



A-LEVEL GERMAN

Paper 3 Speaking
Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The new A-level Speaking test was well received by students, teachers and examiners. The Individual Research Project (IRP) provided students with the opportunity to research and to discuss topics that were of personal interest to them. The majority of students were well prepared for both parts of the test, and examiners of both T and V routes encountered many stimulating conversations. The IRP in particular enabled students to discuss their chosen topic with enthusiasm and conviction.

Administration

Visiting examiners reported very few problems regarding arrangements at centres. Examination rooms were usually large enough to enable the students to carry out their 5 minute preparation on a separate desk; chaperones were provided when necessary.

Recordings

Teachers who conduct their own tests are reminded of the importance of following all instructions regarding administration. This includes:

- Full announcement at the start of each test observing the prescribed wording in the *Instructions for the conduct of A level examinations*, which can be found in Secure Key Materials.
- CD insert/USB label showing the order of tests, the stimulus card used with each student and the teacher-examiner's name
- Correct labelling of tracks showing component, centre and candidate numbers
- Recordings saved in mp3 format
- Checking volume levels for both student and teacher.

Paperwork

Most centres provided the necessary paperwork for the IRP topic. In a few cases Candidate Record Forms (CRF) were not sent to examiners of the T option causing some delay in marking while the forms were obtained.

When completing the CRF it is important that:

- Both student and teacher sign it
- The IRP title and all headings are in English
- Sources including websites are clearly identified
- Both options studied for Paper 2 are named on the form
- Hand-written forms are legible

Additional Answer Sheets with students' notes for Part 1 should not be submitted with the media but should be retained securely by the centre until Results' Day when they should be destroyed confidentially.

In the case of visiting examiner tests, it is useful if spaces 3-8 on the CRF have headings rather than being left blank, so that the visiting examiner has an indication of the scope of the discussion.

Preparation time

At A-level the students have a great deal to do within the allowed 5 minute preparation time (reading the 2 cards, choosing which to answer, preparing responses to the printed questions and preparing 2 questions to ask the examiner) and so teachers are encouraged to ensure that students have plenty of opportunity throughout the course to practise preparing effectively under timed conditions.

It is worth making students aware that lack of specific knowledge of an aspect of a topic covered in a stimulus card should not prevent them from choosing that card.

Part 1: Discussion of Sub-theme – Stimulus Card

During their 5 minutes preparation time students were expected to absorb the information on the card, to form their own ideas about it and to think about two questions to ask the examiner. Visiting examiners reported that most students used the short preparation time well and were able to participate fully in the discussion of the stimulus material. The majority of students understood the material on the stimulus cards well and gained good AO1 and AO2 marks by reacting appropriately and promptly to questions about the content of the card. Many students also demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the wider sub-theme in relation to a German-speaking country. Students had to ask two questions connected to the card material. The majority of students were able to formulate two meaningful, relevant and sometimes imaginative questions. Some had obviously been trained to ask their questions at an early point in the discussion; others were prompted by the examiner to do so. Students are reminded that their questions must have a conjugated verb and must not be a repeat of one of the printed questions or of a question asked by the examiner.

Teacher-examiner conduct

Unfortunately, in many centre-conducted tests students were deprived of opportunities to achieve high AO1, AO2 or AO4 marks because of unsatisfactory conduct by the teacher-examiner. The main issues were:

- Failure to discuss the content of the stimulus card in detail. Many teachers asked the printed questions in quick succession without following up the student's responses or exploring important elements on the card through additional questions between the printed ones. This reduced students' chances to demonstrate good understanding of the stimulus; students who simply gave a summary of the card content or read out verbal information on the card without further discussion could not be awarded high AO2 marks. It is also important that teacher-examiners enable students to rectify any misinterpretation of the card content through additional questions.
- Failure to develop students' responses. In order to have access to high AO1 marks students must show the ability to react appropriately to unpredictable elements. Examiners should therefore follow up student responses and encourage students to develop answers regularly in order to elicit spontaneous reactions from the student. In many centres, students were allowed to deliver lengthy prepared answers without any further response from the teacher, thus denying them the chance to demonstrate independence and spontaneity. Some teacher-examiners asked standard or rehearsed questions on the sub-theme leading to wholly or partly pre-learnt responses for which high AO1 marks could not be given.

