
AS

GERMAN

Paper 3 Speaking
Report on the Examination

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General comments

The introduction of the new speaking test required all examiners to become familiar with a new format and mark scheme but also demanded a new approach to the conduct of the test from both visiting and teacher-examiners.

Administration

Visiting examiners reported that centres were well prepared for the slightly different procedures regarding preparation time and roles of invigilators. Recordings from centres were mostly of good sound quality but centres are reminded that at the start of each test the component and centre numbers should be announced in addition to the candidate's details. According to AQA instructions recordings should be saved in mp3 format; many CDs had been saved in iTunes and had insufficient labelling of tracks.

Issues of Conduct

In centres conducting their own tests, the prescribed sequence of cards was generally observed but it would be helpful to markers if in future a list of the running order was sent alongside the recordings. Most examiners in both T and V options discussed the two cards in the order given on the allocation table; whether the first discussion was based on Aspects of German-speaking Society or on Artistic Culture did not have any perceptible impact on the student's performance. Prescribed timings were adhered to by most centres; very few teacher-examiners exceeded 7 minutes for each discussion or stayed below 6 minutes. Stop watches should not be re-set between the two discussions.

Visiting examiners enjoyed conducting the new tests since they allow greater freedom to discuss and explore one topic area in detail rather than having to move on regularly to the next topic as in the legacy tests. It is a requirement for the student to prepare and ask one card-related question of the examiner and many students had thought of imaginative questions. Very few teachers forgot to elicit the question when it would have been necessary; students may find it good practice to ask their question as soon as possible. Teacher-examiners should be aware that a question asked outside the 7 or 14 minute limit cannot be credited; neither can be a 'catch-up' question for the first discussion which is asked during the second. It is important that answers to the student's question should always be very brief so as not to use up valuable examining time.

The entire test is now exclusively based on the two stimulus cards and this format means that in-depth discussions of the stimulus materials should take place. **AO2** marks (response to written language) reflect the degree of understanding of the card content by the candidate; consequently examiners need to explore the card with appropriate supplementary questions between each of the printed questions. Unfortunately, many teacher-examiners had not adapted to this change from the 'traditional' method in legacy tests and asked the three questions in quick succession without following up on students' responses. Thus many relevant and accessible aspects of the stimulus were not addressed and students were frequently deprived of opportunities to show a thorough understanding of the stimulus material. Supplementary and follow-up questions are also essential for securing the introduction of unpredicted elements which is part of the marking criteria for **AO1**.

A third of the total marks available is allocated to **AO4**, ie knowledge and understanding of the society and culture of German-speaking countries. Such a high percentage of marks has consequences for examiners' questioning strategies: sufficient opportunities must be given to

students within each of the 7 minute discussions to demonstrate the qualities described by the AO4 criteria. Many teacher-examiners asked the third question on the card too late so that the candidate could make limited contributions that showed knowledge and understanding of the German speaking world. Examiners are advised to try and elicit AO4 knowledge throughout the test and, if possible, between asking the first two printed questions.

Markers of centre-conducted tests observed that too many teacher-examiners limited the exploration of German-speaking *society* (Cards A–F) to just one or two questions after which they continued to discuss the sub-theme in general terms, eg the student's use of the internet, his/her family life, personal attitude to fashion/appearance. Aspects of *culture* in German-speaking countries (Cards G–L) were usually dealt with at greater length but even here too much time was frequently spent on general and personal matters or on comparisons with British culture, eg Christmas market in English cities, architecture in London. The AQA booklet *Your questions answered* states clearly what area of knowledge and understanding is assessed under AO4:

Will facts given by students which are not related to a target language speaking country simply be ignored when the AO4 mark is being considered?

That's correct; AO4 tests knowledge of the target language speaking country and so only such information can be credited.

It was pleasing to see that students were generally quite knowledgeable about aspects of culture in Germany, Austria or Switzerland and that many appeared to be genuinely enthusiastic about art, architecture and traditions in the German-speaking world and about Berlin's cultural riches. In centres that conducted their own tests, students were often allowed to deliver pre-learnt mini-presentations that contained a lot of facts, eg on *Karneval, Oktoberfest etc*; unfortunately many teachers did not engage the students in a more substantial discussion that required students to build on their factual knowledge and to demonstrate 'critical response' (AO4) to what they had learnt.

