
GCSE

GERMAN

8668/WH: Writing Higher
Report on the Examination

8668
June 2019

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2019 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General Comments

The standard of work showed a slight improvement over last year's and, on the whole, students seemed better attuned to the demands of the paper. The vast majority had been correctly entered at this tier and a pleasing number gained very good or good marks for all three questions.

However, it was noticeable that some students who gained full or nearly full marks for Question 1 found it difficult to cope fully with the increased demands of Questions 2 and 3. Handwriting was not normally a problem but some scripts were very difficult to read.

Question 1 – General Points

1.2 was a slightly more popular choice than 1.1 but the general level of response was better for the latter. The bullet points were designed to elicit each of the time frames of past, present and future and an opinion. That will always be the case. Most 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 recommended 90 words than was the case last year. 90 words were 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.

Very few students were unable to cope with the demands of this question but entry at Foundation Tier might have been better for those who could not.

Question 1.1

This question was very accessible for students and a good range of both appropriate vocabulary and of structures was demonstrated. It is not a requirement of this question to justify an opinion but many 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. Most students were, however, far more ambitious than that. Many 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 perfect tense was generally well handled but a few students omitted the auxiliary verb. Even though *benutzt* appeared in the bullet point it occasionally became *gebenutzt*. 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 problems. *Heute Abend* frequently became *nächste Woche* or even a time beyond that while several students ignored *im Internet* and wrote about their general plans. *Heute Abend gehe ich ins Kino* or something similar appeared on quite a regular basis. Where this happened the bullet point was not credited but the future time frame was. The formation of the future tense was, on the whole, good but a few students used a past participle rather than an infinitive in conjunction with *werde*, eg *Heute Abend werde ich Kleidung im Internet gekauft*.

Question 1.2

The vast majority of students displayed a very good knowledge of both appropriate vocabulary and of structures. A few, 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 having thought about what each of the bullet points required. Where this happened examiners looked for something which they could credit.

Again, as with 1.1, many 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 quite 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.

Urlaubsort in bullet point 2 was sometimes not 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 created very few difficulties. Here responses ranged from a simple statement such as *Gestern war das Wetter gut* to something more extended, eg *Gestern war es sehr sonnig, aber am Abend hat es gedonnert und geblitzt*. Students often developed that with information about what they did because of the weather.

Bullet point 4 was on the whole 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 1.1, 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*.

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.

Question 2 – General Points

The first alternative proved much more popular than the second but the mean marks for Content, Range of Language and Accuracy were almost identical for the two questions. Far fewer students than last year wrote over-long responses with most having kept to the suggested length of 150 or so words. Where students did write in excess of 200 words, there was some excellent work but many sacrificed quality for quantity.

For a mark in the top band for Content there is a requirement for clear and detailed information. That detail was quite often lacking because students moved from one point to another without developing what they had written. They would have been better served by focusing on fewer ideas and developing them as much as possible.

It was pleasing to note the increased use of *man sollte* followed by *um...zu* plus an infinitive to express an opinion and justification but some students tended to use a series of *weil* clauses to achieve that end. That latter approach somewhat limited the mark which could be awarded for Range of Language.

Several examiners commented on the less than secure verb and tense formations which they saw not only in the past tense but in the present tense as well. One of the main criteria for a good mark for Accuracy is the security of verb and tense formations. Mistakes there very often had a detrimental effect on the clarity of communication. Several students interchanged *man* and *du* and wrote for example *Wenn man fit ist, kannst du mehr Sport treiben*. That also represented a lapse in clear communication at this level.

Question 2.1

There were some excellent responses with well detailed arguments about the importance of being and remaining fit and healthy. In these references to smoking, drinking, drug taking and the student's personal health and fitness regime were linked to that idea of importance.

Many students, however, used pre-learnt material and wrote in general terms about fitness and health in response to the first bullet point. In such cases examiners always looked for a link to the key idea of their importance. Unfortunately that link could not always be found although the bullet point could easily have been addressed as it was by many students by adapting its wording and writing *Es ist sehr wichtig, fit zu sein*. This was often followed by a *weil*, *denn* or *da* clause. As a result not only had the bullet point been achieved but an opinion and justification had also been given.

Bullet point 2 was on the whole treated better than bullet point 1 and most students were able to write about their plans to do more sport or to eat more healthily in the future.

The formation of the future tense was in most cases good but there were some instances of a past participle rather than an infinitive being used. Some students misinterpreted the bullet point and proceeded to give Anna advice about her future health and fitness. Although this meant that the bullet point could not be credited, the language and accuracy could be.

