

External Assessment Report 2013 – German Higher

Overall Performance

The examination was considered to be a very fair test of candidates' ability and the pass mark was restored to 50%, with an A being 70% and an upper A 85%.

It was felt that most candidates had been well prepared and that, in general, candidates responded well to all elements of the paper. In light of detailed advice given in the 2012 External Assessment Report, it was encouraging to find that the standard of translation was better in 2013.

Reading and Translation

- Candidates coped particularly well with the opening question in this paper about household chores. Likewise, candidates coped well with familiar vocabulary in other questions (**2(a), 2(c), 3(a), 4(a)(ii), 6(a)(i) and 6(a)(ii)**).
- Candidates frequently lost marks due to a lack of attention to detail in their answers. At question 1(b) '*a paddling pool and sandpit*' does not satisfy the success criteria for an answer at this level; the key information was that the sandpit was **inside a wooden hut**.
- In some cases, it was felt that the pressure of controlled exam conditions caused candidates to provide absent-minded answers. A case in point would be question 2(c) which asks "Once lunch is over, what **exactly** does Joshua do?" Usually, at the end of a meal, one does not **empty** the dishwasher, one **loads** it; yet a significant percentage of candidates made this error.
- The omission of "auch" in the translation unit "*Das kann natürlich auch nerven*" caused many candidates to lose marks.
- It was felt that "*Es ist Leben im Haus*" was difficult to render in good English but many candidates were able to gain 1 mark for this section.

Listening

- Highly successful questions in this paper were 2(a), 4(a), 5, 7 and 8. These constituted 7 of the 20 marks available. The opening question was also quite well done, with the result that many candidates were able to achieve 9 marks without complications.
- It was felt that the concept in question 3(b), rather than the difficulty of German, proved challenging for many candidates (*ich musste mit den Kindern ausziehen* — she had to move out with the children).
- In the final question, "*ich habe ein Jobangebot bekommen*" and "*mich bei ihnen melden, wenn ich ein Praktikum oder einen Job suche*" proved challenging although these expressions are considered to be within the experience of a Higher candidate.

Writing

- 2013 candidates paid more attention to the detailed bullet points in the Directed Writing with the result that fewer lost marks for failing to address necessary detail.

- The Personal Response task was addressed very successfully by almost all candidates.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Reading comprehension

- Candidates should understand that to be successful in reading at this level they will need to respond in detail;
- A suggested approach to the reading paper is as follows;
 - At the start of the exam, candidates read the whole text through without recourse to a dictionary;
 - Then, they focus on the first section of the text about which questions have been set, and read that section again, still ignoring the dictionary;
 - Finally they should focus on the wording of the question, as that will almost certainly be a translation of part of the text. This will lead them to the answer. (Examples of this in 2013 are: Question 1(a): Laundry = *Wäscherei*; Question 2(a): Before lunch = *Vor dem Mittagessen*; Question 3(a): the 'voucher' = *der 'Gutschein'*; Question 4(a)(i): in the next few weeks = *in den kommenden Wochen*);
 - Often, if an unglossaried and obscure German word appears in the text it will be translated in the question. Centres should train candidates to identify that word and locate it in the text. The required answer should become clearer.

Translation

- Detailed guidance was provided on this exercise in the 2012 report; centres and candidates are recommended to re-read this advice;
- Centres should remind candidates to **use English word order** in the translation. Candidates should understand that if a sentence reads unnaturally, it is unlikely to be awarded 2 marks;
- Candidates must check that they have translated every word expressed in the sentence. In 2013, some candidates lost marks by omitting *meistens* and *sehr*;
- Candidates should be dissuaded from offering alternatives;
- Candidates should understand that success in translation lies in rendering the sense unit skilfully in English. It is a matter of primacy that candidates read over their responses to check for sense in English.

Listening

- Centres should encourage candidates to use the two minutes before the interview is first played to read questions carefully and make use of these as a means of anticipating the sort of information they will need to extract;
- Centres should train candidates to focus on the question words. This directs them to the information they are going to have to provide. By the time the CD is started, candidates should be prepared for what they are about to hear;
- In the two minutes between recordings candidates can write answers about which they are confident. They should then focus on the questions about which they are less sure. During

the second playing, candidates should concentrate fully on the key responses and write down what they think is being said – **there is nothing wrong with writing down the German word for personal reference and working out later what it means;**

- Centres should train candidates to score out information – including German words and rough notes - that they wish the marker to disregard;
- Finally, it is important that candidates read over their answers and resist the urge to change any of these without very good reason.

Directed Writing

- Candidates should make sure that they devote 40 minutes to this task, 10 minutes of which should be used for reading over the response;
- It is helpful to write 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3, 4, 5, 6 in the left hand margin to make sure that all bullet points have been covered and, in the case of the first two, both parts of them. This also provides both the candidate and the marker with a clear picture of the balance of the response;
- Candidates should be able to relate the content of their response to the context they are set. For instance, if it is about Christmas, then reference might be made to December issues like cold temperatures and Christmas shopping. An Easter scenario might refer to spring activities and so on;
- This is especially true in the final bullet point. In 2013 this was '*what you would recommend about being in Germany just before Christmas*'. A pre-learned response about the people being friendly and welcoming **does not answer the task**. Centres should avoid reinforcing this approach. Reference to the Christmas markets, the cold temperatures, the winter activities, however, would be relevant in this context.
- Strong candidates should be aiming to show a mastery of complex sentences, which is so often the difference between 12 and 15 marks. In this task, successful candidates will demonstrate their skills in applying German grammar rules rather than an ability to learn paragraphs and reproduce these in an examination. There will always be at least one unexpected task, and candidates with a sound knowledge of grammar will be better equipped to cope with this.

Personal Response;

- Centres should spend time discussing with candidates the link between the subject matter of personal response and the listening paper. They should investigate together ways in which some of the ideas expressed in the interview can be re-used in the personal response;
- It is still helpful to remind candidates they should give a short response (120 to 150 words) and there is, therefore, no place for redundant material. It is not a past tense task and there is no place for anecdotes about e.g. past holidays;
- Structure is important, both to the reader and for the writer. Candidates should be well prepared to write in paragraphs;
- This task often refers to *Vorteile und Nachteile*, advantages and disadvantages. It is important for candidates to be clear in their mind that these are both plural nouns; and that they are in fact masculine nouns — *der Vorteil, der Nachteil*.