
GCSE

GERMAN

8668/WH Writing Higher tier
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The quality of work produced for this new examination was encouraging. The paper differentiated very well in that most students were able to score marks over a variety of questions. The vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier but some reached their plateau in their response to question 1. The quality of work seen in the overlap questions was of a generally higher standard than that seen at the Foundation Tier. The ability to use a range of tenses and more complex language was generally impressive and students were also able to express and justify opinions well. Although the latter was not a requirement for question 1, justifications seen there were viewed as a development of information and credited accordingly.

Where students failed to score marks it was due to inaccuracies which caused a delay in communicating messages. The usual reasons for this were either wrong verb formation or students writing extended responses, far longer than the suggested word count, something which created scope for error. Another barrier to achievement was the omission or misinterpretation of the bullet points in Questions 1 and 2.

Question 1

For this question, there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 90 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage. The standard of work varied considerably. Many students dealt confidently with all four bullet points and developed their responses. Others were able to do that for the first two bullet points which required only the present tense. The second bullet point in each question invited an opinion and most students were able to add a second opinion elsewhere. The main discriminators in both questions were bullet points 3 and 4. Here, less deft use of language led to a lack of clarity in effective communication. There were some overly long responses, something which gave greater scope for errors.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Students need to be reminded that coverage of all four bullet points is essential, as misinterpreting or omitting even one means that the award of a mark above 6 is impossible, given that for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10, all aspects of the task must be covered. In addition, although students had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing opinions, there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as 'lapses') and this had an impact on the marks awarded. It should be noted that opinions which referred to something unintelligible were not credited, e.g. *"Gestern, in der Schule ich hat ein Mathematics Leben. Es war sehr langweilig."*

Question 1.1

This was the more popular choice with students. It was a topic with which they are familiar but it is important that they remember this new specification requires them to use their knowledge to respond to the exact requirements of the task rather than just reproduce pre-learned language. As was to be expected, bullet points 1 and 2 were well covered, with many good responses. Bullet point 1 in particular enabled most students to develop information. As soon as they wrote *'Mein Lieblingshobby ist...'* to introduce their response to bullet point 2, they had expressed an opinion.

There was often some material common to the responses to bullet points 1 and 2 but almost invariably the students had written enough for both to be credited. In bullet point 3 the past time frame reference proved challenging for some. Bullet point 4 was reasonably well attempted by most students but *Pläne* was on occasion misinterpreted as '*planes*'.

Question 1.2

This again was a familiar topic to students. As was the case for question 1.1, bullet points 1 and 2 were generally well done and the responses to these showed good development. Bullet point 2 was designed to elicit an opinion and development of the response usually added a second one. The third bullet point proved most problematic with the past time frame required. Bullet point 4 was usually quite well done but some students used this as a prompt to write about their career plans when they had finished their university course.

Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy.

- Variety of language – the range of vocabulary used in response to both questions was appropriate and reasonably extensive. *Gern* and *lieber* were quite often given to indicate liking or preference, but a fairly common failure was the omission of the verb.
- Attempts at complexity – there were some well worked longer sentences using a variety of connectives such as *und*, *aber*, *oder*, *denn* and *weil*. It was also pleasing to note the many attempts to use '*um...zu*' or *zu* plus an infinitive. Negatives were also quite well handled, but both *nein* and *klein* crept in at times when *kein* was needed.
- Time frames – most students were able to make an attempt at all three time frames and the questions were designed to encourage this.
- Accuracy – most students were able to write accurately in the present tense using the first and third person singular. They were also able to subordinate correctly after *weil* and *dass*. There were however six common errors.
 - Unnecessary inversion after *und* and *aber*. This turned an intended statement into a question.
 - The wrong auxiliary verb with an infinitive. '*Ich habe...gegangen*' was often seen.
 - The omission of the auxiliary verb in an attempt to form the perfect tense.
 - An auxiliary verb plus an infinitive in an attempt to form the perfect tense.
 - The use of *würde* in an attempt to form the future tense. It should be noted that a future time frame and not a future tense was required. The time marker followed by the present tense to indicate the immediate future would have been acceptable.
 - The use of '*Ich mochte*' instead of '*Ich möchte*' in describing future plans. The missed Umlaut radically altered what the student was trying to communicate.

