

May 2014 subject reports

German B

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 12	13 - 24	25 - 42	43 - 56	57 - 70	71 - 84	85 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 12	13 - 25	26 - 40	41 - 55	56 - 69	70 - 84	85 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 26	27 - 30

General Comments

- This year, the submission deadline for the IA was a Bank Holiday in the UK, which combined with the proximity to the Easter holidays, led to a number of late uploads.
- Teachers are reminded that the source for the photograph in the individual oral must be given.
- When submitting marks for the individual oral, teachers were generally too strict on the

language mark, and too lenient on content.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range of work submitted was wide and varied, and on the whole suitable. There were several comments from moderators that the quality of images, captions and conduct of the oral had improved considerably from last year (which was the first assessment of the new format). Having said that, there were a number of images that left very little space for comment, and also some captions that were not really captions but lengthy paragraphs with detailed guiding questions. In one case a teacher had simply photocopied a page from a text book. Teachers are also reminded not to use cartoons with text bubbles - the reference to visual text in the guide refers to the image itself.

Candidate performance against each criterion.

Criterion A - most candidates at HL were able to speak clearly and fluently, often using quite sophisticated vocabulary. There was little hesitation, and although grammar was not always flawless, it was on the whole a pleasure to listen to these orals.

Criterion B - as always there was a range of performance under this criterion; some students stayed on the descriptive and factual level, but many developed the image as a starting point into complex and interesting discussions. Not all teachers interacted in a way that allowed these complex ideas to emerge; some led too much, interviewing the candidate rather than allowing a conversation to develop - this was particularly upsetting with some stronger candidates who were repeatedly interrupted and stopped in their thoughts. With most candidates the conversation flowed coherently and naturally.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

This is a task that should be practised thoroughly. There are a number of guidelines readily available in teaching materials on how to describe an image in detail, and this should happen in class at regular intervals. Although the assessment criteria do not refer to the image in detail, it does show that the candidate is genuinely able to develop ideas if it is described in a detailed and thoughtful way.

It is important that teachers make students aware of what a 'complex idea' is. Both students and teachers should read and reread the guidelines carefully. Teachers are reminded that there is no Part 3 to this component any longer that allows general questions.

Further comments

- In some cases the acoustics of the room were very bad, and occasionally there were loud school bells which interrupted the conversation.
- Teachers are reminded that it is very important to ensure that students are appropriately placed in the correct subject within the language acquisition group, to ensure fairness for

all students.

- Rehearsed presentations were rare this year at HL, but nevertheless teachers are reminded only to use unseen photos in the oral examination.

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 26	27 - 30

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

It is pleasing to note that the overwhelming majority of schools, teachers and candidates appear to have come to terms with the procedures and format in relation to the revised IA oral. There were very few, for example, who retained vestiges of the old “part 3” general conversation. (Those who did so seemed to be using this as a concluding brief phase to the topic discussion, which teachers are reminded is not necessary.)

The following remarks in this section focus on aspects which were dealt with less successfully by a minority of schools, to ensure that improvements are made in time for the next session. These improvements are very important as this is a component of the course where the candidates are particularly dependent on the effectiveness of factors beyond their control.

Photo selection is still an issue for some teachers. Thankfully, there were very few examples of computer-generated or photoshopped images, or of photo collages, although there are still teachers who select rather abstract, symbolic or static images which offer little opportunity for meaningful description.

There is no specific stipulation as to how much detail the candidate should give about the photo, however, candidates should begin by describing the photo and relating it to one of the core themes. Better candidates should be able to use the image as a springboard into a more analytical exposition of the topic at the presentation stage.

The caption provided with the photo can also help to point the candidate away from the concrete image towards a more analytical approach. This year there were rather a lot of examples where the caption was either missing completely or not successfully uploaded with the photo. Again, exploitation of the caption is not specifically assessed, but it is intended to

be a way of focussing the candidate on analysis rather than description, and therefore candidates not supplied with a caption are disadvantaged.

Good captions provoke discussion and enable analysis and wider interpretation. There were numerous examples of such well-chosen captions, often employing the “A or B?” approach or simply posing a brief but provocative question. However, there were also many examples of captions which offered little scope for exploitation – and it was then hardly surprising that these were then rarely referred to by the candidates in their presentations. A good caption will lead the candidate into more complex ideas (important in relation to Criterion B), whereas it would be more difficult to achieve with an image of leisure activities and the caption “Heute Sport morgen Musik” for example. The caption can also be a useful way of bridging the gap between the presentation and the discussion phase.

Two formal issues in relation to captions: teachers should remember that while the same photo may be used with up to 5 candidates the caption should be different for each candidate; and the caption should not explicitly state the topic – candidates should be allowed to interpret the photo and caption themselves and infer the topic from what they see. In relation to this latter point, given the overlapping nature of the option topics, both with each other and with the core topics, it is often useful at some point early in the presentation for candidates to refer to which option/aspect it is that they are discussing. Sometimes this was not clear.

The photo and/or caption should enable some connection to be made with German-speaking culture/society. Of course the topic under discussion can and often will be more generally/globally relevant, but surely it is hardly expecting too much of candidates to include reference to the culture and society of the language they are studying at some point in their presentation. There were this year hardly any photos where such a relationship could not be established, but some candidates still succeeded in avoiding all references to any country where German is spoken. There were some unusual connections, most notably an image of Rotkäppchen with the wolf leading to a presentation on the environment and Waldsterben. This necessitated a feat of mental agility on the part of the moderator to determine the link.

The guidelines on timing state that the presentation should be 3-4 minutes, followed by a discussion of 5-6 minutes. The vast majority of schools adhered to this, but there are still some who extend parts of the oral considerably beyond these guidelines. In one case there was a presentation of over 7 minutes, followed by only three minutes of discussion. As a result, there was very little time for interaction, which is an essential aspect of the assessment of Criterion B. Several presentations were 5-6 minutes long, and there were also isolated examples of presentations under two minutes. While a short presentation can be understandable with weaker candidates, there is no reason to allow a presentation to extend beyond 4 minutes, and the teacher should gently intervene to initiate the discussion phase. Similarly, allowing a discussion to go beyond 6 minutes is rarely beneficial for the candidate.

Teachers are reminded to ensure that they follow the instructions for conduct of the oral examination, and to interrupt the candidates if necessary to bring an end to the presentation aspect.

