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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In German (4GN1) Paper 03: Speaking

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## **Grade Boundaries**

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## Overview and timings

This speaking assessment has been conducted for the first time this series for the new International GCSE German specification (2017) and is worth 25% of the qualification. It is conducted in exam centres and assessed externally by Pearson. The maximum mark in this speaking test is out of 40 and the total assessment time is between 8 and 10 minutes. This assessment consists of three parts. Task A involves a picture-based discussion and task B and task C involve two conversations on two different topic areas.

The three topic areas of the three different parts must be chosen from the five topic areas

- A Home and Abroad,
- B Education and Employment
- C Personal life and relationship
- D The world around us and
- E Social activities, fitness

and **each topic area may only be addressed once.**

The sub-topics A3 Services, C3 Role models, C5 Childhood, D2 weather and climate and E4 accidents, injuries, common ailments and health are **not** assessed in the speaking test. If a topic area is repeated, then no marks can be awarded for the repeated topic. A randomization grid is provided by Pearson and all centres adhered to it this year. Virtually no centre tested the same topic area twice, although it did occur that there was some digression within the topic areas, and as a consequence the responses were not credited.

Teacher examiners should remember that the announcement of student name and number, centre and topic areas do not count towards timings. Timings must begin when the student begins his response to the first question in Task A, or when they respond to the first questions in both conversations in Task B and C. Task A should be a minimum of two minutes and a maximum of three minutes in length. Each of the conversations should be a minimum of three minutes and up to a maximum of three minutes and thirty seconds. Examiners do not reward extraneous material delivered beyond the allocated timings, which are strictly observed. It is important to note that a long Task B does not compensate for a short Task C, and vice versa and **timing has been an issue this series.** Some students did lose out on marks as they were tested too long on a topic area in Task B and therefore the second conversation was too short as it ran over the total of ten minutes. Please ensure that timings are adhered to.

## Task A

In the first part of the examination the student selects a picture/photo which they have to answer five questions on. This part of the test lasts between two and three minutes. The picture/photo must be linked to one of the five topic areas in the specification. The choice of picture/photo is directly linked to the success of the presentation and discussion. It is very important that the picture/photo is quite detailed and offers plenty of scope for discussion. The pictures/photos should contain the following three elements: people, objects and interaction. The picture/photo should also be clear and being in colour also helps. Most examiners have commented that the choice of visual stimulus was very good this series and enabled students to produce some excellent descriptions with plenty of opportunities for development. The most popular choices were taken from topic area A and D.

An important new element to this speaking test is that the question types for Task A are prescribed and this requires a thorough preparation from the teacher in order to achieve the best marks available for students. The pattern of these five questions must follow the examples in the SAMs and the advice given in the specification and should consist of the following.

Question type 1: A description of what you can see in the picture

Question type 2: Specific factual information about the picture  
For example, select a person or persons in the picture and state what they are doing.

Question type 3: Past or future hypothesis  
This question must ask the student to imagine a possible past or potential future event **relating to the picture**. This is the opportunity to support the student in using additional tenses and time frames.

Question type 4: Opinions about the picture  
This question elicits the student's opinions on the picture and the topic.

Question type 5: Evaluation  
The teacher/examiner should elicit an evaluation from the student. This question will move away from the content of the picture and exploit the wider topic area.

As an example, if the student chooses a picture of a group of boys playing in a football match (Topic E, sub-topic 2: Hobbies, interests, sports and exercise) the five questions could be:

Question 1 Kannst du das Bild beschreiben?

Question 2 Beschreib die Person auf der rechten Seite.

Question 3 Was, glaubst du, haben die Spieler vor dem Spiel gemacht?

Question 4 Was magst du lieber? Mannschaftssport oder Individualsportarten?

Question 5 Warum, denkst du, sollte man regelmäßig Sport treiben?

Teacher/examiners may ask additional questions in Task A, and indeed it is good practice to do so in order to encourage the student to develop his or her answers. However, teacher/examiners are reminded that the **only additional questions** that may be asked (in German) are:

- Why (not)? *Warum ? Warum nicht ?*
- Anything else? *Ist das alles ?*
- Is that all? *Sonst noch etwas ?*

There must be no other supplementary questions and teacher/examiners must not deviate from these prompts.