Advice to Students

- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words. The emphasis needs to be on **quality** and not **quantity**.
- Mention all the bullet points. Attempt to write something about them rather than omitting them. Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been addressed.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames and check that your verb formation is accurate.

- Make sure you include opinions as required by the task.
- In some cases, the language of the bullet points can be manipulated to help you write a successful response. For example, in Question 1.1, the first bullet point ‘*etwas über deine Schule*’ could easily have been adapted to produce ‘*Meine Schule ist...*’ or ‘*Meine Schule hat...*’

Question 2

For this question, there are 15 marks for Content, 12 marks for Range of Language and 5 marks for Accuracy. Students write approximately 150 words in total on two different bullet points. Both bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage. The quality of responses was generally high with most students able to cover both bullet points in the question they chose. They were also able to demonstrate the ability to express and justify opinions. Many students were able to produce fluent pieces of extended writing with few lapses and a variety of language. The philosophy behind this new specification is that students use their linguistic knowledge to respond to the exact requirements of the task rather than just reproduce pre-learned language. Students were less successful where they had misinterpreted a bullet point or had written very lengthy responses, something which created more room for error.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: relevance and detail (implicit in this is coverage of the bullet points), the amount of information conveyed, the clarity of communication and the expression and justification of opinions. Students usually had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing and justifying opinions, but there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘ambiguities’) and this had an impact on the marks awarded. It should be noted that neither opinions nor justifications which referred to something unintelligible were credited, e.g. ‘*Letztes Jahr mit Familie Amerika fahre. Es war gut, weil das Wetter war warm.*’

Question 2.1

This elicited some excellent responses with students writing thoughtfully about various problems which they had encountered. The most common were cyber-bullying, relationships with parents, the pressures and stresses of school life and addiction to modern technology. These students were able to suggest solutions drawn from their own experience. Others chose to write about teenage problems in general but were able to make a tenuous link between those and their own life. In such cases solutions such as talking things over with parents, teachers and friends were common as was the suggestion that finding time to relax was key. Quite a lot of students who opted for this question wrote about environmental or social problems without linking them directly to their own experience. Where this happened examiners looked for something which might indirectly provide that link so they could credit what the student had written. Solutions here tended to be couched in general terms or were non-existent.

Question 2.2

This was the more popular choice with students, the vast majority of whom were able to write clearly about a past holiday. Opinions and justifications were regularly included and it was obviously a topic with which they were familiar. Unfortunately however the second bullet point was misinterpreted by quite a lot of students. They wrote about why tourists should visit the region where they had spent their holiday. This was regarded as an extension of their response to bullet

point 1 and not as being irrelevant. This misinterpretation meant that the maximum mark they could achieve for Content was 12. Some students chose to write about the negative aspects of their own region without making any reference to tourism. Others said that there were too many tourists in their town and a few used obviously familiar material to write about where they wanted to live in the future. Although examiners were asked to credit anything tangentially relevant, some responses to the second bullet point were outside even that broad interpretation.