- Insufficient opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of German-speaking society or culture (AO4). Marks for AO4 can only be achieved through questions and answers that explicitly refer to a German-speaking country. This is made clear in the [Your questions answered](#) booklet:

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.*

In the wider sub-theme discussion, many teacher-examiners asked too many questions about general and personal aspects linked to the sub-theme; this was particularly the case with Cards A, B and C. In order to maximise chances to show AO4 knowledge it is advisable to refer to a German-speaking country even before the third printed question is asked. Many teacher-examiners introduced the last question on the card rather late and thus left little time for an appraisal of the sub-theme in a German-speaking context. For higher AO4 marks students must be given opportunities to evaluate factual knowledge, to express views and to justify conclusions with relevant evidence. In their questioning, many teachers focused too heavily on eliciting facts and too little on seeking critical and analytical responses.

- Failure to prompt the student's questions in time. In a very few tests both teacher and student forgot about the student's questions altogether; sometimes, however, one or both questions from the student could not be credited because they were asked after the maximum time of 6 minutes had elapsed. The AO2 mark has to be capped at 4 if a student asks only one question, and at 3 if they do not ask a question at all; there is no point in the teacher eliciting the missing question(s) in hindsight after the end of the IRP discussion.

Teachers are reminded that students should not be given stimulus cards which overlap with the student's Research Topic. If during the IRP discussion the student repeats information or views from the first part of the test this material cannot be credited for the IRP discussion.

As in previous years, many teachers used *du* and *Sie* alternately, occasionally within one question. It is not obligatory to address students with *Sie* if they are used to *du* from the classroom. Teachers should therefore feel free to follow their usual practice; the questions on the cards can and should be adapted.

Karte A: Familienformen

The prescribed sequence meant that this card was frequently discussed. Many students made valuable contributions about the different types of families and interpreted the two statistics well. Many gave convincing reasons why couples are childless, but some students misinterpreted the statistical information about single parents as meaning that 10% of fathers and 90% of mothers were single parents. *Alleinerziehende* was often pronounced badly. Visiting examiners found that there was good AO4 knowledge about this topic among students, for instance about the low birth rate in German-speaking countries, legalisation of same-sex marriage in Germany, childcare provision in Germany for working parents etc. However, many students of the teacher-conducted option missed out on higher AO4 marks because their teacher did not elicit sufficient German-specific information and instead asked general and personal questions about the family.

Karte B: Lernhilfen aus dem Netz

This was not a frequently chosen card and often tempted students to read out the information verbatim without further interpretation. The bullet-pointed features in the box could often have been discussed in more detail; for instance very few students commented on *Werbung* or why short animated clips may be helpful to young learners. Very few teacher-conducted discussions explored German-specific aspects of digital technology in great detail, but some students talked about a German friend's use of the internet, computers in German schools or the popularity of YouTube stars among young Germans.

Karte C: Eine Rockband mit Geschichte

This card was done reasonably well and proved to be a good discriminator. Less able students struggled to absorb the diverse pieces of information; the fact that the group had suffered under GDR censorship was missed by many. Those students who understood all the elements on the stimulus spoke well about the group's career before and after reunification and how their lyrics link the two phases. Lack of specific reference to the German-speaking music scene prevented higher AO4 marks in many teacher-conducted tests. Some students quoted the names of German-speaking musicians but few evaluated their importance. However, if prompted by the examiner, many students had an opinion about the long-standing dominance of English and the current re-emergence of German as the language favoured by some artists and groups.

Karte D: Tag der deutschen Einheit: Das große Fest in Schwarz-Rot-Gold

This was a frequently discussed card and on the whole produced good performances. Most students had some knowledge about the *Wende* and reunification, but some teachers engaged students in lengthy exchanges about life in the GDR and problems after reunification (*Ostalgie*) rather than staying close to the card's content and the sub-theme. Very few teachers explored the card more closely, for instance by asking about the planned activities for 2018 or seeking the student's view of the slogan *Zusammen sind wir Deutschland*. Wider discussions focused on AO4 related facts and, while most students were keen to show their knowledge of various festivals and traditions in the German-speaking world, most prominently *Oktoberfest* and *Karneval / Fasching*, some were also able to express critical opinions and to respond to challenges about the modern relevance of such festivals or problems surrounding the events.

