

German

Course Code: GRM315114

Oral Assessment

This year examiners commented on the strong level of communication demonstrated by many of the candidates, with the majority seeming comfortable and confident in responding to examiners' questions. However, even a few of the strongest still seemed a little flummoxed when asked for their candidate number in German, with one even starting to offer their mobile number! It is important for teachers to encourage students to practise their candidate number in advance of the exam as this then provides a sense of security through a familiar initial question for students.

On the whole, responses demonstrated a very good range of vocabulary and there were many instances of students being confident in the use of different tenses and irregular verb forms, although the perennial problem of misuse of the auxiliary still regularly surfaces in sentences like *Ich habe nach Melbourne gegangen* instead of *ich bin nach Melbourne gegangen*. There are still a few common cases of misuse of "false friends" such as confusing *Student* and *Schüler* and *ich muss nicht* instead of *ich darf nicht* with the intended meaning of *I must not*. Other than these small problems, which, regardless of teachers' efforts will probably never go away, the general standard really was very impressive. There were many cases of self-correction and the occasional request for clarification of a question, which adds to the candidate's ability to communicate rather than detracting from it. Every candidate communicated a range of information and examiners were impressed with how much they felt they had learned from the student in the space of the ten-minute conversation.

Written Examination Paper

Part I – Listening

Markers felt the variety and degree of difficulty across all five passages was very fair this year and the consistency of responses suggested that students also found them quite approachable. It was also pleasing to see that the questions ranged in value from 1 to 4 marks giving all students a very good chance of success.

A few generic comments can be made regarding technique and the perennial difficulties that students face. Firstly, there still seems to be a problem for students identifying numbers such as 3, 13 and 30. It is highly likely that number will appear in any listening exam, so it is advisable for students to regularly practise those sets of numbers that cause problems. Secondly, despite have access to a dictionary, students are often still not getting common words that could have been looked up. If students know the German spelling conventions, they are able to jot down a word in German and then look it up during the short pause provided for writing answers after each reading. It seems that compound nouns are still a problem for students and so teachers are encouraged to do some language activities with students to help build their confidence in searching for components of compound nouns in the dictionary. Thirdly, the names of places in German-speaking regions will invariably feature in any listening exam. Rather than omit it from an answer because the place is not known to them, students are encouraged to have a go at writing the name, using German spelling conventions. In this year's listening exam several proper nouns, including **Dortmund**, **Dresden** and **Lübeck**, were part of the required answers and, as long as the answer offered was recognisable, the marks were duly awarded. Lastly, whilst a general representation of the information in the text is sufficient for a passing mark, the highest marks were reserved for those who included all the finer details in an answer, such as *often totally* confused, her *own* bike, not *really* expensive, *nearly* always nice, a *little bit of* butter, *totally* destroyed, and so on. Little words can make a big difference.

Question 1 - Spoken text 1

This passage was generally well answered, although half marks were often lost for missing out the finer details. Question (c) created some confusion with the occasional answer being written in German. It is important to remember that the instructions for the listening exam require answers in English, meaning that students needed to translate the movie title, which was not onerous and well within the ability range of German 3 students.

Answers:

- a) From her aunt (0.5) in Dortmund (0.5) as a Christmas(0.5) present(0.5)
- b) The film was a big (0.5) success (0.5) at the cinema(0.5) recently in Germany(0.5)
- c) Honey in the Head (1)
- d) In the film the grandfather/old man (0.5) has Alzheimer's.(0.5) He forgets important(0.5) things(0.5) and is often(0.5) totally confused(0.5). He says it feels like (0.5) he has honey in his head.(0.5)
- e) Tilda can't accept (0.5) the fact that her grandfather (0.5) has to go(0.5) into an aged care home (0.5)
- f) She takes her grandfather (0.5) on one last(0.5) trip(0.5) to Italy(0.5)

Question 2 - Spoken text 2

This text was well-answered with only the first question posing some difficulties, mostly because answers given were often too brief (finer details were missed out.) The word *Meisterschaft* seemed to elude many students.