If in Task A, an additional question is asked which is not one of these, the student's response to that question is ignored when assessing the performance. Teachers should also be aware that they can only **repeat** the question but **not rephrase** the question as the response can then not be credited.

In a significant number of centres this year, Task A was conducted incorrectly. While examiners apply the mark grids positively, incorrect conduct of the test may prevent the student accessing the entire range of marks available.

Some centres did not follow the types of questions and some centres did not follow the order. The examiners were marking sympathetically and credited what could be credited but it did at times effect the end marks. Sometimes the student had a very developed response in Question 1 that did not allow him/her to develop the responses to other questions enough.

It is important to note that, as only one question of the five prescribed types requires the student to use a tense other than the present tense, the student does not have to use all three of past, present and future time frames in order to access the entire range of marks for "Linguistic knowledge and accuracy" in Task A. A student who uses, for example, only present and future time frames in Task A can access all four marks available for "Linguistic knowledge and accuracy" in this section of the test. Students must use at least two time frames successfully to access a mark of two (out of four) or above for "Linguistic knowledge and accuracy" in Task A.

Sometimes the question involving a previous or following event did not relate to the picture and thus could not be credited, which had a serious impact. If a student only relates to one tense in Part A, only 1 mark for Linguistic knowledge & Accuracy can be awarded, e.g. if there is a picture of a brother and sister in a playroom and question 3 asks 'What did you do with your family on your last holiday?' the answer cannot be credited as it does not relate to the picture. It is recommended to include tenses in different answers of the test and phrases as "Ich habe dieses Foto gewählt,

weil...“, “diese Foto wurde in ... gemacht.“ ‘Ich werde über dieses Foto sprechen.’ can be useful. These are all examples some centres have taught their students successfully to ensure a variety of tenses are included.

In general, question 1 gives the student the opportunity to prepare the description of the picture and in particular for this question a more developed and grammatically correct answer is expected. It is important that students are given plenty of opportunities in lessons to practice this task and its types of questions, so that students are familiar and feel confident.

Many students had prepared this part well and were familiar with phrases such as ‘Im Hintergrund sieht man...’ ‘Auf der rechten Seite kann man ... sehen.’ More complex structures such as prepositions with dative and also many relative clauses and passive imperfects were frequently used.

Question 2 was often less well-developed as the question did not necessarily encourage further development. Students are encouraged to not only say what a person is wearing and try to add more details. Please note that the mark scheme requires the student to regularly give opinions and justifications in order to access the 5-6 and 7-8 band for *Communication & Content* and it might be useful to train students to use this question for adding personal opinions.

Question 3 asks students to use a tense and there was a wide range of performances. Some students used the opportunity to name a number of activities producing tenses accurately and linking sentences appropriately. Some students offered only one activity and some students really struggled to produce a correct past or future tense. Please note that an attempt at the time frame is sufficient to access the full range of marks. Most students included two time frames successfully although there were instances where the students did not include two time frames and scored only one mark, despite of producing accurate simple and more complex language throughout.

Question 4 was often successfully communicated and it is important to note that opinions should be justified and justifications need to be developed in order to access the highest band for *Communication & Content*.

Question 5 should give students further opportunities for opinions and justification and again there was a wide range of performances.

### **In conclusion**

Teachers should ensure that the student chooses a suitable picture for Task A and prepare, in advance of the test, the five questions they will ask about the picture. Teachers should encourage the student, when necessary, to develop his or her answers (using only the allowed prompts: Warum (nicht)? Ist das alles? Sonst noch etwas?) so that the Task A lasts between 2 and 3 minutes. It is important to observe the timing, using a stopwatch or timer.

The student should be given the opportunity to respond to all five questions within the three minutes allowed for this task **and develop their responses evenly** in order to achieve a high mark. Also tenses, opinions and justifications need to be included for the best outcome. If the student speaks for too long in answer to question 1 it could lead to the answers to questions 2-5 being rushed. Furthermore, it is recommended that students know how to ask, in German, for a question to be repeated in order to ensure a better interaction and sustained participation.