Karte E: Das Nolde Museum – mehr als ein Museum

Very few students chose this card and it is therefore not possible to give detailed feedback on how successfully it was dealt with. Students are advised to choose a card like this only if they have good knowledge and personal appreciation of artists from the German-speaking world.

Karte F: Ein Festival für Theaterfreunde

This was also not frequently chosen. Students who had personal interest in the theatre made valid contributions about the different types of theatre productions and the various events listed in the box, eg the attraction of Open Air theatre, the popularity of Public Viewing etc. Again, in many teacher-conducted tests, there was not enough exploration of these aspects. Responses to the third question varied widely; while some students had some knowledge about theatres, the cabaret, music venues and different genres of music in Berlin, others could offer very little. Frequently, the conversation digressed immediately into historical aspects of Berlin, citing the East Side Gallery, Checkpoint Charlie Museum etc.

Karte G: „Politisch Verfolgte genießen Asylrecht.“

This was a fairly popular card and produced some good performances. Many students had obviously learnt about the background to the refugee crisis in Germany; some students talked lucidly about the information on the card and gave good reasons why Germany is an attractive country for asylum-seekers. Even so, very few students seemed to have insight into the significance of *Asylrecht* in relation to the German constitution. Some less able students read out the points in the box without clear understanding and often with faulty pronunciation. In most teacher-conducted discussions the problem of young unaccompanied refugees or the controversial issue of *Familiennachzug* was ignored in favour of discussing matters of integrating refugees. Many wider discussions also deviated from the actual sub-theme of immigration into aspects of integration and racism.

Karte H: Integration durch Sport

This was the most frequently chosen card, partly due to the prescribed sequence. The detailed information on the stimulus tempted many less able students to read everything out in one go, even if they had not fully understood some of the vocabulary. Students are advised not to lift words and phrases from cards if their meaning is not clear to them as poor pronunciation can lead to diminished comprehension. This sub-theme had obviously been covered extensively in classroom teaching, and many students had a lot to say about the integration of immigrants in Germany; unfortunately many teacher-examiners deprived their students of higher AO2 marks by not discussing pertinent elements on the stimulus card in more depth. Language courses were often mentioned exclusively as the means to successful integration, and AO4 marks were frequently lost by teachers concentrating on general aspects of integration rather than seeking explicit information about Germany, Austria or Switzerland. As with Card G, many teachers digressed from the sub-theme and largely discussed racism.

Karte I: Rock von rechts

Several students chose this card, but only few had a clear idea of extreme right attitudes within the rock music scene. Many found it difficult to interpret the stimulus material appropriately and to express meaningful opinions as to the banning of right-wing concerts. Skilful guidance through the stimulus content by the examiner resulted in some students gaining good AO2 scores, but in many cases the card remained under-exploited. The majority of students had knowledge of populist groups such as *Pegida* or *AfD* and expressed negative views on them. However, all too often teacher-conducted discussions drifted into general issues concerning immigration and racism without a clear and continuous focus on German-speaking countries.

Karte J: Marsch für Europa

Few students chose this card, but it discriminated well between able and less able students. Many students missed or ignored the actual reason for the march: *60.Jahrestag seit der Gründung der EU*; very few students appreciated the fact that this was a *pro-Europe* demonstration and the symbolic destruction of a wall at the *Brandenburger Tor* was rarely mentioned. The discussion about the sub-theme was often limited to Germany's attitude towards refugees; few students were able to talk about Germany's wider role within the EU.

Karte K: Politik JA, Parteien NEIN

This card was also not discussed often. It was generally chosen by confident students who were interested in political matters and could interpret the statistics well. Unfortunately, teacher-examiners missed several opportunities to take elements on the card as starting points for interesting and spontaneous discussions: boycotting goods, demonstrating against nuclear power or participating in initiatives for asylum seekers would all have been possible avenues for discussion. AO4 knowledge about young peoples' attitudes to politics in German-speaking countries was limited; while some students knew about the outcome of the German general elections in 2017, very little reference was made to relevant, sub-theme related issues like voting turnout, youth sections in the main political parties, the debate about lowering the voting age etc.

Karte L: Deutschland – vereint und doch geteilt?

