
GCSE

GERMAN

8668/WF: Writing Foundation
Report on the Examination

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General comments

The vast majority of students who sat this paper were entered at the correct level. Practically all of them gained some marks and there were very few completely blank scripts which was very pleasing. All students made an attempt to write something about the photograph in Question 1. To their credit, many of those students also went on to write at least one sentence for Question 2 and made attempts at parts of Question 3 before coming to a halt at Question 4. The more able students at this tier attempted all four questions and there was some very pleasing work in the last question. Handwriting was not normally an issue but some scripts were very challenging to read.

Question 1

This question requires students to write four sentences about a photograph and the majority of students attempted to do that. Many scored either full or nearly full marks by beginning each sentence with *Es gibt* and then using vocabulary with which they were familiar to identify various people or things in the picture. Others who scored well not only used *Es gibt* but also wrote a simple sentence about the weather, eg *Es ist sehr sonnig* or described a person in the picture, eg *Das Mädchen hat blonde Haare*. Although the picture was in black and white, that was acceptable.

Provided the rest of the sentence made sense, those beginning *Gibt es* or *Der ist* or which contained a continuous verb form were given one mark. On several occasions, students had started some of their sentences with *Auf dem Foto gibt es...* but had then omitted *Auf dem Foto* in a later one and had still inverted *Es gibt*.

The whole of each sentence was assessed when awarding the mark and some students spoiled good German by writing too much and making a mistake in the second part, eg *Sie sind in einem Park und es gibt sonnig*.

Advice to teachers:

- newspapers and magazines are a ready source of pictures. Encourage students to bring their own in and get them to practise writing four simple sentences about a picture of their choice
- stress the need to attempt to write in full sentences.

Advice to students:

- keep things simple and do not attempt to write more than four or five words for each sentence
- use *Es gibt* at the start of the sentence and then complete it with vocabulary you know to identify people or things in the picture or write a simple description of a person or a short sentence about the weather if it is an outdoor scene.

Question 2

This was done adequately to well by most students and very few students scored no marks. Although there were some good responses of 100 or so words, the most effective work was of the suggested length of approximately 40 words. This gives ample scope to cover all the bullet points and to develop at least some of them. It was very often the case that the overlong pieces were less clear and more inaccurate than those of the suggested length. Although an opinion was not required, a lot of students included at least one. There were also many good examples of students

using a range of language beyond that which was needed for this question. Some students misinterpreted the question and wrote as if they were Karl. In such cases, examiners looked for any stand alone information which was not directly linked to him and which they could credit, in accordance with general marking principles.

Bullet points 2 and 3, *Konzerte* and *Kino*, were clearly understood by virtually all students as was *Fernsehen* but the response to the latter was often not as well handled as that to the former two, mainly because of the separable verb. *Lesen* caused the most difficulties as there were several instances of it being misunderstood as 'lesson' and information being given about a school subject.

Advice to teachers:

- point out that the initial statement is scene-setting and that the student is writing from their own personal point of view.

Advice to students:

- don't write too much - quality is better than quantity
- try to write something about each bullet point even if it is only one sentence.

Question 3

Students found parts of this challenging and there were some surprising gaps in lexical knowledge.

- Sentence 1 – Although *Hund* was generally known *Katze* proved to be a stumbling block for quite a few students. Some students seemed to have rushed through this sentence and had written *I* instead of *Ich*.
- Sentence 2 – *Trinken* was often rendered as *drinken* and in some cases the *wir* form of the verb was not known. Although *Orangensaft* was quite familiar, there were some variant spellings, *Orangenschaft* being the most common. Recognisable variants were accepted as conveying the key message but they were considered under the application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. *Frühstück* was not commonly known but where it was correctly rendered, both *zum* and *für* were accepted in front of it.
- Sentence 3 – *Schuluniform* was more often than not expressed as *Schule Uniform*. This was accepted but was taken into account when awarding the application mark. *Altmodisch* was not widely known and was frequently misspelt by those students who did know it.
- Sentence 4 – *Arbeitet* proved troublesome while *nach Hause* was quite often used instead of *zu Hause*. The former was not credited but variants such as *in meinem Haus* were. Very few students knew *Büro* and *in einem Office* was very much in evidence.
- Sentence 5 – Although the perfect tense was on the whole formed better than it was last year, it still proved a challenge for some students. The main problem was the omission of the auxiliary verb *habe*. There was, however, a pleasing increase in the number of students who used the imperfect form *spielte*. That avoided the need for the auxiliary verb. *Wit* was used instead of *mit* on occasion while *gestern* was beyond some students.

Advice to teachers:

- keep basic Key Stage 3 vocabulary and near-cognates under revision
- ensure that students practise basic present tense verb endings regularly.

Advice to students:

- make an attempt to translate at least part of each sentence. Anything left out cannot be given credit but what you do write could score marks
- pay particular attention to the little words
- compare your finished work with the English to make sure you have left nothing out.