Teachers are again reminded to use the 2/BIA to comment on reasons for the mark awarded, and not to use the form for comments relating to a candidate’s state of health or mind, or

performance prior to the oral.

As stated above, these initial remarks focus on the few, not the majority, but they focus on aspects which have a considerable impact on candidate performance, and it is therefore imperative that schools should observe the guidelines as closely as possible.

Range and suitability of work submitted

The majority of work was appropriate to the prescribed format, with suitable photos, captions, presentations and discussions. The format appears clearly accessible to all, with a little planning.

There were a wide range of topics, most of which were relevant to Option topics, and only very occasionally did teachers select photos/topics which were clearly Core topics. Although the degree of topic overlap is great, it is hard to see where economic globalisation and problems of migrant workers fit in with the options. The number of photos and presentations related to traditional favourites such as Karneval and the Berlin Wall was refreshingly lower than in the previous year. Indeed, teachers should perhaps be encouraged to avoid these, as they often resulted in presentations which were too factual and simplistic. When the discussion continues in a similar vein it becomes necessary to remind teachers that an encyclopaedic knowledge of historical dates and facts does not constitute the expression of complex ideas, as required for the higher mark bands in Criterion B. Similarly, a photo of a carnival procession with a caption “Straßenkarneval in Köln” scarcely invites analytical exploitation. While holidays and festivals clearly provide good opportunities for comparative discussion, too often such topics focus on facts. The discussion phase should not be a test of recall of factual knowledge, and teachers should encourage a more natural exchange to develop, rather than a quiz eliciting long knowledge-based answers. Furthermore, candidates would do well to avoid a presentation giving a series of historical facts, as this tends to create the impression that the presentation has been prepared and learnt in advance.

By far the most popular topic was Leisure, in its many aspects. This is often a good topic for less proficient candidates, allowing easy access to personal experience, although the more able often had problems making the discussion complex enough. Again, the choice of photo and caption can be decisive – it is difficult for any candidate to introduce complexity into an image of water polo with a caption “Wasserball – Trendsport”.

Health-related topics were also popular. Again, this usually provides opportunities to relate to personal experience, and is good for expressing and defending opinions. Other topics frequently met included favourites such as the internet and alternative energy sources. Here the only danger is that the presentation becomes a rather generalised recycling of the topic as studied in lessons, without a clearly specific focus, and often with little attempt to make globally-relevant issues related specifically to German society/culture. There were few this year which followed more unusual paths; apart from Red Riding Hood (see above), mention could be made in this context of presentations covering the “Opernball” in Vienna and “Rapmusik in der Kirche”.

As last year, most candidates described the photo in greater or lesser detail and then

proceeded to widen their presentation to address the topic related to the photo. This is good practice, particularly as it then allows the discussion phase to pick up on points made and widen the subject still further, thus also allowing greater depth and complexity of ideas. Some candidates, however, restricted themselves to a basic factual description of the image in front of them (even if clearly capable of more). They therefore cannot easily score well with regard to complexity of ideas. As noted above, consideration needs to be given to this aspect when selecting photos for the oral.

Many discussion phases developed organically out of the presentation, picking up on aspects touched on by the candidate, or using the caption as a starting point for a deeper analysis of the subject matter. The best discussions were characterised by probing questions and comments from the teacher which elicited clearly personal opinions and responses, while at the same time retaining a fairly relaxed tone in keeping with what can pass as a natural conversation in the unnatural context of an examination. Such discussions showed the teacher was prepared to adapt his/her role to respond to the candidate and to tailor questions accordingly. The assessment of Criterion B focuses on this part of the oral, particularly with regard to the candidate's ability to interact and maintain a conversation, and candidates are not served well by teachers who interrogate, who treat the discussion as a quiz, who pose the same list of questions to all candidates, or who offer a series of either/or alternatives in questions. Unfortunately, there were several examples of each of these scenarios.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A) Schools are reminded that Language B SL does not aim for perfection. Many candidates were able to attain the upper reaches of the mark bands (7+) by keeping their language reasonably straightforward, clear and accurate. Clearly, it is advisable to be able to show a command of the basics of German grammar, with conjugated verbs, an awareness of word order, gender and endings, and recognizable tense formations, though this should not be at the expense of seeking to communicate and maintaining a flow. The teacher should not interrupt to correct language errors.

Presentations were on the whole less rehearsed than has been the case in the past, although those candidates who chose to give a series of facts tended to fall into a rather flat intonation characteristic of delivering pre-learnt information. Another common failing is to deliver the presentation at breakneck speed. A rushed presentation invariably leads to swallowed words, stumbling and an impaired overall performance. Candidates should practise the skill of presenting to avoid this, and learn to build in natural pauses.

B) The upper end of the mark range in Criterion B (7+) requires good interaction and complex ideas. The latter often depend partly on the topic, but also on the style of questioning and interaction adopted by the teacher (see above). It is also rarely possible to achieve the former with "Q & A" sessions in the discussion phase, as also noted above. Candidates need to remember that in the discussion phase they should aim where possible to extend their answers beyond the factual and descriptive to the discursive and analytical, but all too often candidate performance in this respect is very dependent on the teacher's role.

Some teachers allow candidates to produce long responses to their prompts and questions.

This may well demonstrate the candidate’s capacity to manipulate the language and use a wide range of vocabulary, but it does little to show an ability to interact in a conversation. It is better for the teacher to intervene and pick up on a point made, even if only briefly, rather than to let the candidate talk, often for a minute or more. In particular, the teacher should intervene to curtail longer answers when the candidate is clearly beginning to flounder. The aim is, as already mentioned, to conduct as natural a conversation as possible in the context of an exam. The best discussions maintain the interest of the listener to the end and can truly be described as a coherent and flowing conversation.

Other approaches adopted by a small number of teachers which do little to help the candidates include talking themselves at great length on and around the topic (one teacher spoke for over two minutes after a presentation before finally posing a question), feeding answers to the candidates by offering alternative answers to their own questions, excessively feeding key vocabulary, and interrupting in order to correct the language or even to “correct” a factual statement. These should all be avoided.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Many key recommendations are contained in the preceding sections. It should go without saying that there should be plenty of practice in class of the oral format during the course, and that candidates should be trained to respond to a photo/caption directly and then developing their presentation out of this organically as much as possible. They should also be reminded to endeavour to relate their presentation to Germanic society/culture where possible.