This was a popular card and was generally handled well. Some students explained and interpreted the statistical figures, eg. *im Westen verdienen die Menschen im Durchschnitt 900 Euro mehr als im Osten; die Arbeitslosenquote ist im Osten fast doppelt so hoch* etc; but many others spent a considerable time reading every single number on the table. When asked about reasons for the differences between East and West, many students offered valid ideas, but once again some teachers denied their students the opportunities to exploit the information on the stimulus in more depth. Generally, students had fairly wide knowledge about life in the GDR before and after the *Wende*, although quite a few simplistic arguments and generalisations were expressed. Many sub-theme discussions in teacher-conducted tests over-emphasised factual knowledge without sufficient attempts to evaluate events before and after re-unification.

Part 2: Individual Research Project**Titles**

There was a wide variety of topics, ranging from current political and social issues in German-speaking countries to industry, sports, philosophy, literature and many other areas of culture. Clearly, the majority of students had genuine personal interest in the subject of their research, and many participated successfully in the discussion. Most topics and titles on the CRF were appropriate and in compliance with the requirements of the specification, but there were exceptions. The main reasons for unsuitable topics were:

- There was no explicit link to a German-speaking country (e.g. How can we defeat terrorism?)
- The scope was too broad (e.g. Germany before and after 1871)
- The title specifically included comparison with British society

A number of titles while being appropriate were rather general and lacking in definition, e.g. *The German parliament; VW; Film in Berlin*. Well worded titles indicated the scope and main direction of the student's research and suggested an analytical approach which is essential for a successful outcome. For example:

- 'To what extent was reunification economically and socially beneficial to Germany as a whole?'
- 'Are Berlin's most popular tourist destinations intrinsically linked to its history?'
- 'Kafka: to what extent did his personal life impact upon his novels?'

Popular subjects for IRPs were: the German car industry; the refugee crisis; Angela Merkel; German football; right extreme groups in Germany; energy policy in Germany. Quite a few students chose Brexit and its impact on Germany, but examiners reported that it was often difficult to keep the focus on German rather than EU matters. Unusual topics included: *Der Ampelmann*; women in concentration camps; vegan diet in Germany; historical monuments and memorials.

Two main sources had to be listed on the CRF and the great majority of sources were websites. Examiners observed that many students had relied on Wikipedia as their main source and that many listed websites were in English rather than in German. When researching and preparing for a German language test it seems logical and sensible to use mainly material in the target language. Students are reminded that the title of online sources must appear in full, not in generic form like ‘the internet’, ‘Bundestag website’ etc.

Centres are reminded that there is an IRP Adviser for German allocated to each centre who can be contacted at any time outside the 5-week window when tests are conducted, with regard to queries relating to the IRP and the appropriateness of titles. Centres are advised to contact the IRP adviser to seek approval of their titles. For contact details of the IRP adviser, centres should contact mfl@aqg.org.uk.

Presentation

Students had a maximum of two minutes to present key findings. Teacher-examiners should not lose valuable time during the transition from Part 1 to Part 2; they should invite the student briefly to start with the presentation. In a few centres the teacher wasted time through a long-winded introduction and reading out the topic title in full.

Many students succeeded in giving a meaningful and well-structured overview of their research within the time limit. Over-long presentations should be interrupted by the examiner so as to ensure enough time is available for the discussion. Marking examiners are instructed to time the test as a whole without re-setting the stop-watch and to stop marking at 18 minutes.

A few presentations were very short and lacking in substance; some students wasted time by giving lengthy general introductions (e.g. historical background, general definitions) or explanations as to the reasons for choosing the topic. Good presentations provided a broad but clear overview of the topic without being either too vague or listing too many unconnected factual details. Some less able students appeared to have lifted entire passages from source material which contained sophisticated language that was beyond their grasp; as a result poor pronunciation and unreliable memorisation often reduced immediate comprehension. Presentations could also not score highly if students only announced what aspects they had researched without actually presenting any findings.