To quote once more from the *Your questions answered* document:

The important thing is that there is evidence of the student's ability to develop arguments, justify points of view and draw conclusions based on his/her understanding of the sub-theme. This evidence may come from only the aspect of the sub-theme covered on the card or from across other aspects of the sub-theme also. There is no requirement to cover in the discussion aspects of the sub-theme beyond the one covered on the card and students will be able to access the full mark range without doing so.

To summarise the main points for good conduct:

- Supplementary questions should be asked between all printed questions
- Aspects on the card that are not covered by the printed questions should be explored
- Students' responses should be followed up to develop points and introduce unpredicted elements (AO1)
- Question 3 should be asked between 3 and 4 minutes into the discussion
- AO4 knowledge/understanding should be elicited throughout the test, not only with Question 3
- Students need to be encouraged to interpret information on the card rather than just reading it out (AO2)
- Questions requiring evaluation of facts and the expression and justification of views should be asked regularly

- Lengthy pre-learnt statements on AO4 facts should be discouraged
- If necessary, the student's question needs to be elicited before the time limit of 7 or 14 minutes
- Examiner answers to students' questions should be as brief as possible.

Student performance

Assessment Objective 1 Understand and respond in speech to spoken language including face to face interaction

The descriptors combine three qualities of students' responses to spoken language: fluency, independence and spontaneity. The majority of students spoke with good or satisfactory fluency and regularly extended their responses beyond minimum replies. Demonstrating spontaneity depended on examiners asking unpredicted questions when discussing the card material and in the wider discussion of the sub-theme. Performance in AO1 was generally good with marks from 3 to 5 being most commonly awarded. Some students in centre-conducted tests where teachers relied on a prepared list of questions lost out on the highest marks because they were not given the opportunity to respond to unpredictable elements, as required by the mark scheme.

Assessment Objective 2 Understand and respond in speech to written language drawn from a variety of sources

Performances on AO2 varied widely; visiting examiners tended to exploit the stimulus material in more detail and often enabled even less able students to give additional information about the stimulus. On the other hand, many teacher-examiners left the stimulus material under-exploited and denied their students opportunities to go beyond their prepared answers and to show a deeper understanding of the content of the card. Good understanding is not demonstrated either by simply reading out any verbal information on the card without embedding it meaningfully into utterances. Many students did so and if they were not asked by their teacher to develop and explain some elements on the stimulus higher AO2 marks were out of their reach.

Assessment Objective 3 Manipulate the language accurately, in spoken form, using a range of lexis and structure

The descriptors on the mark scheme made it possible for many students to score above the middle band of marks even if there were noticeable grammatical weaknesses. The majority of students attempted complex structures and/or had learnt some appropriate idiomatic expressions. Examiners identified accurate verb conjugation as the area needing improvement; frequently, students were not able to apply correct first and third person endings.

Other widely reported problems were:

- Modal verb structures
- Personal pronouns (*er* for *ihn*, *mit sie*)
- Appropriate prepositions, including *auf dem Internet/Computer/Handy*
- Possessive pronouns (*sein/ihr*)
- *aber/und/oder* with the verb being placed at the end
- Perfect tense with the correct auxiliary verb
- Word order in negations (*ich nicht denke*).

Most students had sufficient vocabulary to communicate clearly. Examiners frequently commented on:

- Confusion of *wissen/kennen*, *spenden/verbringen*, *töten/sterben*
- *da ist* for *es gibt*
- *nur* for *einzig*
- Confusion of *entspannt/entspannend/Entspannung*
- Wrong use of *süchtig* (*Computerspiele sind süchtig*)
- *gescheidet* for *geschieden*; *heiratet* for *verheiratet*; *winnen* for *gewinnen*.

Shortcomings in pronunciation rarely had a serious impact on comprehension. Students generally benefited from the fact that pronunciation is not assessed separately on the new mark scheme. Inaccurate *z* and *v* pronunciation, *ä* for long German *e* (*mähr, sähr*), missing *Umlaute* and badly formed diphthongs were common, but many students made a commendable effort at good and clear pronunciation.

Common errors included:

- *gescheiden; Schiedung*
- *Famili* (English)
- *Tecknologie/Tecknik*
- *Gothik* (with English *th*)
- *Gebaude*
- French rather than German pronunciation of *Image*.