### **Task B and C**

After completion of task A, students are required to take part in two conversations of equal length (between three minutes and up to three minutes thirty each) on two further topic areas from the specification chosen specified by a randomization grid provided by Pearson. Before the beginning of the first conversation, the examiner should announce the first topic area to be covered and then they should announce the second topic area at the changeover to the second conversation.

The mark scheme for this part has a new section and a mark out of eight is applied for *Spontaneity and Interaction*. It is important to encourage the student to produce spontaneous speech. If a student does not respond spontaneously to questions, he or she may not be able to access the full range of marks available for "Interaction and spontaneity". Teacher/examiners should not use a list of pre-prepared questions but, instead, react to and build on what the student says. In this way a spontaneous conversation will develop.

The randomisation grid was adhered to in almost all cases, but there were a lot of issues with timings reported. Each conversation should last between 3 and 3.5 minutes and timing begins as the student begins to answer the first question. As already mentioned, both Task B and Task C are timed separately, so a short Task B is not compensated by an overlong Task C, and vice versa. Please ensure that timings are adhered to as it seems that a number of teachers were not aware of this and it did have a negative impact on some performances.

The standard of student performance varied considerably. Some students could sustain a conversation at length with impressive structures, vocabulary and interaction with individual thoughts whereas others struggled to put thoughts together in a coherent form.

There were some very interesting discussions of the more "challenging" topics such as the environment and technology as well as the more common topics such as school and family, holidays, and again, original material could be heard here.

Some performances were outstanding, but examiners also reported common grammar mistakes, such as confusion with *sein* and *haben* in the perfect tense. There was a fair amount of incorrect verb conjugation, even with common verbs like *tragen*. There was very little use of the passive

voice, the pluperfect and even the imperfect apart from ich/es war and ich hatte. There was good use made of the future tense although some students used "ich will" instead of "ich werde" and there were few examples of any other personal pronouns than "ich".

Some examiners reported an imbalance between the linguistic content of Task B and C - especially when it came to tenses/timeframes. When this was the case, it often transpired that one of the conversations was "packed" with a variety of structures and tenses whereas the other conversation was not. It did not seem as if the teacher-examiner was aware that the level of linguistic knowledge displayed needed to be constant and consistent across the two conversations and performance in one conversation could not normally compensate for the other.

Three minutes per topic is a short time and it is important for teachers to **choose the right questions** in order to achieve the best student's performance. Questions should be at an appropriate level for the student and do not limit them. They should push each student to reach his or her "linguistic ceiling". Questions should also prompt the student to use past, present and future time frames in both Task B and Task C and encourage the student to develop his or her answers, offer opinions and reasons for these opinions. It is recommended to use **open questions** and avoid closed questions. Although it is tempting to offer opinions and views as a teacher themselves, it is advised to keep teacher's input at a minimum to allow the student to speak for most of the exam as his/her language skills are being assessed.

## **Administration**

The administration of this examination was generally completed efficiently and professionally by most centres. A correctly completed cover sheet, signed by both the teacher and the student has been included along with the picture/photo used for the presentation in section A.

When recording, teachers should ensure that both the student and the teacher/examiner can be heard clearly. Where only one microphone is used, this should favour the student.

Teachers should introduce the student name and number clearly at the beginning of the test and not stop or pause the recording at any time during the test. Tasks A, B and C should be conducted in that order and it should be checked that the whole test has been recorded clearly.

Centres are reminded that CDs/USBs must be labelled appropriately and packaged carefully. Attaching a clearly visible identifying label to the memory stick is also good practice. Centres should ensure that each recording is audible and working before being dispatched to the examiner. Some examiners this year had to ask for second recordings as the first one was inaudible. Please remember to check that the files have been burned on to the CD before sending and that these are clearly labelled with the student



name and number to enable the examiner to easily locate the correct student. If the USB or CD is password protected, send the password to the examiner at his or her address under separate cover. A few centres used encryption software which is not compatible unless additional software is downloaded - this should be avoided and the encryption should be restricted just to the USB drive itself.

Further information can be found on the Pearson website and teacher/examiners should make sure they are familiar with the following documents (all available on the Pearson website):

- Specification: International GCSE German (first teaching 2017)
- International GCSE German: Getting Started Guide
- International GCSE German: Oral Examination Training Guide

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