Of course, weaker candidates can and should keep closer to the actual photo as something to hang their ideas on. It is better to show what you know than what you don’t know. More able candidates, however, need to be reminded of the need to progress beyond the descriptive, particularly if aiming for marks at the upper end of Criterion B, where candidates are expected to show evidence of the ability to express complex ideas. However, this does not necessarily mean using complex language structures, and simple but accurate is often the best policy.

Finally, it would be useful to teach candidates strategies such as paraphrasing to avoid them having to search too long for vocabulary or resort to mother tongue. Always bear in mind that the oral is an opportunity to show what you know, and disguise what you don’t know.

Higher level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

There were approximately 1100 candidates in the M14 session and only very few schools had problems with using the correct cover sheet or with meeting the deadline.

As there will be a new format and procedure for the M15 session, information for teachers and examiner training on OCC and in workshops will be of vital importance.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The majority of candidates came up with creative and ingenious pieces of work which were a pleasure to read and it would be most unfair not to mention this. It always is exciting for examiners to see many different approaches to a text and to see how much planning and thought goes into the production of a well thought out and creative task.

There was no significant problem with extending or undercutting the word limits. The predominant number of literary texts used were written in prose, only very few candidates used a play or poem for the task.

The variety of texts used was wide and similar to last year: works by Dürrenmatt, Frisch and Schlink were again at the top of the list, short stories are also very popular. Some texts, however, proved too much of a challenge: literature of the 18th or 19th century is often (and quite rightly so) beyond the reach of B HL candidates (eg. Lessing, Goethe), as frequently are texts by Kafka.

On the opposite end of the range there are texts that have little literary merit or are at a language proficiency level of an Easy Reader, which is not really appropriate for B HL either.

Very few schools committed the error by choosing a text not written in the target language (Die Welle, Great Gatsby). This does not comply with the Language B Guide and must be avoided in future. A few tasks contained rather strong and inappropriate language due to the fact that the original text was written in the same style. It is difficult to see much educational merit in choosing such a text.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A. Language: A wide range of language skills was in evidence, the majority of candidates have very good, even excellent language proficiency, both in vocabulary and grammar. Many students were able to express quite sophisticated ideas with confidence and fluency. There is a relatively small group of very weak students for whom SL would have been more appropriate.

B. Content: Most students showed good understanding of the text and were able to rework an aspect of the text creatively. Weaker students often just focused on the plot and retold the story or summarized the text, thus scoring low in this criterion. Sometimes the choice of text

was unfortunate or teacher guidance was amiss or clearly too evident.

C. Format: Conventions appropriate to the text type were always discernible. The text type of diary and letter dominated. Diary as a text type appears to be straightforward but it still looks odd when an adult writes the heading „Liebes Tagebuch“ – it is permissible not to do it like this but keep to all other diary conventions. Quite a few students opted for an alternative ending and it must be pointed out that this is a task that is not at all easy as only too often it does not harmonize with the original text. The text is then used as a “springboard” only.

D. Rationale: Many students had problems to include all the information required, especially title and author of the text used were often missing. Maybe students thought that the cover sheet included this information already and therefore was superfluous for the rationale. This is not so, a complete rationale needs to address all aspects as set out in the Language B Guide.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

First priority must be the suitability of texts studied within the course. This clearly is the responsibility of the teacher/team. Then teacher guidance/feedback once the process of WA writing has begun, is decisive. Admittedly, with large teaching groups this may need foresight and more organization than with small classes with only a few students. Schools with many candidates need to be very careful that candidates do not duplicate tasks. The doubling up of texts with the same text type should not happen and basing more than 12 WAs on the same text should not occur. Allocating tasks to individual candidates must not be done either, this clearly overreaches teacher guidance.

- The choice of other text types than diary, letter, interview or alternative ending should be encouraged.
- Work on organization of thoughts and transition between paragraphs is important, the reader should be able to easily follow the thought process, even if the language may not be excellent.
- Indicating quotes adequately needs to be addressed and practiced more.
- Rationale writing still needs special attention as the language used is different to writing a creative task.

Further comments

The WA is meant to be a creative piece of work and the candidates take full responsibility for the outcome. Nevertheless, teacher guidance is of great importance: the role of the teacher in regard to text choice and then choice of task cannot be stressed enough. Teachers set the framework and from then on just give feedback once.

The new format of the WA (first examined M15) needs detailed study of the IB Language B Guide as there are subtle differences to the current WA format.

Standard level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 22	23 - 25

General Comments

Overall it was encouraging to see that after some initial problems in the first year of this component the majority of schools have now gained a clearer understanding of the requirements of the Written Assignment. There were far fewer issues with individual schools requiring follow-up, and the number and nature of source text issues was also considerably reduced. A significant proportion of the work submitted reached a relatively high standard, and overall standards in this component continue to compare favourably with standards in other areas of assessment.

Where teachers had studied the Guide and other support materials thoroughly, including possibly last year's Subject Report, the result was some excellent pieces of work based on well-chosen source materials. Where there were weaknesses, as with last year this often lay either in a less than ideal selection of source texts, or in a response itself which was too vaguely defined in terms of aim and audience.

Many of the comments made in last year's report remain generally valid for this session, although it should be remembered when reading this report that the procedures and the assessment criteria for the Written Assignment will be different in May 2015.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The vast majority of candidates made a reasonable to good attempt at the task overall, as long as they were furnished with carefully selected source material which was interesting and appropriate. Areas of weakness lay primarily in command of the language and in a clear statement of the aim(s) of the piece of writing. As with last year, certain text types were particularly problematic in this respect: above all articles and speeches need a clear context, audience and purpose, otherwise they quickly descend into a thinly disguised essay, although this comment can also apply to correspondence and to blogs.

Assignments were submitted across a very wide variety of topics, illustrating how wide-ranging the teaching of these core themes is across schools. Apart from occasional texts with a focus on aspects of health (an Option topic), there were few which failed to observe the

stipulation that the Written Assignment should be based on the Core topics. The most popular areas were the environment, migrants and the internet, although even within these topic areas the variety of aspects covered was quite wide. Indeed, while these and other overarching topic areas will by their nature be quite general, it was noticeable that better responses were elicited from candidates when they were presented with source texts which dealt with specific concrete details and aspects, rather than general overviews. They were more able to find an aim and a perspective based on specific sources, while generalised sources tended to elicit generalised – and thus often vague – responses.