Assessment Objective 4 Show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken

Outcomes for this Assessment Objective differed widely. Unfortunately, some able students missed out on a good score due to unsatisfactory teacher-conduct. As mentioned earlier, it is essential that examiners provide sufficient opportunities for students to show not only factual knowledge of German-speaking society and culture but also to demonstrate critical response to facts through a meaningful discussion. With cards A–F (Aspects of Society) it may appear harder to fulfil the AO4 criteria but examiners heard many students who presented pertinent facts about a German-speaking country which they had obtained from textbooks, internet sources or contacts with exchange partners, but also personal impressions and views gained during visits to a German-speaking country. In contrast, students could not achieve a good AO4 score if they only quoted a few numbers, eg about families in Germany, use of mobile phones among German teenagers etc, or if they simply declared the situation in Germany to be the same or very similar to that in Britain.

During discussions about cards G–L (Artistic culture) many students were keen to talk about cultural aspects in German-speaking countries and Berlin. Most could name and talk about an artist or an art movement, knew some renowned architecture and described popular festivals and traditions, *Weihnachtsmarkt* and *Oktoberfest* featuring most frequently. A large number of students regarded Question 3 on the card as a trigger to deliver a pre-learnt statement about the sub-theme regardless of whether this had any relevance to the question. Although some students demonstrated their ability to evaluate factual knowledge with opinions and conclusions many students in teacher-conducted tests could have achieved higher marks if they had been involved in a genuine discussion about their knowledge of cultural aspects.

Stimulus Cards

The choice of cards by students was fairly evenly spread with Cards D and H being particularly popular. Some students produced very long answers to the first question which often anticipated elements of the second. It is important that during their preparation time students concentrate not only on writing answers to the printed questions but also form some thoughts about other elements on the card in order to make most of the stimulus material.

Karte A: Scheidung in Österreich

Many students simply read out all the information on the card verbatim and, if this was not followed up with further questions from the teacher-examiner, real understanding of the issues could not be demonstrated. 'Mittlere Ehedauer' was not always understood and 9,6 was often rendered as 9 Punkt 6. Answers to Question 2 usually described consequences for families and children; very few responses mentioned possible effects on the society as a whole. The wider discussion of the sub-theme too often focused only on general points, eg most mothers going to work, same-sex marriage etc, without any clear AO4 reference. Visiting examiners found it hard to entice students into substantiating such general statements by quoting sources, examples or personal experiences relating to a German-speaking country.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Personal reaction to the statistics; reasons for arguments in a marriage; elements of a happy marriage; staying together for the sake of children; stress caused by divorce procedures.

Karte B: Ehe für alle?

Most students were able to explain the statistics in their own words but not many mentioned the organisation *Regenbogenfamilien* and what it supports. Question 3 mostly produced general statements without or with very brief reference to German-speaking society; some students presented a list of statistics on single households, cohabitating couples, patchwork families etc in Germany which unfortunately was hardly ever followed up and developed by teacher-examiners. Where a more detailed discussion about AO4 aspects took place students regularly mentioned *Mehrgenerationenhäuser* in Germany. Students who had been on an exchange visit often shared their impressions of family life in their host family.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Own reaction to the survey; reasons for rejecting gay marriage; date of the survey being two years in the past and potential different outcome today; whether gay marriage should automatically mean the right of adoption; the purpose of the organisation *Regenbogenfamilien*; reasons for Switzerland not having legalised gay marriage.

Karte C: Die Spieleparty des Jahres!

Students found this card accessible. However, few students quoted the dates in correct German and many read the three bullet points out without re-phrasing or developing them. Once again not enough teacher-examiners explored these elements through supplementary questions. Many students knew some facts, often in the form of statistics, about the popularity of mobile phones, internet, social media sites etc in German-speaking countries but unless they were pressed by (visiting) examiners to flesh out such facts and figures (eg Where did you read about it? What did

you observe during your visit? What does your pen-friend do? What do your friend's parents think?) AO4 aspects were all too often dealt with in just one or two sentences.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

English title of the trade fair; English as the dominant language in digital matters; opinion about the admission price; student's reaction to the large number of foreign visitors; why computer companies come to these events; suitability/attraction of the event for different age groups; reference to the people/the activities in the two pictures; possible problems during such an event.

