

GERMAN

Paper 8683/01

Speaking

General comments

There was a wide range of entry, mostly from centres with a small number of candidates, typically 2 or 3, as in the case of the German A level Syllabus 9717. The entry included candidates who had learned German at school, some who had a German-speaking parent and others who were themselves native German speakers. There were some interesting Topic Discussions and General Conversations whatever the candidates' backgrounds and the overall standard was encouragingly high.

Many Centres were obviously well aware of the requirements of the syllabus and conducted the tests well and marked them accurately. In a few cases there was a degree of optimism or generosity in the marking, but this was not a major problem.

The following aspects need to be addressed by some Centres in future years:

- Please adhere to the recommended 20-minute time limit for the examination. It does not provide any advantage to the candidate to exceed this, as some Centres did, sometimes greatly.
- Please ensure that the Presentation relates to a German speaking country, as the content mark can be halved if this is not the case. A candidate, especially perhaps a native German-speaker, should, therefore, not talk exclusively about the country where he or she happens to be living, but is obviously free to make some sort of comparison if desired.
- The candidate must ask at least two questions of the Examiner to seek information and his or her opinions in both the **Topic Conversation** and **General Conversation**. If this does not happen, even after a reminder, no marks can be awarded and a maximum of ten marks are, therefore, lost. If only one question is asked per section, the maximum mark each time is 3 out of 5.
- Please announce to the candidate quite clearly when the switch is to be made to **General Conversation** so that the two sections can be clearly distinguished.
- Please do not ask any questions during the Presentation, as the candidate is being judged on his or her ability to speak uninterrupted for about three minutes. Make a clear distinction between the Presentation and the Topic Conversation that follows.
- Please encourage thorough preparation of the Presentation, as this year there were one or two that sounded less convincing than usual.
- Individual Centre Reports will have highlighted any further problems.

There are no further comments on specific sections of the Speaking test.

GERMAN

Paper 8683/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

The level of difficulty of the Paper was similar overall to last year's. The subject matter, relating to various aspects of the decision whether to have children or not, was clearly considered accessible by most candidates, although this led some into occasional superficial answers based on assumptions not in the texts. There were again relatively few very weak candidates. In a pleasing number of cases the standard of German was very good.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 [*Erster Teil*]

Question 1

- (a) This was usually answered correctly.
- (b) This was usually answered correctly, although *persönliche* was added by a significant number. The addition was tolerated in this instance, as the two words were also used together in the text. However, it should be noted that *Selbstverwirklichung* on its own already includes this element.
- (c) This was usually answered correctly.
- (d) This was usually answered correctly.
- (e) This was usually answered correctly.

Question 2

This exercise was also done well generally.

- (a) Occasionally there was some confusion, leading to the retention of *man* in the passive.
- (b) Occasionally candidates tried to retain *gut verdienende* in their answer.
- (c) This was usually answered correctly. However, it should be noted that the omission of *von morgen* changes the focus, and is therefore incorrect.
- (d) This was usually answered correctly.
- (e) This was usually answered correctly.

Question 3

The language of the text was fairly approachable, and this may have led candidates to overlook the instruction *ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben*.

Where a candidate simply reproduces a section of the text by way of an answer, without manipulating it in any way, no marks can be awarded. Very few achieved 14 or 15 marks for this exercise, suggesting that most candidates would benefit from further practice in re-writing ideas in their own words, and in finding synonyms. Some answers were vague, or of a summary nature that did not attempt to interpret the text in depth, and there was occasional reliance on familiar cliché concepts that were not in the text.

