

GERMAN

Paper 8683/01
Speaking

General comments

Candidate performance on this component covered a wide range with many candidates able to demonstrate effective speaking skills. There was a good variety of mainly appropriate German based Topics, offering ample scope for interesting and searching Topic Conversations. The General Conversation section of the test too provided a good deal of evidence of candidates able to move from responding to fairly straightforward questions to the type of more mature conversation specified in the syllabus and produced some interesting discussions.

Most tests were well and effectively conducted and Teacher/Examiners are thanked for their thorough and professional approach. The format of the examination was clear to all involved and familiarity with the detail of the mark scheme resulted in it being applied in a consistent and appropriate manner. All Centres are reminded that the working mark sheet must be filled in with marks for each criterion and not with a global mark for each section of the test. This makes marking more transparent for moderation purposes.

The following points relating to the administration of the test are highlighted for future reference. A small number of tests were poorly recorded making them hard to moderate. Centres are reminded of the need to test the quality of the recording equipment before starting the examination and to ensure a quiet environment. Both the CD or the tape, and the box they are in, should be labelled fully and AS and A Level tests should be recorded on separate CDs or tapes.

Section 1: Presentation

This section of the test gives candidates the opportunity to prepare thoroughly a topic in which they have a personal interest and for them to give a lively and interesting presentation. Most topics chosen at this session were appropriate, drawn from one of the topic areas listed in the syllabus and treated so as to reflect a knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the language is spoken. A candidate, especially perhaps a German native speaker must therefore not talk exclusively with regard to the country where he/she is currently living. Some form of comparison is of course permissible. A small number of candidates at this session presented a topic that was not German based. Where this happens candidates' content mark for their presentation should be halved.

The timings of the different sections of the test need to be closely observed. In the case of the presentation this should last no longer than 3½ minutes, which was generally the case this year. Candidates should not be interrupted during this time unless they show no sign of finishing or to prompt them if they are having difficulty in continuing with their presentation. Candidates should keep any questions they may have for the Topic and General Conversation sections.

Section 2: Topic Conversation and General Conversation

Candidates' presentations lead into a conversation about the chosen topic, lasting 7-8 minutes, which is followed by a general conversation, starting with question's about the candidate's background and interests then moving quickly to a discussion of more abstract and/or current issues within the general topic areas. A number of the points made below have appeared in previous reports However, it is worth noting them in order to maximise candidate marks.

- The candidate must ask at least two questions in the **Topic Conversation** and in the **General Conversation**. It is stated in the syllabus that candidates are required "to seek information from and the opinions of the teacher". Some Centres did not appear to be aware of this while others awarded marks for "Seeking information and opinions" even though no questions had been asked. In the case of candidates who do not ask any questions by the end of the Topic Conversation, Examiners must prompt

them by asking *Do you have any questions to ask of me* in the appropriate language. The examiner should prompt candidates at the end of the General Conversation. Candidates are not penalised for being prompted in this way. However, if there are still no questions forthcoming then no marks can be awarded and a total of 0 marks can be lost. If just one question is asked, the maximum mark is 3 out of 5, in both **Section 2** and **Section 3**. Questions should be varied and reasonably substantial: "Und du?" is not really sufficient. Examiners on the other hand should keep replies really brief, as these attract no marks for the candidate.

- Examiners should make a clear distinction between **Section 2** and **Section 3** by announcing to the candidate that the switch to General Conversation is now being made.
- For the candidate to obtain a mark from the top band for Responsiveness in the conversation sections some challenging questions should be put so that some form of "debate" can take place. Even, or perhaps especially, a fluent candidate should occasionally have his or her opinions challenged so that the opportunity arises both for them to present and to defend their point of view in discussion.
- Some Centres could afford to be more generous with marks for Accuracy and Feel for the Language in the case of native or near-native speakers, as of course this mark-scheme is primarily aimed at non-native speakers and, therefore perfection is not required, even for a maximum mark.

Individual Centre Reports will have highlighted any other issues.

GERMAN

Paper 8683/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The subject matter of this year's paper - the widespread introduction in Germany of tuition fees for candidates - was generally found to be accessible and, whilst the questions set occasionally proved slightly more demanding, the standard of difficulty was considered comparable overall with last year's paper. Most candidates could relate to the issues raised in the texts, and this led to some very good and pertinent answers in the more extended writing exercise in **Question 5**. A small number of candidates unfortunately misunderstood *Studiengebühren* as candidate grants, and this then led them inevitably to distort a number of textual points and lose relevant focus in their **Question 5** responses.