Karte D: Der Einfluss des Internets auf junge Leute

This was a very popular card and easy to relate to for most students. There was a tendency to quote the content of the speech bubbles verbatim instead of rephrasing and interpreting them. Many students realised that one of the statements related to the second question. *Studie* was often pronounced as 'Study' and *Tabletten* was frequently used instead of *Tablets*. All students had a lot to say about the advantages and the dangers of the internet in general but the majority were much less prepared to talk about the subject from a German-speaking perspective. However, some students did offer relevant knowledge and/or personal observations regarding the role of digital technology in schools, homes or public life in Germany.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Possible reasons for carrying out such surveys; which of the statements the student most agrees with; why on-line learning materials are more interesting; the use of tablet computers in classroom as shown in one of the pictures; what type of free time activities can be planned with the internet; what is 'too much time'; advantages/disadvantages of accessing news on the internet.

Karte E: Schönheitsideale

This card produced mixed results. Not many students explained that it was about a survey among teenagers. A lot of long-winded quoting of percentages took place and a surprising number of students found it hard to rephrase the *ich*-statements in the table adequately. Able students used the complaints about appearance selectively often adding their own views. The differences between the genders were expressed and discussed successfully in many conversations. *Schönheitswahn* was not understood or was misinterpreted by a number of students leading to many irrelevant responses to Question 2; in such cases it was up to the examiner to pursue this point and provide another chance for an appropriate reaction. The role of celebrities could often have been discussed at greater length and pertinent AO4 knowledge could at this point have been elicited (e.g. popular clothes shops for German teenagers, fashion magazines, beauty vloggers, no uniforms in German schools). Unfortunately, too many discussions addressed only general ideas about fashion and appearance while a few teachers unnecessarily introduced 'music' or 'television' into the conversation.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Reasons for more self-criticism among girls; personal reaction/surprise at statements; experience from student's circle of friends; advice/help that could be given to unhappy teenagers; role of parents/school/internet; own view of what is 'perfect appearance'; personal admiration for celebrities; unnatural appearance of fashion models.

Karte F: „Das Sommerhaus der Stars“

This was a less popular card which produced moderately successful performances. Many students missed the point about this show featuring celebrities *and* couples rather than individual participants. The bullet points were often read out without interpretation. *Ständige Kameraüberwachung* was apparently not always fully understood and therefore ignored by many students; it was also not picked up for discussion by most teachers. Visiting examiners observed that most students had limited knowledge of television in German-speaking countries and its role among young people; even when pressed many could not name any German-language programme.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Possible reasons for featuring couples rather than individuals; whether rich celebrities should be paid money for this; effects on people of being permanently watched; motivation of people becoming participants in such shows; reasons for banning mobile phones; knowledge of any talent show on German-language television; why this format has become so popular worldwide.

Karte G: Eine Stadt spielt Mittelalter

This card contained a lot of information which most students made good use of. *Bayern* and *bayerisch* often caused pronunciation problems. Not many students mentioned the four year interval and the fact that citizens of Landshut were very involved as participants. Answers to Question 2 often repeated information given earlier rather than expressing students' own thoughts about the popularity of the festival. Most students knew of traditional festivals in German-speaking countries; *Weihnachten*, and *Karneval* featured most frequently but *Nikolaus*, *Hexenfest*, *1. Mai* and *Silvester* were also mentioned. Visiting examiners often enjoyed entertaining exchanges about festivals and traditions but many teacher-examiners allowed students to present a lot of facts on the sub-theme without engaging students in a discussion and testing their deeper understanding.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Personal opinion on the events during the festival; possible reason for the long duration of the festival; the town of Landshut as a suitable backdrop i.e. old houses, big castle; speculation on what medieval food/drink would be like; possible reason why it is only held every four years; possible problems for security; economic benefits for the town; relevance for young people.