Range of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment are variety of language and the ability to produce complex sentences in a confident and fluent manner. It is worth noting that reference is not made to time frames or tenses in the criteria, but the use of these was considered as an attempt at complexity. From that point of view it was pleasing to note the wide range of tenses and verb forms used, including the conditional and subjunctive. The pluperfect was less in evidence than other tenses. The modal verbs *können*, *müssen* and *wollen* appeared regularly as did *ich möchte*. Although *weil* and *obwohl* were the most frequent choices of subordinating conjunctions, others such as *dass*, *da*, *wenn*, *als*, *ob*, *bevor* and *nachdem* were also all used to telling effect. It should however be noted that a preponderance of ‘*weil* clauses’, no matter how accurate they are, does not demonstrate a wide variety of language. Infinitive constructions with both *zu* and *um...zu* added to the range of structures seen. It was noted that some students expressed opinions using *ein Vorteil* or *ein Nachteil*. This is acceptable given that what one person sees as an advantage or disadvantage may not be viewed as such by another. The second bullet point for question 2.2 *Schreib, warum Touristen **deine** Region besuchen sollten*, if adapted successfully to “*Touristen sollten **meine** Region besuchen, weil...*”, not only provided another way of expressing an opinion but also led neatly to a justification. The above reflects some of the good practice seen, but a determining factor in giving the higher marks for Range of Language is the **successful** use of a variety of structures. There were many fluent pieces in which the students had used complex language accurately and effectively. There were, however, those who attempted complexity but who were less successful by, for example, inverting rather than subordinating after *weil* or by using a finite verb form in conjunction with a modal verb. The criteria for assessment for Range of Language also refer to style and register but this did not prove a problem given the nature of the questions.

Accuracy

The criteria for assessment focus mainly on verbs and tense formations, and the type of errors that students make. It is to be noted that a ‘major’ error is one that interferes with communication, and a ‘minor error’, albeit still an inaccuracy, does not. The majority of students were able to produce work worthy of three marks and above. Common major errors included the inappropriate use of infinitives and past participles and poor formation of the perfect tense. Minor errors included gender errors, inaccurate adjectival agreements and minor mis-spellings.

Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the number of words required. The emphasis needs to be on **quality** and not **quantity**.
- Read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what they require in terms of response. Answer the question which is there. If ‘*du*’ or ‘*dein(e)*’ is in the rubric, make the response personal and link it to yourself in some way.
- Ensure that what you write relates to the bullet points in some way.
- When including complex language, check that your verbs and spellings are accurate.

Question 3

For this question, there are 6 marks for Conveying key messages and 6 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at covering Grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well with almost all students able to score some marks.

Conveying key messages

Key message	Main issues
My friends and I	<i>Mich</i> instead of <i>ich</i>
Like to help	Omission of <i>gern</i> <i>Hilfe</i> instead of <i>helfen</i>
Old people	<i>Rentner</i> instead of <i>alten Leuten</i> Very few students managed the dative plural
When we can	<i>Wann</i> instead of <i>wenn</i> <i>Kann</i> instead of <i>können</i>
We have no time now	Omission of <i>jetzt</i>
Because we get a lot of homework	Word order after <i>weil</i>
Last week I went shopping	<i>Kaufen</i> instead of <i>einkaufen</i> Omission of or wrong auxiliary verb with <i>gegangen</i>
For my grandmother	<i>Mit</i> or <i>vor</i> instead of <i>für</i> . <i>Grandmutter</i>
When she was ill	<i>Wenn</i> or <i>wann</i> instead of <i>als</i> <i>Krank</i> was not widely known
And she gave me some money	Omission of auxiliary verb with <i>gegeben</i> <i>Mich</i> instead of <i>mir</i>
I will use it	Omission of <i>es</i>
For my holiday	<i>Urlaub</i> frequently not known
In Switzerland	<i>Schweiz</i> frequently not known or misspelt <i>Nach</i> instead of <i>in der</i>

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

Minor errors did not prevent marks being awarded for conveying key messages provided they were communicated. These inaccuracies were considered when deciding on the mark for the application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. For example, wrong word order, the slight misspelling of *Freund(in)* and the omission of *es* in key message 11 did not affect communication so were taken into account under this area of assessment.

Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases, especially connectives and prepositions.
- Check carefully that all aspects of the translation have been addressed accurately, particularly the little words.

Most of the work seen was legible but in some cases students would have benefitted from taking greater care.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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