There were three common errors which appeared on quite a regular basis and which had an effect on the clarity of communication. No distinction was made between *gesund* and *Gesundheit*, *bekommen* was used instead of *werden* and *Gym* appeared instead of *Fitnesszentrum*. In addition the formation of the comparative was not always right and both *mehr wichtig* and *mehr gesund* were frequently seen.

Question 2.2

By far the most popular choice of a recently celebrated festival was *Weihnachten* and practically all the students were able to write about how they spent Christmas and what presents they received. There was also ample opportunity here both to express and to justify opinions and most students did this well.

Unsurprisingly, *Geburtstag* was the next most popular choice and, as with *Weihnachten*, students chose to talk about the day and what presents they received. Music festivals proved to be quite a popular choice as well. *Sylvester* and *Oktoberfest* were also in evidence and some pleasing knowledge of the traditions associated with the former was displayed and expressed in good German.

Most students automatically produced an opinion and a justification in their introduction to their response to bullet point 2 by writing eg *Mein Lieblingsfest ist Weihnachten, weil ich viele Geschenke bekomme*.

Quite a lot of students used the same festival in their response to both bullet points. While this was acceptable some tended to repeat information, opinions and structures and therefore did not demonstrate the necessary variety of language to gain a high mark for Range of Language. Some wrote about more than one favourite festival while others wrote about both their favourite festival and their favourite tradition. Far too frequently that resulted in a lack of any detailed development. There seemed to be less reliance on pre-learnt material for this question.

Advice to teachers:

- encourage students to read the bullet points carefully so they know precisely what each one demands
- practise verb and tense formations.

Advice to students:

- don't write too much - quality is better than quantity
- make sure you know what each bullet point is requiring
- adapt what you know to the specific bullet point.

Question 3

It was in the first and last parts of the translation that the vast majority of students gained their marks. The linguistic demands of the middle section did however prove a challenge for many. This was expected as the most demanding discriminators were in that part. Where vocabulary and structures were not known, a pleasing number of students attempted to paraphrase rather than leave gaps.

Examiners were, however, mindful that this was a translation and not a paraphrase exercise and marked the conveying of key messages accordingly. Those attempts at paraphrasing varied in standard and they were considered when awarding the mark for the application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. As a result, 5 for conveying key messages and 6 for application of language was quite a common mark profile. There were gaps in lexical knowledge but what was more noticeable was the lack of precision with the all important little words, for example *is* instead of *ist* was not uncommon.

- ‘My town is not clean’ – many students wrote *schmutzig* which was needed in the next part. *Dorf* appeared on occasion instead of *Stadt*.
- ‘The air is dirty’ – this was well done for the most part but *Luft* was occasionally missed.
- ‘because there is’ – practically all students translated this correctly but the word order was incorrect at times.
- ‘A lot of industry’ – this was not as well known as was expected and both *Fabriken* and *Kraftwerke* appeared on a regular basis. Some students used the English spelling.
- ‘But I like the area’ – this was quite well done with both *Gegend* and *Region* being used. There were examples of *gern* being used on its own.
- ‘My friends also live here’ – this was done well by the vast majority of students but *also* instead of *auch* and *dort* instead of *hier* were both in evidence.
- ‘And therefore we see each other’ – this was a challenge for many students with the reflexive pronoun often omitted but *einander* was accepted in its place.
- ‘All the time’ – very few students rendered this correctly because the structure *die ganze Zeit* was what was being tested and alternatives were not accepted.
- ‘I am interested in cycling’ – *Ich bin interessiert in...* appeared on a regular basis.
- ‘And last week’ – very few students could not translate this but there were some misspellings of *letzte*.
- ‘I went to school’ – only comparatively few students did not translate this correctly with the two main stumbling blocks being *nach Schule* used instead of *zur Schule* and the occasional omission of the auxiliary verb *bin*.

- ‘By bike’ – this was well done by the vast majority of students some of whom combined the previous key message with this one and wrote ...*bin ich zur Schule...radgefahren*.
- ‘Every day’ – this presented very few problems.

Advice to teachers:

- practise the little words with students. They are crucial
- design translation exercises which can be broken down into manageable sections and which have different levels of demand.

Advice to students:

- leave enough time after Questions 1 and 2 to give this your full attention
- attempt to translate everything. Anything you leave out cannot be marked 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.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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