IRP discussion

The discussion should be based on the presentation and on sub-headings the student listed on the CRF. It is not necessary to cover all the sub-headings during the time available; doing so can lead to a superficial discussion, especially if the student has listed the maximum of eight items. It is good practice for teacher-examiners to probe more deeply into particular aspects rather than trying to ‘tick them off’ by asking one or two questions on each. Furthermore, it is essential that the teacher-examiner involves the student in a real exchange by following up answers and developing points; most importantly, teacher-examiners must enable students to evaluate facts, to explain and justify arguments and to draw relevant conclusions. Examiners of teacher-conducted tests reported

that in some centres teachers regarded the headings on the CRF as a blueprint for their line of questioning; instead of an in-depth discussion of the topic they performed a ‘question and answer session’, going through the headings in quick succession without requiring even able students to develop points spontaneously or to demonstrate the analytical qualities that are prominent on the mark scheme for AO4. In a number of centres students were allowed to produce a series of pre-learnt mini-presentations, each triggered by a question from what seemed a pre-set list. Students of all levels of ability were served badly by such methods of examining, which adversely affected AO1 and AO4.

AO4: The majority of students had carried out wide-ranging research resulting in thorough knowledge of facts. Less able students tended to convey mainly factual information, but many students demonstrated in-depth understanding of their subject and expressed and justified thoughtful views. Many students could, however, have referred more regularly to source materials as evidence to support their arguments. As mentioned earlier, teacher-examiners frequently tended to ask too many factual questions without using them as starting points for more detailed analysis and personal evaluation; this would have allowed higher AO4 marks to be awarded. Teachers also need to be careful to make the IRP discussion reflect the actual topic title and to stay close to the German-speaking world; there were numerous cases where the conversation focused too much on aspects that had little to do with the remit of the topic. For instance:

- Topic: Grimm’s’ fairy tales; discussion of Disney films
- Topic: Sustainable fashion in Germany; discussion of general and world-wide issues of sustainability
- Topic: Effects of Brexit on the German economy; discussion of EU-wide issues
- Topic: Extent of Germany still being a divided country; discussion of life in the GDR without sufficient reference to the present.

AO3: The quality of grammatical performance and pronunciation varied; very few students regularly failed to convey their ideas because of linguistic shortcomings or wrong pronunciation. There were some excellent performances where students demonstrated thorough awareness and tight control of grammar using sophisticated vocabulary and structures as well as appropriate idiom. The majority of students achieved marks in the Level 3 or above.

Pronunciation and intonation were often affected when students delivered pre-learnt monologues. Surprisingly, many students mispronounced words that were central to their IRP discussion, eg *Psychologie*, *Asyl*, *Euro*, *Reichstag*, *Karriere*, *Albert Speer* (as ‘spear’). Abbreviations and acronyms were sometimes pronounced with English letters, eg *DDR*, *EU*, *AfD*, *JS Bach*. Other common errors with pronunciation and stress were: *Berlin* as *Börlinn*, *Umgebung*, *Monate*; *Kirche* as *Körche* or *Körsche*, *deutschsprachige Länder*, *Gebaude*, *für/vor*, *st/sp* not pronounced as *sht/shp*; *Maßnahme* with short *a* before *ß*; English pronunciation of cognates eg *Idee*, *System*, *Moment*, *Musik*, *Studie*, *Symbol*, *adoptiv*.

Common grammatical errors included:

- Conjugation of modal verbs (*wir kann/wir magen* etc)
- Use of *mehr* with comparatives
- Wrong use of *nach* and *zu*
- Confusion of conjugations *als* and *wenn*
- Verb *wissen*: *ich wisse*, *man wisst*, *habe gewissen*
- Word order after *und/aber/weil*: *und gibt es*, *weil es gibt*
- Past participles and auxiliary verbs: *ich habe besuchen/bekommt/ich habe gegeht*

- Confusion of possessives *sein* and *ihr*

Some students peppered their statements with idiomatic phrases which sound artificial and/or inappropriate in an oral context and often indicated that what followed was largely pre-learned. Indiscriminate use of phrases such as *Es lässt sich nicht leugnen / es ist nicht von der Hand zu weisen / ich stehe auf dem Standpunkt / bin der festen Überzeugung* do not lend more weight to an argument than saying *ich glaube / meine / bin der Ansicht / bin überzeugt* etc.

Common vocabulary errors included:

- *jeder / jemand*
- *Mann / Mensch*
- *eigene / einige / einzige*
- *nur* as an adjective: *die nur Partei*
- *erstens / zuerst*
- *meinen / bedeuten*
- *kennen / wissen*
- *Geld spenden/verbringen*
- *in meiner Meinung*
- Use of *zustimmen/übereinstimmen* eg *ich stimme Sie zu*

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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