Question 4 – General points

Slightly more students opted for 4.2 than for 4.1 but the overall standard of response was very similar for both of them. The bullet points were designed to elicit each of the time frames of past, present and future and opinions. That will always be the case. Many students recognised this and were able to respond accordingly. It is worth remembering that time frames and tenses are not the same thing and that a future time frame can be indicated by a relevant time marker used in conjunction with the present tense, eg *Heute Abend kaufe ich Kleidung im Internet*.

This year there were far fewer examples of responses well in excess of the suggested 90 words than was the case last year. 90 words are ample to address each bullet point and to develop the information about some, if not all, of them. Although some of the lengthier pieces were really well written and merited full or nearly full marks, others either contained material which was not relevant or dropped in standard towards the end, or both. Everything which a student had written was taken into consideration when awarding the marks for Content and Quality of language. Both irrelevance and a falling off in standard had a detrimental effect on those marks. The standard of some of the work seen suggested that entry at Higher tier might have been more appropriate.

Question 4.1

This question was very accessible for students and a good range of both appropriate vocabulary and structures was demonstrated. It is not a requirement of this question to justify an opinion but quite a few students did, usually in response to bullet point 2.

Bullet point 1 was well handled by the vast majority of students who did this question. Any comment about mobile phones, whether it was about the model, size, age or what the student used it for was acceptable. Most students also provided an opinion in response to this bullet point. The second bullet point was designed to elicit an opinion and practically every student was able to provide one even if it was through the use of *gut* or something similar. Some students developed what they had written to include the dangers of social media. What was slightly surprising was the number of students who did not realise that *Medien* is plural and thus used *ist* instead of *sind*. Bullet point 3 was generally understood with *in letzter Zeit* stretching from *heute früh* to *letzten Monat* and beyond. The auxiliary verb was quite often omitted and although *benutzt* was in the bullet point, variant forms such as *gebenutzt* and *gebenutzen* appeared in what some students wrote. Where the bullet point was misunderstood, students usually wrote about having recently bought a new mobile phone. Very few students failed to change *dein* from the bullet point to *mein* in their response. In such cases, the bullet point was not credited but the time frame was.

Bullet point 4 caused the most challenges. *Heute Abend* frequently became *nächste Woche* or even a time beyond that, while some students ignored *im Internet* and wrote about their general plans. *Heute Abend gehe ich ins Kino* or something similar was not uncommon. Where this happened, the bullet point was not credited but the future time frame was. The formation of the future tense also proved challenging for some with a past participle being used instead of an infinitive after *werde*, eg *Heute Abend werde ich Kleidung im Internet gekauft*.

Question 4.2

There was a good knowledge of both appropriate vocabulary and of structures demonstrated in the responses to this question. Some students, however, made the mistake of using pre-learnt material or material they had used in their Speaking test to write entirely in the past tense about a previous holiday without consideration of what each of the bullet points required. Where this happened, examiners always looked for something which they could credit. Again, as with 4.1, some students not only provided opinions but also justified them as well.

For bullet point 1, any period of time was accepted. This was, in most cases, expressed by a simple statement such as *Wir bleiben zwei Wochen hier* but a few students wrote about when they had arrived and when they were due to leave. That approach caused the occasional problem in that the arrival but not the departure date was given so the length of stay was not actually indicated. On rare occasions, the use of *vor* instead of *für* spoiled the response to the bullet point.

Urlaubsort in bullet point 2 was not widely known so a sympathetic approach was adopted when marking this. A reference only to the hotel was not accepted but if a sentence began *Der Urlaubsort ist gut* and then went on to talk about the hotel it was accepted as the bullet point had been addressed. Where *Urlaubsort* had not been included in the response but an opinion about something which could feasibly be found there had been, that was also accepted, eg *Der Strand ist sehr schön*. Some students interpreted *Urlaubsort* as meaning the type of holiday they preferred and responded accordingly.

Bullet point 3 did not cause many difficulties with most students making a simple statement such as *Gestern war das Wetter gut*. Some students developed that with information about what they did because of the weather. When attempted, there were several different spellings of *geregnet* and a small number of students confused two weather types by writing *Gestern hat die Sonne geschneit*. Bullet point 4 was quite well handled with most students opting for eating in a restaurant, going to the cinema or going to the beach for a swim.

As was the case with bullet point 4 in 4.1, there were instances of attempts at the future tense which combined a form of *werden* with a past participle eg *Heute Abend werden wir in einem Restaurant gegessen*. Some students misunderstood *Pläne* and wrote about their flight to the holiday destination or gave their opinion of flying.

Advice to teachers:

- make a list of time frame markers and practise them with students
- stress the need to identify precisely what each bullet point requires.

Advice to students:

- don't write too much - quality is far better than quantity

- read the bullet points carefully so you know what is needed for each one.
- attempt to write something about each bullet point
- look for and highlight the time frame markers and start your response to the bullet point with that marker.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.