There were some refreshingly individualistic topics, including German cinema, the debate around the *Nationalpark Schwarzwald*, and *Straßenkinder*. Equally, there were some idiosyncratic choices which were less appropriate, such as Goebbels' propaganda machine (Core: Communication/Media?), international software litigation (Core: Global Issues?) and the morning after pill (Core: Social Relationships?).

Overall, the selection of source materials was better than in 2013, with texts of a suitable length and complexity, linked to each other and thus easily integrated in the candidates' own work. Most candidates were able to use the source texts to produce pieces of work to reflect their ability, and the more able showed good levels of creativity in their responses. Where topics or sources were dry and complex candidates rarely produced good work. To quote one examiner, they were occasionally "outrageously disadvantaged" by the source materials given, and it is difficult not to have sympathy with one candidate who noted with some exasperation in the Rationale that they found it difficult to integrate the 3 disparate source texts which had been provided. Thankfully, there were few instances in this session of source texts being taken from textbooks (they should be "previously unseen"), although one school did use three such texts, all from the same book, and another used an IB Paper 1 examination text, which is equally inappropriate.

As noted last year, the role of the teacher is vitally important in relation to the source texts, and it will continue to be so under the new procedures from 2015, where the teacher will have the responsibility of advising on the suitability of source materials selected by the candidates themselves.

Candidate Performance against each Criterion

Criterion A – Language

In this Criterion the work ranged from excellent to barely comprehensible, although most candidates achieved at least half marks, often by keeping their language simple but sufficiently clear and accurate. There is nothing in the assessment criteria about a requirement for complex structures, although stronger candidates displayed a clear desire to stretch themselves linguistically, even where this resulted in some errors. Perfection is not expected at Standard Level, and the ability to manipulate language from the sources and incorporate a range of vocabulary into an ambitious piece of writing will be rewarded under this Criterion. To achieve half marks, a command of basic structures is essential at this level. Weaker responses were characterised by shaky verb forms, word order and pronouns in particular, along with little awareness of gender, case and adjective endings. Such

candidates often also copied entire passages from the source texts – which of course cannot be credited – and often made little attempt to integrate such extracts into their own writing. Other common failings lay in choice of words and expressions, where Anglicisms were often at fault, and in inconsistent choices of register. Proofreading and checking work before submission may seem a chore, but it is essential, and with a methodical approach many basic errors as listed above can be eradicated.

It should also be remembered that use of a dictionary is permitted, and is indeed a useful tool for checking grammar as well as vocabulary, but this needs to be used with care. This word of caution will apply even more so under the new procedures from next year, where there will be unlimited access to all reference materials, including on the internet. Schools should be aware that from 2015 to reflect this there is no difference in the Language assessment criteria mark bands at SL and HL for the Written Assignment. The assessment criteria from 2015 are all significantly different and should be studied carefully.

Criterion B – Content

Criterion B assesses both the fulfilment of the aims (as stated in the Rationale) and the use of the sources. The skill lies in achieving both aspects, and many candidates did indeed produce a well-written assignment integrating aspects from 2 or 3 sources in a well-organised response which gave a new perspective to the subject matter. Stronger candidates were able to adapt ideas from the sources and engage with their chosen audience, especially where they chose to write correspondence or blogs. A considerable number, however, clearly had good ideas in relation to the topic and their aims, often incorporating external background knowledge from lessons, but failing to integrate the sources adequately. The result was often an interesting interpretation which neglected the sources or where the sources were largely irrelevant. This is taking “springboarding” a step too far.

Weaker candidates often relied on summaries of the sources with no clear indication of aim, audience or perspective. When this summary was then a linear reflection of the three texts, rather than at least attempting to integrate the ideas contained in them, there was no discernible purpose to the piece of work. Even a summary can at least be made relevant to the chosen audience – although how you do this in a school newspaper article based on texts about the German economy in the 1920s was a considerable challenge for one candidate.

If the content remains too generalised (again at times a result of generalised source texts), then the piece of work can quickly degenerate into an essay. Concrete examples are useful here, and in some cases candidates failed to use concrete examples given in the source texts and remained on a more general abstract level.

Many assignments dealt with global issues. In many but not all cases these were given a perspective/slant which drew some relationship with German-speaking societies and cultures. While it is perfectly acceptable to write about the problems faced by migrant workers, for example, it was disappointing to see this dealt with in one school in relation to source texts about Mexicans in the USA. The candidate faced with source materials about the relationship between China and Japan understandably found it impossible to give the work a German perspective.

Candidates should remember that it is inappropriate to make direct reference to source texts in their work. Writing in an email “*In Text A habe ich gelesen, dass ...*” shows a lack of awareness of the context: the imagined reader does not have access to or knowledge of the source texts, and the ideas need to be integrated more indirectly.

One consistent weakness with regard to Criterion B lay in the absence of a clear and specific aim, as stated in the Rationale. Criterion B assesses the extent to which the aim is achieved, and from 2015 this aspect will have increased importance with the Rationale and Task being assessed together in the new criteria, while the organisation and development of ideas will be assessed discretely from 2015. Again, teachers and candidates are advised to study the new criteria closely.

Criterion C – Format

“Format” is the brief label for Criterion C, and includes wherever appropriate observation of the key conventions associated with the chosen text type. However, it needs to be viewed more widely to include style, register, tone, rhetorical devices where used, to further the purpose of the piece of writing.

Candidates submitted examples of almost all text types listed in the Guide (even including one example of a short story), although by far the most popular were again articles, blogs, interviews and the various forms of correspondence. The choice of format was generally successful as long as the candidate set the writing in a specific context. Interviews were particularly successful in this respect. In contrast, many who chose to write an article failed to identify the context or the readership, or to give their article a specific purpose. The danger with this and several other formats is that the response quickly degenerates into a poorly disguised essay. It is not sufficient to say in the Rationale that the text type is a blog, and then simply to write a heading “*Blog*” – it needs to look and read like a blog as well. Several pieces of work adopted the conventions of a particular text type at the beginning and end, but remained formless in the main body of the text – again, this was a characteristic of weaker candidates writing summaries or disguised essays. Some specifically chose the text type “*Essay*”, which is a perfectly acceptable if perhaps rather lazy option, particularly when the essay itself seems to lack any clear purpose. In a few isolated cases the format was neither specified in the rationale nor clear in itself, which has an effect across the assessment criteria.