It must be strongly emphasized once again that answers which simply reproduce lengthy passages of textual material cannot be credited; it is essential that the guidance ***ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben*** highlighted at the top of **Questions 3** and **4** is properly heeded. Candidates should be advised that this applies also to **Question 5**, where ***Ihren eigenen Worten*** is similarly highlighted. Given that paragraph indicators are provided at the end of each sub-question in **Questions 3** and **4**, it is clearly necessary for candidates to show their understanding of appropriate element(s) in the paragraph concerned and also of the force of the question set, rather than simply including in their answer everything in that paragraph.

There was a sizeable increase in the overall entry this year, which is clearly very encouraging, and this led perhaps inevitably to a broader range of mark achievement. As in previous years, the best candidates performed to an excellent standard and wrote with fluency and flair. There were a high proportion of these.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 [Erster Teil]

Question 1

- (a) This was usually answered correctly.
- (b) This was usually answered correctly.
- (c) This was usually answered correctly, but nouns other than *Entscheidung*, the correct alternative noun to *Beschluss* in the text were occasionally offered.
- (d) This caused problems for some candidates, who saw a similar ending to *fordern* in the verb *erlitten*.
- (e) This was usually answered correctly.

Question 2

This grammar manipulation exercise was found challenging by weaker candidates.

- (a) This was usually answered correctly.
- (b) Candidates needed to maintain the same tense in the passive sentence as that used in the active sentence: *Deutschland hat diesen Vertrag unterzeichnet* replaced by *Dieser Vertrag ist von Deutschland unterzeichnet worden*. This was not always recognised. Occasionally the passive was wrongly formed.

- (c) A number of candidates were not familiar with the required idiom: *Die Richter wachen über die Meinung* for *Die Richter sahen das anders*.
- (d) *Zugang* was sometimes wrongly retained in the answer.
- (e) *Niemand* – or an equivalent emphasis - as a necessary element of the answer was overlooked by some candidates, who simply completed the sentence with *nicht*. (*Man dürfte ...*) *niemand(en) von einem Studium ausschließen*.

Question 3

Candidates are required to answer comprehension questions on the first of the two texts on the paper. There are 5 out of 20 marks available for quality of language on this exercise. Whilst most candidates could identify the appropriate area of the paragraph indicated, there was some reluctance, as already indicated, to move away from the sequencing and syntax of the text, and thus show convincing understanding. As stated above, where a candidate simply reproduces a section of the text by way of an answer, without manipulation or recognition of the question, no marks can be awarded.

- (a) Most candidates gained the one mark here, despite the inclusion of surplus detail.
- (b) This was usually answered with the correct elements for the full 3 marks. There was some lack of recognition of *vorschreibt* as a separable verb, however, which would be considered when allocating the mark for Language.
- (c) (i) This was usually answered correctly for the 2 marks. It should be noted however, that the question asks *Worin?* This requires candidates to detail the issues rejected as contradictory by the judges. Candidates who simply copied material verbatim and in full from the text could not be credited with full marks here.

(ii) A number of candidates simply reproduced the material in lines 14 – 16 here, and did not refer to the judges' view that the decision to charge tuition fees as appropriate had nothing to do with the UN provision that no-one should be barred from higher education because they could not afford it.
- (d) Of the seven points acceptable in response to this question: *Welche Vorteile haben die Kredite, die man beantragen kann?* most candidates were able to identify at least four for the full 4 marks available. Again, however, there was some inappropriate text-copying.
- (e) Weaker candidates struggled to manipulate the vocabulary in lines 27 - 28 on poorly stocked university libraries.
- (f) The final question in this exercise, which required candidates to draw a straightforward inference, was answered in a satisfactory way by those candidates who understood the last sentence of the text.

Section 2 [Zweiter Teil]

Question 4

This exercise, as is to be expected at this stage in the question paper, was a little more difficult generally, though again weaker candidates also lost marks for simply reproducing the material in the text. The instruction ***ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben*** is repeated above the exercise.

- (a) (i) Most candidates gained 1 mark here, which was available for an answer that showed awareness that all or multiple children had to be paid for: *Welches Problem gibt es dem Text zufolge für Großfamilien?*

(ii) A number of candidates found the second part of the question difficult: *Woher stammt dieses Problem?* and the legal obligation on parents to fund their children contained in *juristisch gesehen* (line 3) was often overlooked. In addition, *keine eigenen Finanzmittel* in line 4 was frequently attributed incorrectly to the parents, rather than to their children.