- (a) Most candidates gained 3 of the 4 marks available here. Although the question centred on women, there were attempts to relate the issue to men, taking the line that men left their wives to run the household/family, and that this was unfair, etc. However, this was not an appropriate point in the context. There were five possible points to be made, the notion of *vereinbaren* being sometimes missed, and the implication of *es fehlt an Kinderbetreuung* not always fully understood.
- (b) Candidates had plenty of choice here, as there were a total of 8 possible valid points, and most candidates managed at least 3 of the 5 required. The notion behind *abstrakte Gemälde* was often missed, and the idea *weniger glücklich* often omitted. There was also comparatively little attempt to put the key elements of the sentence *Mit Kindern riskieren Paare einen finanziellen Abstieg* into the candidate's own words, such that marks for this point could not be credited.
- Some candidates unfortunately misread the question and missed the force of the conditional tense.
- (c) This was mostly done well.
- (d) Most candidates earned 2 of the 3 marks available here. Occasionally the idea of *sofort nach der Ausbildung* was given instead of *in den Zwanzigern*, but the former is not the point, nor necessarily the same thing. More frequently missed was the idea of *genug Zeit für Karriere* after bearing children.

Section 2 [Zweiter Teil]

Question 4

This exercise proved more difficult, and again candidates lost marks as a result of simply reproducing material from the text. The instruction *ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben* is given for both **Questions 3 and 4**. It is essential that candidates recognise the need to put keywords and concepts into their own words. A number of answers also ignored the specific *Absatz* guidance after each question, and included generalised points from elsewhere in the passage. At times the impression was given that candidates considered this second text easier than in fact it was.

- (a)(i) Most candidates gained 1 mark here. However, the second mark for *um sich um die (beiden) Kinder zu kümmern* was often lost, possibly because candidates did not read to the end of paragraph 2, and despite *Kinder* being part of the question.
- (ii) Most candidates earned the 2 marks for this question, although there was some tendency to focus on the idea of *nur Maria hatte einen Beruf*. The deduction that her life changed comparatively little was not often made.
- (b) Candidates found it difficult to interpret Maria's words, and many answers were superficial and imprecise. One mark, relating to the Kellers' financial hardship, was more often secured, but *Sozialhilfe* was frequently ignored, as was the reasoned desire for a second child. A number of answers focused generally and idealistically on money being less important than having children.
- (c) Most candidates gained the 2 marks here, but others lifted heavily from the vocabulary and syntax of the text.
- (d) *Wofür* was usually correctly answered, but the answers to *Warum* relied frequently on reproducing the keyword *fördern* without conveying understanding, and a synonym for *begabt* was rarely offered.
- (e) Candidates again lost marks here by reproducing the language of the text and not interpreting it. The *um Geld zu sparen* of the question has a different application from that of *sparen an* in the passage, and a number of candidates simply re-used the latter along with the keywords *Altersvorsorge* and *Eigenheim*, thus forfeiting 2 of the 3 marks available. One mark was more readily earned, however, with the appropriate interpretation *sie kaufen keinen Sportwagen*.

Question 5

The essence of this task is to summarise the two texts in candidates' own words, according to the angle of the question set. Both texts should be referred to, and consequently candidates should look to give an overview, ideally by means of points of contrast and comparison, in order to facilitate their task. The word limit of 140 encompasses both parts of the question. A number of candidates either made most of their points on text 1, leaving little room for significant comment on text 2, or their comments on both texts took up most of the words permitted, leaving no room for any effective attempt at a personal response/*Meinung*. A significant number of candidates wrote at great length without apparent regard for any word limit, and in such cases risked forfeiting the marks available for the 'personal response' part of their answer, because they left this too late. It should be noted that the marking of this exercise ceases at the end of the sentence after 140 words, with a final cut-off at 150 words. In general, 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 this year, and many candidates were able to earn around seven of the ten marks available for this summary part of the question. Some answers here were again generalised and rather vague, however.

Most candidates addressed the question in two distinct parts, but the second - 'personal response' - part sometimes lacked substance and reasoning. Some responses did not go beyond a first emotional level. Marks of two and three out of the potential five were common. The most able candidates sought to express their own views within the summary, as this has the evident merit of avoiding repetition (and of conserving words). However, where personal views are offered within the summary, it must be made clear these are personal views, and not assumptions that the text(s) may not support.

Language

The remaining five marks in **Question 5** are for the quality of the language, and for most candidates these were broadly comparable with those awarded for **Questions 3 and 4**. Many candidates wrote fluently, if not always equally accurately, and the confusion of *dass* and *das* was disappointingly frequent. Punctuation was also rather unreliable, making syntax sometimes clumsy and difficult to follow. In particular, the requirement in German for commas between clauses was sometimes overlooked.