Answers:

- a) The under 19(0.5) soccer(0.5) European(0.5) championship(0.5) semi-final game. // football fever (1)
- b) Germany (1)
- c) Germany (0.5) is in the final (0.5) and will play against Portugal(0.5) or Serbia(0.5).
- d) He is very (0.5) happy (0.5) with his team. They showed a strong game (1) and had good chances(1).

Question 3 - Spoken text 3

This was a more challenging text, although students were still able to score passing marks without too much trouble. *Ostsee* was seldom translated correctly (Baltic Sea); however, even if students literally translated the word as *East Sea*, they were still awarded a half mark. Words that frequently seemed to cause problems included *Taschenlampe*, *Zelt* and *Grenze*.

Answers:

- a) northern Germany (1) on the Baltic Sea (1) ('East Sea' was awarded 0.5 marks)) then in Hamburg (1)
- b) A bike tour (0.5) along the east coast(0.5) of Germany(0.5); from the Polish border(0.5) to the city of Lübeck(0.5). She cycled/rode (0.5) approx. 30 km(0.5) every day(0.5)
- c) Nearly (0.5)always nice(0.5). Sometimes (0.5)strong wind (0.5). Only once (0.5)there was a little rain.(0.5)
- d) How *the weather* would be (1)
- e) camping grounds (1)
- f) They would have had to(0.5) transport (1) so much luggage/things(0.5) such as tent, sleeping bag, a torch (3x0.5) on their bikes (0.5)
- g) Usually in cheap accommodation/ B&Bs guest houses (1) or in youth hostels(1).
- h) Her own (0.5) bike (0.5)
- i) It was really (0.5) nice(0.5), great (0.5) to have seen(0.5) so much, and it was not really (0.5) expensive (0.5).

Question 4 - Spoken text 4

Probably the most challenging text, it was nevertheless well handled by the majority of students. The most common difficulty seemed to be in conveying details about the demonstrators (in particular, that they were *moving through the city*). There were also a number of half marks available for adding in the finer details such as **several** cars, **about** 3000 demonstrators, **about** ten were burned, **most** were totally destroyed.

Answers:

- a) Several (0.5) cars (0.5) in Dresden *went up in flames* (1)
- b) The police (1)
- c) There were about 3000 – 4000 (0.5) demonstrators (0.5) moving through the city(1) and about(0.5) 250 people(0.5) in a counter-demonstration(1)

- d) The fire brigade (1)
- e) They were of different brands (0.5), about ten (0.5) were burned/burned out/torched (0.5) and most (0.5) were totally (0.5) destroyed (0.5)

Question 5 - Spoken text 5

This passage seemed deceptively simple, yet almost all students lost marks along the way, generally for a lack of attention to detail. It is worth noting that *eating dinner* is not the same as *cooking dinner*, nor is *in the evening* the same as *cooking dinner*. Markers were also perplexed at the number of times the German word *Butter* was translated by *flour* or even *sugar*!

Answers:

- a) While Hanna is *cooking dinner* (1)
- b) He would like to have/borrow (0.5) a little bit of butter (0.5)
- c) He will bring back (0.5) the butter (0.5) when he goes shopping (0.5) tomorrow (0.5)
- d) She is offering/giving (0.5) him a whole (0.5) piece/block (0.5) of butter as she has plenty (0.5)

Part 2 – Reading

Question 6

Students generally handled this passage well and, where marks were lost, it was usually because the finer details were overlooked. (e.g. a *little robot*, rather than *a robot*.)