This aspect of the Written Assignment was nevertheless generally handled better than last year, and schools have clearly taken comments in previous reports on board. Below are some comments specific to some of the more common text types, which should be read in conjunction with the comments in previous Written Assignment Reports. Schools should meanwhile note that assessment of the format is subsumed into the wider assessment of accomplishment of the assignment in the new criteria applicable from next year.

Letter/Email:

Almost without exception, maintaining the conventions of letters and emails was unproblematic, but many had problems with the appropriate register (e.g. *du/Sie*) and style. A poorly conceived letter or email can quickly degenerate into an essay. In this session, for example, a grandmother emailed her granddaughter to lecture her on the excess of plastic

and the effects on the environment, and it seems a little incongruous to write a letter to a friend debating the arguments for and against cloning, complete with concluding paragraph stating the writer's own opinion. Perhaps surprisingly, letters written in more formal contexts were on the whole more successful than those designated informal and personal.

Blog:

There were some imaginative and effective representations of a blog, often with a personalised, reflective, and emotional response to the source material. Some even included comments from readers and remembered to present multiple entries in reverse chronological order to reflect how it would appear online. However, there were also several examples of blogs which were little more than a disguised essay with a heading "*Blog*".

Speech/Presentation:

When the audience and purpose were clearly defined, this relatively popular format was well done, but candidates often failed to specify why they were giving a speech, or where, or to whom, and at times the speech descended into vague generalisations. The audience should be addressed at intervals throughout, and it is vital to have a perspective and purpose more specific than simply "*zu informieren*".

Article:

The article was a very popular choice, but rarely done well. Where candidates merely stated they were writing "an article", with no specified target audience and no clear aims or context, the assignment often quickly degenerated into what was essentially an essay. In some cases there was even an absence of key conventions associated with articles.

Interview:

This was one of the most popular formats and generally well-executed, as long as the candidate remembered to include a short introduction setting the scene, outlining the circumstances, and relating to the audience.

Criterion D – Rationale

This aspect of the Written Assignment was dealt with much better than in May 2013, with most candidates clearly stating their aims, perspective and audience, explaining their choice of text type, and giving a clear link to the source texts. Where there were weaknesses, these were largely in relation to the statement of the aim. It is very weak and imprecise to declare the aim to be “*um das Publikum zu informieren*” or even “*zu engagieren*”, and while this may apply on a general level when addressing a wider audience, it needs to be made more specific when the readership is an individual, as is the case with an informal letter or email to a friend. Some even stated this was the aim with a diary entry, clearly not mindful of the ‘readership’ of a written internal monologue. Where the Rationale was at best ambiguous in its statement of the aims, this had an effect on the assessment of Criterion B, which includes how well the candidate has achieved the aim.

In a small number of schools the candidates had clearly been given a template for writing the Rationale, which is in no way in keeping with the nature of the task. This is immediately apparent when all candidates include sentences such as “*Ich glaube meinen Standpunkt am Besten in Form eines darstellen zu können*”, or when five candidates writing different text types all use the reason “*weil ich mit [Textsorte] am effektivsten überreden kann*”. In the latter case, they cannot all be right!

The Rationale will increase in significance, scope and length from 2015, when it will be assessed in more direct relationship to the actual piece of writing, and again the advice is to study the new assessment criteria carefully.

Recommendations for the Teaching of Future Candidates

As has been noted repeatedly above, there are changes to the procedures and assessment from 2015 which schools need to take account of. Nevertheless, the core aspects of the Written Assignment remain fundamentally the same, and students should still be taught the importance of

- a clear rationale with clear and precise aims and audience – which is then carried forward into the actual piece of work
- choosing a format with which they are comfortable, but one which is appropriate to the task and the aims
- remembering that a text type has certain conventions but also often needs a particular style
- making the format and the style compatible (e.g. not an academic essay in a blog)
- ensuring that register and style remain appropriate and consistent throughout the piece of

work

- allowing time at the end to read through and check the final draft, and using reference tools effectively in this time, as well as in the planning and writing phases.

Above all, however, the teacher should be aware of the importance of his/her role in advising the student appropriately at all stages of the task up to and including the writing of the initial draft. This includes close monitoring and guidance with regard to the choice of source texts and their exploitation, as this has been shown to be key to successful completion of the task. Previous guidance on the selection of source texts, as given in last year's Reports, remains valid.

Recommendations in Relation to IB Procedures and Instructions

While procedures will be different from 2015, meaning that some paperwork issues will not arise in future, schools will still need to ensure that all relevant documentation is correctly submitted. Examples of incomplete cover sheets and poorly collated work are not uncommon.

Otherwise, it remains simply to repeat the advice to be particularly vigilant in overseeing the selection of sources and in developing an understanding of the revised assessment criteria.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 23	24 - 31	32 - 39	40 - 47	48 - 60

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates.

There were 1131 candidates in the M14 session. The range of language proficiency and examination skills covered the whole range. As Paper1 was not an "easy" paper, many candidates were challenged and weaker candidates, who may have been better advised to choose BSL instead of BHL, found some of the tasks beyond their scope.

Text A was for many a serious hurdle.

(Please see point 4.)

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared.

Most candidates managed to complete the paper.

Most candidates did well in text B and texts C, D and E had "pockets" of correct answers.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions.

Text A

This definitely was the most difficult text and weaker students sometimes scored 0 points or guessed one or two answers. Very good students struggled as well.

- Qs2 - 5 (R/F) were very infrequently answered correctly or even not answered at all. Very often the answer was correct but the tick was in the wrong box, thus losing a point. Q2 caused issues as many candidates appeared to misread "instabil" and simply mentioned the rising prices of food stuffs.
- Q5 also caused problems.
- Q6 was not easy either and I put this down to misreading the content of the question (lexical issues).
- Q8 (zunehmend) was answered wrongly and A=aggressiv was given instead of G=verstärkt.
- Q11 usually was fine.

Text B

Text B was the most accessible and even very weak students scored points.

- Q12 was on the whole satisfactory.