Karte H: Dreimal Vatertag

This was one of the most frequently discussed cards and led to generally successful performances. Students usually gave a lot of information when answering the first question; some students were prepared to comment on the different kinds of celebrations while others read out the bullet points for each country. *Meist hoher Alkoholkonsum* was often misunderstood as 'highest consumption'. *Ausflüge* on German Father's Day was often thought to be trips for the whole family and few students explained in their own words what the *politische Dimension* and *Väter zwischen Beruf und Familie* meant. *Am sinnvollsten* in Question 2 was unknown to a high number of students but this did not necessarily cause a problem if examiners helped students towards a relevant response through re-phrasing or asking alternative questions. Responses to Question 3 and the ensuing discussions resembled those on Card G.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Reason for the term *Herrentag*; Father's Day merely an opportunity for commercial profit; suitable presents for fathers; possible types of father-child activities in Switzerland; the role of fathers today; possible reason for the recent introduction of Father's Day in Switzerland; reaction to the differences between the German-speaking countries.

Karte I: Ein architektonisches Meisterwerk

This card produced to a wide range of performances. Able students described the different styles of buildings on the card well and expressed their opinion on them but many students simply listed the names of the buildings without any further description. Explaining the age or length of *Ringstraße* was often difficult and very few students could say anything about the characteristics of Gothic, Baroque or Renaissance style. Question 3 frequently served as a trigger for students to talk about one architect they knew rather than the role of architecture. Discussions about architecture in general focused largely on Berlin. Students may have limited knowledge about architecture in other German-speaking towns or cities but discussing famous buildings in London, as happened in a few conversations, was an unnecessary deviation from the sub-theme.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Which building(s) on the card the student likes; which he/she would like to visit; the main differences between the architectural styles on the card; the need for a capital city to have grand buildings; value of splendid architecture for tourism; cost of maintaining historical buildings; modern working-environment inside historical buildings; grand architecture as a manifestation of social inequality.

Karte J: Straßenbilder

This was a popular card and generally handled well. There were problems with expressing the date in accurate German and some students thought that there were in fact six art festivals in Wilhelmshaven. Less able students read out the information about the event verbatim without showing real understanding but many students were able to express their opinions about street art, graffiti etc. Easy access to art for everyone during the festival and the attraction of observing painters at work were however points often overlooked. Responses to Question 3 frequently ignored the key words *Rolle* and *Städte* as most students immediately talked about a famous or their favourite painter(s). Students could have quite legitimately transferred some of their knowledge of *Berliner Kulturleben* (eg *Museumsinsel*) to form relevant answers but hardly any students mentioned art galleries in German-speaking cities, art in cathedrals and churches, public sculptures etc.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Greater attraction of street art for young people compared to art galleries; whether copying famous paintings is valid art; contributions from international artists; value of talking to artists personally; speculation about what happens in bad weather; the point of producing paintings that have a limited life span; whether there should be a competitive element during the festival.

Karte K: Berlin macht Musik

This was a popular card and most students who chose it related well to the material. Few, however, explained in their own words the more unusual characteristics of this music festival, ie venues throughout the city, only a few hours, involvement of amateurs etc. Question 2 was generally answered well as many students mentioned the relaxed atmosphere and the inclusivity of the event. When answering Question 3 students made frequent reference to the multi-cultural nature of Berlin, much less so to music and art in general. Many discussions in centre-conducted tests digressed too much into Berlin's history and students frequently offered a lot of pre-learnt material.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Speculation on different genres of music as gleaned from the pictures; reasons for the high number of venues throughout the city; financial cost; possible reason why the city holds this annual event; advantage of free admission; what amateur musicians can contribute; benefit of instrumental workshops for children; potential security problems.

Karte L: „Hinterm Horizont“ – das Berliner Musical

This card produced mixed results. Many students seemed to have a superficial understanding of the nature of the musical and the significance of the venue for its performance. While it was not necessary to know of Udo Lindenberg or to make reference to his music many students ignored *Potsdamer Platz* and *Mauer*; the list of themes was often read out without further explanation or development. Unfortunately, teacher-examiners rarely asked appropriate additional questions that could have enabled students to show a clearer understanding of the stimulus material. Responses to Question 3 often had limited relevance as many students talked exclusively about the history of Berlin as a divided and re-united city but paid little attention to the importance of this history in the city's cultural life.

Possible points for further exploitation of the stimulus card:

Link between the venue and the themes of the musical; meaning of the title; more detailed speculation about the plot; significance of the terms *Trennung*, *Ost-West-Beziehungen*, *über die Grenze hinweg*; happy or sad ending; attraction of the show to people of different ages; whether historical/political themes are suitable for entertainment.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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