Answers:

- a) A little (0.5), 60 centimetre high (0.5) robot (0.5) Nao (0.5) as language trainer (0.5) for refugee and migrant children (0.5 either detail was accepted.)
- b) a French (0.5) manufacturer(0.5)
- c) Through cameras (0.5) and microphones (0.5) it communicates (1) with its environment (1). It should guide (1) the children (0.5) through language exercises (0.5), and through that, recognise (0.5) their mood (0.5) and progress(0.5) and respond to these.(1)
- d) The kindergartens can't afford to teach (1) every child (0.5) a second language (0.5) individually, but this little robot Nao could do this.(1)
- e) He's convinced (1) that the children will learn (0.5) the second language(0.5), in their case German(0.5), quickly(0.5) from Nao/the robot (0.5) as the students were quite(0.5) excited(0.5) in yesterday's class (0.5). He is definitely excited too.(1)

Question 7

This passage proved a little more challenging for most students, perhaps because of the potential difficulty with the key word *Vorhängeschlösser*. Again, this is an example of the importance of students developing confidence with compound nouns. Words that caused occasional problems included *schwören* (often let out or misinterpreted), *abgelegen* (also often missed out), *einigen* (means *some*, not *a*), *Laterne* means *lamp/streetlight*, not *bridge*). *Selbst*, meant *even* in the context of the passage, and *Städten*, was often rendered as *states* when it actually meant *cities*.

Answers:

- a) It was originally planned for trains (1) and cars (1)
- b) It's known as the Love Bridge (1). Young couples (0.5) come and hang padlocks/locks (0.5) on it as a sign of their love (1)
- c) A young couple (0.5) walked onto the bridge (0.5) and fastened their personal padlock/lock, (0.5) engraved (0.5) with their names (0.5) and the date (0.5), onto the fence (0.5) in the middle (0.5). They kissed (0.5) each other before throwing the key (0.5) into the Rhine (0.5 – *into the river* was also accepted.). Together they watched (0.5) as the key sank into the water (0.5)
- d) He wrote a novel (0.5) in which a young couple (0.5) in love swear (0.5) eternal love (0.5), fasten a padlock (0.5) to a lantern (0.5) on a bridge (0.5) and throw the key into the river (0.5)

- e) The following ideas were accepted: There are over 40,000 padlocks on the one bridge/on the Hohenzollern Bridge (1). The custom has spread too many countries (1) and even to Tasmania, where locks can be seen on isolated/remote bridges (1). It has even been banned in some cities in Europe.(1) More locks are added to the Hohenzollern Bridge daily.(1)

Question 8

This passage posed a few problems for students when answering question (a) as there were two elements to Zoya's surprise: That Zoya's friends had seen wild pigs in the suburbs and that she herself has seen wild pigs. Some students only conveyed one or other of these ideas and lost marks as a consequence. Although the idea of the reading comprehension is to take the information from the text, question (b) did not actually stipulate this, so any generic answers (e.g. where a student indicated they were answering from personal experience) were also given credit, provided they fitted with the general concept presented in the passage. As the aim of this task was to test comprehension skills, no marks were deducted for grammar and spelling mistakes.

Answers:

- a) Answer in German, meaning: Her friends (0.5) had already seen wild pigs (0.5) in the area (0.5) but Zoya thought this was impossible / crazy / madness.(0.5) Returning home, she saw a group of 40 wild pigs/animals (0.5) in the middle of a street (0.5)in Berlin-Charlottenburg/the suburbs(0.5) about 3 a.m. /in the early hours of the morning(0.5). The animals were blocking(0.5) the road (0.5).
- b) Answer in German meaning any six of the following general ideas: No, it's not unusual to see wild animals in cities (1). For example, in Vienna there are ten times as many foxes per square meter as in the country areas of Austria (1). In Munich if you are waiting for a tram at a late hour, you are more likely to see a hedgehog than a person (1). There are about 5000 wild pigs living in Berlin (1). People talk of 1600 fox families and 180 types of birds in Berlin (1) Green spaces and gardens provide lots of living areas for animals (1). Many animals come into the suburbs because people feed them. (1). Wild animals living close to humans is not a new phenomenon (1).
- c) Answer in German meaning: She was too scared (0.5) to walk past the wild pigs (0.5), so she went back to her friend's /girlfriend's place (0.5) and slept there (0.5).
- d) Answer in German meaning the following ideas: The animals notice/remember places where they found food and go back there (1). Sometimes people feed them too (1). Note: if this second answer had already been used as an answer for question (b), it was not awarded another mark for question (d).
- e) Zoya hat etwas Unerwartetes gesehen (1)
- f) Laut diesem Artikel muss man vorsichtig sein, wenn Wildschweine junge Tiere haben (2)
- g) Früher waren nicht so viele große wilde Tiere in Städten zu finden (2)