GERMAN LANGUAGE AND GERMAN

Paper 8683/03

Essay

General comments

All questions were attempted. By far the most popular question with candidates was **Question 2** *Gesundheit und Fitness*, attempted by nearly half the candidates. **Questions 1, 4 and 5** each drew roughly an equal number of the remainder of the candidates, with a small number only attempting **Question 3**.

As observed in last year's report, there were a number of candidates who appeared to be native speakers of the language. The nature of the errors these candidates make remains much the same. There was incidence of some poor spelling (*Vortschritt*, various versions of *Jugendliche* and *nähmlich* amongst the most frequent). Punctuation (a general disregard for the proper use of the comma, in particular), little regard for the proper use of upper and lower case letters (*Rauchen* as noun and *rauchen* as verb seemed interchangeable to the vast majority of candidates), and the usual problems with *das/dass* were the most prevalent errors amongst this group of candidates. A number of essays also suffered from a rather superficial treatment of the question from a number of the candidates.

Of the non-native speaker candidates there were a good number who showed excellent command of the grammar and syntax of the language, as well as good topic specific vocabulary and an ability to produce a reasoned argument, looking at various aspects of the question before coming to a conclusion. Inevitably, there were once again a number of candidates whose limitations in expressing themselves in German made it hard for them to produce a coherent essay.

Observations on the quality of language under the first two question headings are intended as a guide to the typical errors candidates make and are not exclusive to these questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Inwiefern ist der Zusammenbruch der traditionellen Familie für soziale Probleme in unserer heutigen Gesellschaft verantwortlich?

The candidates who attempted this question were generally clear on concepts such as family structure and various problems in society but less successful in explaining to what extent family breakdown was the cause of social ills.

Some candidates continue to be uncertain about key genders and plurals, adjectival endings, use of cases, use of the correct preposition (+wrong gender/case) and word order. Some typical examples: *die Probleme* used as singular, *das Grund*, *der Leben*, *ein wichtiger sozialen Problem*, *hilft die Leute*, *im Arbeit*, *am Haus*, *Einfluss zu/vor*, *für viele Gründe*.

Question 2

Was kann man machen, damit junge Leute mit dem Rauchen gar nicht erst anfangen?

As noted above, this was the most popular question this year. The majority of candidates were quite clear on the dangers of smoking and there was evidence of good topic specific vocabulary. A number of candidates gave statistical information, though the figures cited varied widely from candidate to candidate. Though all candidates sought to offer some solutions in response to the question a good number tended to lack breadth and detail.

The adjectival noun *Jugendliche* did not cause the majority of candidates the problems that *der Einzelne* caused in **Question 5**, other than with the spelling mentioned above. Some candidates seemed to be using *die Jungen* as a synonym for *junge Leute* or *Jugendliche*. Other spelling problems arose with *Zigarette(n)* and *Nikotin*. A number of candidates were using *mehr* + adjective instead of the comparative adjective. There was further evidence of confusion between different parts of speech in *die meisten/meistens*, *man/Mann*, *das/dass*, *bevor/vorher*, *wegen/weil*. There was also evidence of some problems with distinguishing transitive and intransitive verbs, particularly in 'raise/rise' (e.g. *die Preise steigen* for *die Preise erhöhen*).

Question 3

„Man muss sich in Deutschland einfach an hohe Arbeitslosenquoten gewöhnen.“ Denken Sie das auch?

The small number of candidates who answered this question appeared, in general, to be aware of recent developments in Germany, but the essays lacked sufficient concrete detail to support the arguments put forward.

Question 4

Wie ist Terrorismus auf der Welt überhaupt zu bekämpfen?

This question produced a number of engaged and well argued essays, though a small number of candidates did seem to be struggling for something to say.

Question 5

„Der Einzelne allein kann nur sehr wenig zum Schutz der Umwelt beitragen.“ Wie stellen Sie sich zu dieser Meinung?

The candidates who answered this question were generally able to put forward strong arguments for what an individual can do and to see the global picture. A number of candidates lacked breadth and depth of argument, producing generalised essays on particular problems of pollution.