which is supposed to be their family, things soon get a bit confused and stilted when they are subsequently asked to talk about their own family, and continue to pretend that the picture family is their own. Similarly some candidates pretended that they lived somewhere else and then did not handle subsequent questioning of their real home town very well, continuing to describe the amenities of their fantasy place which they clearly didn't know much about, in spite of the examiner protesting that they don't really live there and should talk about their own town.

There were still some examples of the same topic area being used for more than one section of the examination. It is important to distinguish between Topic A which discusses the home town and holidays, and Topic C which discusses one's home and family. Topic area D was a lot more popular this year. Sometimes the picture chosen didn't match the Topic Area. For example a picture of a holiday in Austria was chosen and ticked as Topic B because it was a school visit. Unfortunately both the presentation and discussion were just about the holiday. The examiner was able to change the topic area to A as topic area A wasn't chosen in Section B. if it had been this would have been quite a problem.

Centres should therefore make sure that the picture is fully relevant to the chosen topic area. Some images could potentially fit into several topic areas and it is important to focus the conversation and material on one topic area only. Indeed, marks were often lost because the questions asked were from a different topic area.

Examiners have the responsibility of assuring that the correct technique is applied to the conduct of the examination.

The candidate must not be allowed to speak for longer than 1 minute for the presentation. This may be shorter but not significantly so. The candidate is allowed to learn the presentation but it should be the candidate's own work and not corrected in advance by a teacher.

The discussion must be organised into a three stage development of questioning as follows:

- a) Questions based **directly** on the picture.
- b) Questions based **indirectly** on the picture.
- c) Questions about the **general Topic Area**.

Many examiners continue to fail to ask questions directly or even indirectly on the picture and simply move on to the general topic area. This is not acceptable examining technique. It makes the picture itself almost irrelevant as it is the whole basis of the discussion.

The examiner should begin with a number of questions directly on the picture. These should be varied. There is no point in asking the candidate to describe the clothes of every person on a picture. This not only wastes time but doesn't stretch candidates. At least three questions ought to be put directly on the picture.

This is followed by questions which are indirectly related to the picture and these questions are an opportunity to allow the candidate to use tenses by asking what might have happened or might happen next after the picture was produced.

Only then should the candidate move on to questions on the general topic area. It is not necessary to stick to one sub topic and neither is it necessary to ask questions on all sub topics.

Yet again a number of candidates did no presentation, and a number were asked no questions at all after the presentation. This resulted in a much reduced mark. Without a presentation or discussion a candidate cannot access the full content mark scheme.

Centres are reminded that the candidates' pictures should be sent to the marker along with the oral mark sheets and the recordings. Where this is not possible a note describing the picture **must** be included. Examiners require an understanding of what the candidate and the examiner can see.

Here are some examples of good practice noted by examiners:

Examiners who stuck closely to the timings and gently interrupted the candidate when it was time to move on.

Examiners who ensure that a past or future tense question is asked early on in the three minutes. This year several examiners let the conversations overrun significantly and did not ask any tense questions until after the three minutes had passed, thereby limiting their candidate to a restricted mark Knowledge and Application of Language when they were actually able to use different tenses.

Examiners who helped struggling candidates by rewording the question or perhaps giving their own example. Some examiners just moved on to the next question if the candidate appeared not to understand.

Examiners who listened to what the candidate had said and asked a natural follow on question thereby promoting a natural sounding conversation, rather than jumping around all over the topic area asking unrelated questions.

Examiners who had clearly taught some set phrases which would trigger complex structures such as *Wenn ich viel Geld hätte*. Also, examiners who had taught phrases which enable the candidate to elicit an unknown item of vocabulary or to ask if the question could be repeated, so that the students were less likely to flounder in silence.

Examiners who stuck closely to the picture in Section A and had clearly encouraged their candidates to bring in busy-looking pictures.

Section B

In this section the candidates are required to take part in 2 conversations **of equal length** on 2 further Topic Areas from the specification chosen by the examiner. They must be different from the Topic Area chosen in Section A and must **never** be known by the candidate in advance.

The examiner should announce the start of the Topic Area and again before the second conversation.

Overall the standard was high. Having said that, the German native speakers did not necessarily get the highest marks. This was due to various things. Sometimes the examination was too short. Sometimes the candidate hadn't really prepared properly and didn't have a lot to say. Sometimes the wrong types of questions were asked, including a lack of tenses.