- (b)(i) Most candidates were able to gain two marks here, with even simple manipulation of the text.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to gain one mark for their answer to the question about how people who are studying are treated in Northern Germany, but they did need to make it clear that Duisburg-Essen was an exception to the general rule.
- (c) Most candidates were able to identify the categories of candidates eligible for concessions, and were able to gain their 3 marks, unless the text was simply copied out. It was not always clear that candidates had understood the word *Sonderfälle*.
- (d) *Aus welchen Gründen sollte der junge candidate mehr zahlen als erwartet...(Absatz 4)*. Some candidates found difficulty in relating this question to the text, and offered material from the first part of the paragraph relating to the impact of the duration of a candidate's studies on fees paid in general. The point about this young man's particular situation was seldom effectively made: that by delaying the start of his studies by one year in order to do his community service he had become liable for tuition fees that had not applied previously.
- (e) Whilst many candidates gained two marks here, some experienced difficulty in differentiating the judges' decision – as indicated by the subjunctive *spiele* - from the author's comments in the rest of this paragraph.
- (f) Again, weaker candidates were not always able to pick out from this final paragraph on what grounds the judges chose to justify their decision, and there was some reiteration of the perceived general unfairness of fees and exceptions. However, a good number of candidates showed that they had fully understood all the nuances of this paragraph.

Question 5

In their responses to this task candidates are required to summarise the issues and arguments presented in the two texts in their own words. Both texts should be referred to, and candidates should expect to present a meaningful overview of the main points, and how they relate to each other, ideally by means of contrast and comparison.

A list of points is not an appropriate form for a summary.

It should be made very clear to candidates in preparation for this paper that the word limit of 140 encompasses both parts of the question, and that therefore the conciseness and effectiveness of their writing is likely to have a bearing on achievement. Some candidates wasted words with an explanatory version of the task title, before addressing the content, and in a few cases by quoting in full the titles of each text as they introduced them.

Standard opening sentences are clearly often prepared and learned. However, there is a risk that this may expose candidates who are unable to adapt their starting formula to the precise requirements of the task. It should be noted that the two texts set will not necessarily present fundamentally opposing points of view throughout, but rather different aspects or approaches to the same topic for consideration and comparison, and that the syllabus requirement is simply for: "two passages which deal with related themes".

Again this year candidates who wrote at considerable length, without apparent regard for any word limit, almost invariably forfeited marks for the 'personal response' part of their answer, because they left this too late. The marking of this exercise must cease at the end of the sentence after 140 words, with a final cut-off at 150 words, and teachers should ensure that candidates are aware of this. As a general point, candidates would undoubtedly benefit from focused practice in the skills of summary, which amount to more than just picking out elements in the passage(s). There were plenty of points to be made again this year, and many candidates were readily able to earn around seven of the ten marks available for this summary part of the question.

Most candidates prefer to address Exercise 5 in two distinct parts, and most expressed a pleasingly clear personal stance on the issue, which was of evident interest to them, as hoped. There was, however, often in both parts of the responses some over-emphasis on candidates from poor family backgrounds, which was not a central platform of either text. Personal views may be readily incorporated within the textual summary, but it is important that candidates make clear that these are personal views, and not assumptions which the text(s) may not support. By and large marking in this respect will look to take a lenient view, where

reasonable. Marks of two and three out of the potential five for personal response were quite common, and the full range was in evidence.

A small number of answers were significantly shorter than 140 words, and candidates should also receive advice that this will limit the language mark available.

Language

The remaining five marks in **Exercise 5** are for the quality of the language, and for most candidates these were broadly comparable with those awarded for **Exercises 3 and 4**, as might reasonably be expected. Confusion over the roles of *dass* and *das* is still regularly seen, and not helped by a lack of commas between clauses. Indeed, the absence of effective punctuation in general not infrequently undermines the making of a good point. It must be said, however, that many candidates wrote both fluently and impressively, and their responses made for some excellent reading.



GERMAN

Paper 8683/03

Essay

General Comments

This paper produced the full range of responses: from thoughtful, well-structured essays to some rather vague, poorly structured answers, though these were very much in the minority. Candidates' language was equally diverse.

There were as usual a number of candidates of native speaker standard or with some native speaker experience. While such candidates were generally able to write quite fluently, their work also tended to contain some inaccuracy, including phonetic spelling errors, such as the confusion between *das* / *dass* and *ä* / *e* sounds. The Principal Examiner also noted a somewhat relaxed attitude to the use of capital letters for nouns and to punctuation, especially commas.

Many non-native speaker candidates proved to have an excellent command of German and achieved marks in the Very good category of the mark scheme for language. They had an impressive array of vocabulary at their disposal, both general and topic-specific, and were ambitious in their use of structure. There was, however, some evidence at this session of rote learning of sometimes lengthy set phrases, which candidates were then not always capable of manipulating appropriately. This manifested itself in complex sentences containing incongruous errors, which did not add up to a coherent expression of ideas.