- Q13 was easy and Q14 only caused problems because candidates did not read the question properly and so missed the key word „garantieren“.
- Q15 - again lexical issues with "überfliegen".
- Q17 – was easy and only very few failed.
- Q19 was fine except for some candidates who answered with „Sunday“ as this seems to be the day one goes to church (jumping to conclusions rather than skimming the text).
- Q20 and 21: most students got one of the answers right; A few candidates wrote what they thought and not what the text said, many answered: „würde lächeln und sich abfinden“ – ignoring „vielleicht“, which makes all the difference. But this is something that needs very good understanding and perception of the text.
- Q21 - 23: more interpretative reading was required - even weaker candidates surprised by their understanding, although 21 was often misread and proved challenging.

Text C

This text certainly contained some challenges and even top candidates were unable to score on all Qs.

- Q24 - was easy and no problem.
- Qs25 - 28 – R/F showed better results than the R/F section in text A but again, quite a few candidates did not get both parts right (same problem: often getting the justification right but ticking the wrong box!).
- Q29 - many candidates mentioned "Sprachwandel" or "Ausdrucksfähigkeit" – but missed „verfallen“.
- Q30 was the easiest of all questions in the paper and apart from a handful of candidates everyone got it right.
- Qs33 -36 proved impossible for a large number of candidates, these Qs really caused many problems ! It must be said that even native speakers may have had problems with this vocabulary exercise as some of the words are either slightly outdated (währen = andauern/dauern) or not used very often (grämen and dürftig).

Text D

This text was not easy either but most candidates managed to gain a few points.

- Qs37-40 yielded some good results despite this not being an easy task; the first two Qs were easier than the last two.
- Qs 42 and 44 triggered some very strange answers while almost everyone got Q41 right.

- Q 43 proved difficult as well which is surprising as it only needed careful reading of the text.
- Testing connectors in Qs45-48 was a stumbling block for many (schließlich/endlich in 45, während/obwohl in 46, immer/mehr in 47 and stattdessen/schließlich or ausserdem in 48).

Text E

This text was not too difficult but some (rather few) students either had run out of time or felt too tired to complete the exam and left responses blank or simply guessed, especially in Qs51-56 where there sometimes just was a row of the same letter, the candidate clearly hoping to hit the right letter occasionally.

Many candidates did not do well on Q 50 and only too often came up with B (mit ihnen), again, this clearly derived from sloppy reading. Most of the stronger candidates had no problems and often scored full marks on this question.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

Quite a few basic grammatical errors appeared in a number of papers; Even where these did not lead to loss of points, they need to be mentioned: lack of knowledge of the DATIVE, m/f (gender issues - Hildegard: er, seine) and also erroneous verb forms. Lack of gap filling practice with „connectors“ was also a point.

All questions types (incl. MCQ and R/F) should be taught AND practiced in class - past papers are very useful

In this session it almost appeared as a pattern that candidates, who had a satisfactory level of language skills, gave the correct answer in the R/FQs but ticked the wrong boxes, unfortunately this happened very frequently.

Vocabulary work is highly recommended - also focusing on non-content words - encouraging students to read more and to watch TV / films in German will also help to instil more authentic usage patterns.

It also was noticeable that some open-ended questions (notably 20, 29, 44) allowed scope for interpretation and sometimes misinterpretation thus leading to loss of points. The teacher should also remind candidates to read questions very carefully and to be fair, there were many scripts where one could see that the candidate had underlined key-words. Extensive copying from the text and verbose answers ought to be discouraged – It must be clear that the text has been understood! Also: Please inform candidates to write the FULL answer and not just the first and last word of what is deemed to be the answer as this makes it impossible to accurately assess understanding and the point is lost, also quoting lines by giving the line number is not appropriate.

Some candidates left a lot of questions blank, either they had planned to revisit the question later and then forgot or did so due to lack of time. Please inform candidates that they should

always venture to complete the exam even when not quite sure whether it is the correct answer or not. This is more helpful to examiners who need to judge the level of language skills than leaving spaces empty.

Another issue relates to handwriting. Due to the fact that the papers are scanned in, deciphering some of the handwriting is very difficult and an onerous task and thus may lead to misreading answers, and in case of MCQ, letters.

It also is of utmost importance that corrections are made clearly; crossing out of words or sentences is no problem as long as it is done clearly. Only too often the correction of a letter in a MCQ is done by overwriting the original letter, which is messy and leaves an ambiguous impression. Despite examiners being able to magnify the script on screen, making a decision is often difficult, therefore, writing the correct letter next to a clearly crossed out box is much better. If there are two perfectly clear letters (one in the box, one outside), the examiner definitely will not choose the correct one but the one which is in the box. If, and this has happened, two letters are in the same box and the examiner has a „choice“ – „0“ points are given.

Further comments

Additional pages: There were several scripts with additional pages, in most cases this would not have been necessary as corrections or answers would have fitted onto the exam paper.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 22	23 - 29	30 - 35	36 - 45

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some feedback from teachers suggested that this paper was more difficult than last year's paper. The main concern was that some questions were too sophisticated in terms of vocabulary knowledge and differentiation between nuances of meaning. Questions testing vocabulary/synonyms (e.g. questions 30-33) have always proved challenging, and it has to be admitted that some of the options offered as answers were not easy. Questions 3-6 proved difficult for some, for similar reasons: the options were at times fairly close to each other.

Teachers also commented that questions 24-29 were difficult, because the question format was slightly unusual. However, these questions turned out to be amongst the usually correctly answered questions.

The true/false format with justification was again not an easy one to handle. In order to do well in this exercise, candidates need to be extra careful. They have to look out for signal words (numeric adverbs, negations etc.) in order to determine how the statement is phrased, negatively or positively. They also have to double check that they have answered both parts of task: ticking the appropriate box and justifying answers (even if they are correct).

For this paper, the most important areas that teachers should point out to students, while practising the various question types, are:

- Careful reading not only of texts but also the choices of answers is crucial.
- Line references given must be observed for answers.
- Open ended questions can always be answered with words from the text.
- Word classes and endings provide useful clues with the vocabulary matching questions.

The areas of the programmed and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

The majority of candidates appeared well prepared for the format of this paper. It seemed that much work has been done in teaching students the concept of not looking for meaning through translation, but dealing with the text by focusing on the questions to be answered.

It was encouraging to see that the gap filling exercise posed fewer problems than in the last sessions, suggesting that teachers' focus on guided analysis of elements of text coherence has borne fruit.

There were also fewer Nil Response answers, which is good, since it raises student chances to scoring.