Part 3 – Writing

Question	9	10	11	12	13
Number of candidates attempting the question	15	1	0	3	3

As can be seen from the table above, there was a distinct preference for question 9, which candidates no doubt considered safe and familiar. There were some excellent answers with confident use of past tense as the question required. Some inventive students also made suggestions for what the student and Michael could do the following summer, or even asked Michael what he would like to do. Whilst this requirement was not spelled out in the rubric, in the context of writing to a future exchange student, it was entirely appropriate and so did not disadvantage the candidates at all. In fact, in many cases, it gave the candidate opportunities to demonstrate an even wider range of tenses, structures and vocabulary, which is always to the candidate's benefit.

As both questions 10 and 11 were clearly unpopular with the candidates, it can only be assumed that they found them too difficult to negotiate quickly under exam conditions. Question 10 required candidates to write about the encounter with the tourists, but the risk with this question type of question was that candidates would write about what the visitors have already seen on their trip. Teachers are encouraged to remind their students to take a moment to decide *exactly what is being asked for* in an essay rubric. Question 11, not addressed at all, most probably deterred students because of the need for specific knowledge of a given person and the necessary

vocabulary to explain why they would be invited. This task would also require quite a lot of conditional structures in the introductory paragraph in particular, and this may have been the ultimate deterrent for candidates. Again, teachers are reminded to encourage students to focus on the language rather than the fact – an imaginary person could have been proposed and as long as the language is sound, the fact that the person is fictional is neither here nor there.

Both questions 12 and 13 garnered a very small number of responses and, in general, were well handled by candidates who were able to demonstrate a capacity for past tense constructions and a wide range of vocabulary. Occasionally the candidate's imagination got away from them and they stumbled due to a lack of certain structures of vocabulary, but in no case did this happen to such a degree that it impeded understanding as examiners marked for language accuracy rather than imagination. As with the general advice given regarding question 11, it is worth reminding students that their imaginations are often necessarily far more advanced than their language skills and so they should write to their language capacity rather than to the degree of imagination with which they might be comfortable in their first language.

The usual common difficulties appeared in most essays. It is impossible to list all the errors that occurred, so a list of the most common is given below, with the aim of giving teachers and students guidance to increase the accuracy of writing tasks in future exams.

- The overuse and underuse of commas seems to continue to plague some candidates' writing. Often the comma was omitted before *dass* or *weil* (er sagt, dass er mitmachen darf, weil er seine Hausaufgaben schon gemacht hat.) It is also being forgotten between verbs in relative clauses. (e.g. Wenn er nach Hause geht, muss er das Abendessen vorbereiten.) On the other hand, commas are being put in where they are *not* needed: For example, *Heute, habe ich....* does not need a comma.
- Examiners saw a few problems with subject-verb agreements (e.g. Er gehe nach Hause).
- As always, case endings caused quite a few candidates some difficulty, especially dative plural constructions.
- Numerous nouns were missing their capital letters and there were the usual spelling errors. In particular, there still seems to be a problem with students not being able to demonstrate the difference between *das* and *dass*.
- Word order, relative clauses, and by default, relative pronouns still seem to trip up quite a few candidates.

One final observation – many students are still writing in pencil, which is often very faint and so makes it hard for markers to read. Answers to all sections of the exam should be written in blue or black pen.