Many candidates seem to feel that it is necessary to write up to the upper limit of 400 words on this paper. This does not automatically entitle them to more marks for content because, in doing so, they may become repetitive and so disqualify themselves from the higher categories of the mark scheme. A succinct, well structured but shorter essay within the word count can create a much better impression.

There are candidates who appear to choose the overall **topic** rather than the **title** set. Although some start out with good intentions in the introduction, they can end up writing a very general essay on the topic, perhaps falling back on ideas they may have used in earlier essays. This, of course, does not impact well on their mark for content. Time spent studying the title and planning the essay is never wasted.

Question 1

„Junge Leute haben heutzutage zu viele Rechte und wollen keine Verantwortung tragen.“ Wie stellen Sie sich zu dieser Aussage?

This question was chosen by a substantial minority of candidates. Although they were comfortable with the concept of responsibility, there was a lack of consensus amongst the candidates as to what constitutes rights for young people: some equated them with freedom, but almost no candidates took the time to define what rights meant to them. This lack of clarity had a negative impact on the structure of some essays. A number of candidates went on to write a more general essay on the topic of young people without responding to the specific question posed in the title. At the same time, other candidates made interesting and relevant points and were generally keen to point out that young people are not all the same.

There were the usual difficulties with the word *Jugendliche*, including when and when not to add an *-n* for the plural form. Similar problems arose with *die jungen Leute*. There was some confusion too between *Jugendliche*, *Jugend* and *Jungen* which provoked errors in meaning, and number. *Das Problem* often appeared as *die Probleme*, singular.

Question 2

„Warum sollte ich **Ihr** Land besuchen?“ Nehmen Sie zu dieser Frage Stellung, indem Sie die Vorteile Ihres Heimatlandes als Urlaubsziel begründen.

Candidates who chose to write on this subject needed to put their essay into the wider context of travel and tourism, something that a number of them did not do. Many candidates concentrated instead, with varying degrees of success, on simply detailing the attractions in their country, without indicating what it was that made their country particularly worth visiting compared with others. There were nevertheless some well-illustrated essays written in an upbeat style, which were very persuasive.

One of the challenges posed by this essay lay in the vocabulary: when to use the source language names for attractions and when to translate them, and how much explanation to give. Some weaker candidates tended to lapse into lists, which then also had an impact on the range of structures they used to express themselves. There was some confusion about how to use *besuchen*, which was often followed by *nach*.

Question 3

Was sind die Hauptursachen der Umweltverschmutzung in **Ihrer** Region der Welt. Was wird dagegen unternommen und wie sind die Perspektiven für die Zukunft?

This was the most frequently answered question of the five. There was no lack of subject matter in the essays submitted, although some candidates did seem to be better informed about the science of climate change than others. It was important for candidates to note that the question was in three parts. Not all of which were consistently addressed. It seemed that candidates were so used to writing about possible solutions to environmental problems that they failed to notice that they were being asked about what is happening now. Many concluded their essay very generally rather than by giving an opinion about the prospects for the future as required.

The amount of topic-specific vocabulary relating to the environment that most candidates who chose this essay had at their disposal was impressive. Unfortunately, there was also a significant number who appeared to have learned set phrases off by heart, which made for stilted reading in some instances and considerable repetition. *Ursache* and *verursachen* occasionally got confused and there were some difficulties with *Schutz* and *schützen*, *sparen* and *retten*. *Ob* also appeared regularly (and not only in this question) when the sense clearly required *wenn* or *obwohl*.

Question 4

Welche wissenschaftlichen und medizinischen Fortschritte der letzten Jahre halten Sie für riskant?

This essay question was rarely chosen and generally by candidates at the top of the ability range. Candidates needed sound topic-specific vocabulary in order to allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and give examples. It was otherwise all too easy to fall into vague generalisations. The topic area is a relatively challenging one, though the question itself was quite straightforward in its requirements.

Question 5

Inwiefern sind Fastfood und Softdrinks für das Problem des Übergewichts in manchen Ländern verantwortlich?

This question was popular with candidates, possibly because it could be seen as lying more closely within their immediate sphere of experience than some other questions. It was as ever crucial for candidates to read the detail of the question closely. There were a number of coherent and quite thoughtful essays by candidates who had recognized that *Inwiefern?* required them to consider factors other than junk food which might cause obesity. Those who did not recognise this tended to limit themselves in their responses to writing about the dangers of fast food and soft drinks and the reasons for their popularity.

Most candidates had the requisite vocabulary to write on this topic. The vocabulary item *Übergewicht* could have been borrowed from the title, both as a noun and as an adjective. Candidates needed of course to manipulate this language for themselves, to produce the correct form *übergewichtig* here, for example, instead of *übergewicht* as the adjective.