Some examiners seemed to ask one question after the next to the candidates, sometimes in a random order and even interrupted their candidates as they were expanding their answer and using relevant

language to explain their ideas and opinions. Luckily however most examiners encouraged candidates to expand their answers more by just asking a short "Warum?" or "ach ja, kannst du mir mehr darüber erzählen?" or "und was hat dir dabei nicht so gut gefallen?".

The quality of the interaction was always better when the examiners adapted their questions to each candidate rather than asking questions from a limited predetermined set.

One examiner for example only asked extremely simple questions such as "Wann hast du Geburtstag? Was machst du am Wochenende? Was machst du in den Ferien?" and didn't include more interesting questions. Another teacher went to the other extreme, using language which was too advanced for the students in question, such as "Was ist deine Einstellung zu öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln/zuckergehaltigen Getränken?", "was hältst du von dem Konzept 'Ehe'?", "wie wirst du deine Kinder erziehen?", "was versteht man unter Klimawandel?", "Wie wird sich das Klima in Europa verändern?", "Welche Schwierigkeiten können soziale Netzwerke mit sich bringen?" Such questions should be reserved for Advanced Level.

Section B was generally successful and there were some outstanding examples of spontaneous and fluent German. The rapport between student and examiner was very important in this section of the examination and less able pupils who were examined by their class teacher tended to perform better than pupils of similar ability who were examined by an examiner who did not know them (often a native speaker invited specially to conduct the orals).

Examiners should avoid closed questions. Candidates should not be allowed to answer any question with yes or no. Similarly questions offering a choice such as *Gehst du lieber mit Familie oder Freunden ins Kino?* are not appropriate as the candidate has been fed the answer. Asking open questions of the appropriate level, following up candidates' answers and re-phrasing sympathetically were examples of good practice.

Failure to use a range of tenses and insufficient length of either conversation were the main causes of lost marks for the most able pupils.

Some centres asked their candidates questions on the same topic areas, even when there were a lot of candidates. At one centre the Section B conversations were identical including the responses, so clearly they had been rehearsed, both by the examiner and the candidate. Such malpractice will be sent on to Pearson for further investigation. Topic Areas A, B and C were most popular but those offered D produce some very good conversations. There were occasions again this year where some examiners noticeably strayed too far from the selected topic area.

Insufficient time was sometimes spent on one conversation area. Often if a conversation went on longer than necessary, examiners compensated in the second conversation. Another problem, also noted last year, with longer conversations was that the more stretching questions tended to come

towards the end, and therefore often after the 3 minutes. For the most able students some of the straightforward questions could be missed out in favour of the more advanced questions. Even when a stopwatch was used the examiner seemed to think that the 3 minutes was just an indication to think about finishing the conversation rather than the requirement to finish at once.

At most centres the questions were appropriate and stretched those able to respond with a wide range of question types, encouraging the use of the full range of tenses. Most of the more able candidates tried, with varying degrees of success, to use different time frames, subordinate clauses and varied vocabulary. Particularly impressive this year was the knowledge of many of the candidates with regard to the problems in the environment. (Quite a few cited the sceptical nature of the USA towards climate change as a major threat.) Almost all but the weakest candidates seemed determined to expand their basic reply with opinions, justifications or further comments. Some centres, however, do need to be more aware of the need for more complex language structures to access the top marks. Some of the candidates merely replied to the question asked and stopped, even though they appeared to be capable of adding more.

All the topic areas were generally covered as long as there were enough candidates. Most examiners and candidates seemed to have prepared the areas well and the questions may have been rehearsed but only a few of the conversations appeared over-practised or scripted. There was the inevitable situation where a candidate had obviously prepared a long spiel to a predictable question.

It should be remembered that the candidate is under a lot of pressure. Clearly most examiners understand this, but those who have an unsympathetic examiner are disadvantaged, often considerably. A number of examiners this year were too aggressive and this is not fair. Candidates are also often thrown by an examiner who doesn't appear to be listening and doesn't develop the conversation.

As was the case last year very few recordings in Section B were too long, but a significant number were too short, in some cases shorter than two minutes, which meant that candidates could not score highly. Even if a candidate is extremely good and speaks quickly, the section should **not** be shortened.

The vast majority of examiners and candidates performed very well and overall the examination this year has once again been very successful.

All markers would like to express their thanks for the hard work undertaken by both candidates and examiners.

Grade Boundaries

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