Text A, dealing with families and work, was generally well handled. Most students appeared knowledgeable on the required vocabulary and hence handled the questions well. Similarly, Text D on friendships/relationships was well handled.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

The most frequent questions that candidate answered correctly were 13, 17, 24, 25, 28 and 7; the most challenging ones appeared to be question 32, 42, 14, 30, 6 and 16.

While some questions for Text C (e.g. questions 30-33) were designed as difficult ones, this was not the case for questions in Text B. Problems occurred when candidates had not read the questions carefully enough or they didn't know common question words (e.g. question 13 offering a response as to 'who', when the question called for 'where').

Text A was generally managed well, only questions 3-6 proved to be difficult for some students as it was required to choose - among at least two possible ones - the answer that fits the original question BEST.

Text B appeared to be difficult, resulting in many students not reading the questions as carefully as they should have. Questions 14-16 required candidates to carefully read the text and to apply general analytical skills. (See Recommendations) There were no questions with two possible answers:

Q 14 – only C is possible, not B. "Authentisch" (Text) only means that "seine Auftritte nicht gekünstelt" sind (=answer C). Answer B is wrong: not everyone who is authentisch, "sagt offen, was er meint" (answer B) and "selbstbewusste Sprueche" (Text) is also not the same as "offen sagen, was man meint".

Q 16 – the correct answer is C through elimination: selbstsicher (answer A) = selbstbewusst (Text): witzig (answer B) = Humor (text) and attraktiv (answer D) = charme

Text C was meant to be the most difficult text and questions ranged from some of the easiest (question 24, 25, 28) to the most difficult ones (questions 30-33), including the always-tricky true/false questions (19-23).

Text D posed no further problems. Even the gap filling questions were generally managed well.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

While examination preparation should always ensure that candidates are familiar with the various question types and core key vocabulary.

A wider reading of a variety of texts on a range of topics with a focus on extracting meaning from context rather than trying to 'understand' every single word per se is recommended, to develop good general reading skills.

This session proved again the importance of general language mastery for high scores in paper 1, for which wide reading and regular paraphrasing exercises in the course of the programme are recommended.

In terms of specific format preparation, plenty of practice of question formats and reinforcement of all key vocabulary items on which these questions depend (question words, numbers, adverbs, positive/negative fill-ins) is recommended.

A helpful approach to dealing with the true/false format is unpacking the true/false statement, identifying possible synonyms and opposites of each part of it and then looking for these in the text as a possible choice for the "reason".

A final note to be considered: In order to do well in group 2 examinations students are expected to exhibit the same analytical sharpness that they would in other IB assessments. Where students did not perform as well as in previous years it was sometimes not due to their linguistic competencies but due to the lack of applying general analytical skills.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 14	15 - 21	22 - 27	28 - 33	34 - 39	40 - 45

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates.

This year, the tasks seemed evenly spread out and did not present difficulties as such. However, once again it has to be noted that many students are not familiar with the defining characteristics of the text types they are required to produce. It needs to be stressed that this aspect is worth marks in Criterion C and should therefore not be ignored. Question 4 was the most popular one in this session, but many students did not know how to make a blog specific and authentic. Similarly, Question 2 was a popular choice, but it was rare to find a convincing leaflet that was not simply an essay with occasional bullet points.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared.

Most students seemed to be linguistically competent and many wrote responses with very good grammar and included some interesting turns of phrases. Most understood the task well, even if they occasionally lacked argument. Some responses were persuasive, even inspiring.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions.

Question 1 - this question was not popular. Some responses were interesting and detailed, but often had problems with the text type and produced a letter instead of a report. Some candidates wrote about abusive behaviour that was not racist - the actual definition of this term may perhaps be a subject of discussion in future lessons?

Question 2 - This was a popular question. Most students wrote detailed responses with obvious enjoyment and a wide range of imaginative details. The problem, once again, was the text type of flyer/leaflet, which many were not familiar with. The candidates who were prepared for this text type, however, wrote really convincing responses.

Question 3 - Not many students chose this presentation, but those who did, did well. There was usually a wide range of thoughtful and relevant considerations, even if ideas were sometimes problematically black and white. This was a challenging topic for 18 year-olds to write convincingly about.

Question 4 - This was the most popular question. Candidates had a wide range of imaginative ideas, even if sometimes a little bit naive as to how problematic it was to cross a border without a passport. As mentioned above, the blog format was not always convincing and sometimes looked very much like a letter.

Question 5 - Candidates who chose this question were obviously well prepared for the topic and had a wide range of interesting ideas at their disposal, as well as the appropriate type of technical vocabulary. Writing a letter to the editor is obviously not a text type that is practised these days, so rarely did a response live up to the standard conventions.

Question 6 - On the whole students responded very well to this question. Most wrote a mini-essay, but there were some creative ideas that worked very well. Interestingly, some students who had chosen question 2 continued or repeated some of the ideas used there, but that was, of course, not penalized. Occasionally candidates misunderstood 'Konsum' - this was sometimes written about as 'Kostüm', or also as the consumption of drugs and Alcohol. Some students were aware of this and tried to write more generally, avoiding the issue, and some succeeded. Again, some students had problems with structuring an argument and just wrote down ideas as they came to their mind.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

It should be stressed that handwriting and presentation skills are important, perhaps even more so now that we are marking online. It would also be helpful if students could give a clear word count - when too much is crossed out an 'unedited' word count can cause confusion.

As said above, text types need to be practised - many students lost points over this. There are enough teaching materials available that give advice on this, but even a common sense approach to reading these texts should give some idea as to what is required. It is important that teachers make students aware of the assessment criteria and the importance that is given to getting it right.

There are enough past papers available for teachers and candidates to practise how to plan and structure a task in terms of content and argument. Criterion B gives 10 marks for the message, and some candidates did not seem to be aware of this. The choice of topic really does matter! Even for Section B every topic studied under the Core heading has enough scope for short and controversial statements that can serve as a practice stimulus.

Please make sure that candidates get a chance of practising to write under timed conditions. A small number of candidates (albeit the weaker ones) did not seem to make it to Section B, or just wrote a couple of sentences.

Further comments

One examiner commented on how Question 2 combined creativity (blog), global issues (Asia and tourism) and personal concerns (lost passport) - this struck me as really being the type of task we should be aiming for generally in Group 2. It may be a helpful idea for teachers to model practice tasks on this kind of approach.

On the whole, Paper 2 seemed to stimulate and challenge students, but not unduly so. Most examiners enjoyed marking this session considerably more than the last one, so I would like to thank all teachers for taking suggestions on board and preparing students so carefully.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25

General comments

The vast majority of candidates had been well prepared for this examination, and seemed comfortable with both the format and the expectations. Standards of achievement in this session equated well with standards over recent sessions. With tasks assigned to topic areas, candidates were able to make a more focused selection, and very few responses failed to address the task at least to some extent. Examiners commented repeatedly that knowledge of topic vocabulary was sound, and the application of key conventions for the chosen text type was on the whole good.

The ability to write reasonably accurate German remains central to the task, and while there were examples from across the full range of marks for Criterion A, it should be remembered that even language described as “clumsy but clear” can still aspire to a mark of 6-7 at Standard Level.

By far the most popular were tasks 3 and 5, followed by tasks 2 and 4. Task 1 elicited the smallest number of responses.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

There were hardly any responses which failed to reach the minimum number of words, and very few candidates significantly exceeded the maximum, although in one case a candidate wrote a response to task 2 stretching to over 800 words. Examiners are instructed to stop marking at around the maximum word count. It was yet again encouraging to see an increasing number of candidates planning their responses before writing them, and those who did so invariably benefitted, often developing their writing effectively and creatively. However, evidence of checking at the end was often sadly lacking.

In general, candidates perform best where they can engage with a task on a personal level. Where a personal relationship with the subject matter is missing, weaknesses begin to appear. Perhaps candidates are increasingly recognising this, and it may explain why task 1 was the least popular: it was the most straightforward format, and the spoken context allowed for relatively simple language, but the subject matter was the most abstract.

The best answers from the point of view of content showed an ability to incorporate elements of personal knowledge and experience into the response. However, such an approach can only be effective if the focus remains on the task as set out. There were thankfully few examples of clearly pre-conceived answers being shoehorned into the question, but it remains vital that the candidate answers the question, rather than producing what is essentially a general essay on the topic. All the tasks incorporate several aspects, including a specified format, perspective and audience, and will invariably include more than one point of content to be addressed. Candidates need to unpick the question carefully, and this is where planning becomes so important.

Most candidates produced reasonably appropriate text formats, at least with regard to the key conventions. Some were less successful in maintaining an appropriate tone and style in the

main body of their response, and particularly with task 5 many answers became thinly-disguised essays rather than articles in a school newspaper.

As in previous sessions, the biggest area of concern with a significant number of candidates lies in overall standards of written accuracy. There were responses in largely well-written German, and where candidates showed some awareness of the fundamentals of correct German structures they were able to score highly, but these remain the minority. As noted above, it is possible to score above half marks in Criterion A at Standard Level with simple but clear German which is more accurate than not, and without venturing into the realms of complex structures and clauses. Complex structures are only required of candidates aspiring to the highest mark band, and a mark of 9-10 can be achieved with evidence of some awareness of how complex sentence structures are used.

However, there are still many candidates who display little understanding of the fundamentals of German sentence structure and grammar, with recurrent problems in the areas of verb forms, word order, pronouns and agreement/endings. There should be evidence of some command, however inconsistent, of such basic elements at this level. Accuracy with more complex aspects, such as the use of past tenses, simple subordinate clauses and the correct use of connectives is desirable, but above all candidates need to grasp the basics and use them competently, otherwise the meaning often becomes too clouded and this will also affect the marks for Criterion B. Similarly, wayward spelling (including often treating the umlaut like confetti), and at times an excess of Anglicisms also impinged upon the marks awarded for Language.

Question 1

This task elicited the smallest number of responses. In a few cases the interview was well-contextualized, with an introduction to the topic and the interviewee and a summative conclusion, and a central interview which addressed the various aspects with specific examples, but such responses were rare. More often, the challenge of setting a discussion of language trends in the context of a well-constructed and balanced interview with concrete examples eluded candidates. Many overlooked the focus on media and advertising stated in the task, and there was a common misconception that the question was about US/English domination of culture and society rather than specifically about language. The occasional candidate misunderstood the task completely and wrote about the decline of German in their own country. Most often, responses remained on a general level without including specific examples to illustrate points made.

The interview format is generally straightforward, and was on the whole handled well, although it is worth posing probing questions to introduce specific issues rather than retaining a rather simplistic approach to the questioning. To achieve full marks for Criterion C the interview needs an introductory paragraph which sets the context and introduces the interviewee to the readers.

Question 2

Responses to this task were characterised by good attention to detail on the central focus of the task, underlining the comment above that candidates were able to perform well in areas

which they could relate to directly and personally. It is important to note here that the task specifically refers to family life in the period before Christmas. There is no expectation that the family even celebrates Christmas, and it is perfectly possible to remain relevant to the task in such cases. As it was, details about the period before Christmas were mostly clear and relevant, although a few focused too much on Christmas itself, or strayed too much from the realms of family life. There was a clear opportunity to compare with German-speaking countries if candidates had the background knowledge, and many did, although this was not deemed essential to scoring high marks in Criterion B, as this would have disadvantaged some candidates. Less successful responses chose to write about general customs in their country, or even occasionally wrote solely about German Christmas customs (perhaps a prepared response?). There is some relevance in general customs, but the focus of the task was clearly on family life.

The secondary aspect of content in the task was to include comments designed to reassure the friend. Most responses were successful in this, when they made the effort to include this aspect, although a few totally ignored it. In this it is important to address the friend in the body of the email, and this was at times an aspect of this format which was neglected. While email conventions generally proved easy to replicate, such an email needs to maintain an informality of tone throughout. For the award of the full 5 marks for Criterion C, the response needed to be immediately recognisable as an email: in some cases it could equally have been a letter.

Question 3

This task elicited a high number of responses. It should be noted that it is in the topic of Health, not Leisure, and so the expectation was that responses related to healthy living rather than simply being an account of recreational pursuits.

Most (though not all) wrote three blog entries at monthly intervals. Some inexplicably wrote only one. The best responses highlighted the aims in the earliest entry, reported on progress in the second, and drew conclusions from a personal health perspective and looked forward in the final entry. Less successful responses consisted of three entries which described three different sporting activities undertaken and then considered the task accomplished.

The most common failing was in attention to both aspects of the task – sport and nutrition. Most focused far too heavily on sports, and a small number ignored sports and only wrote about healthy eating. A reasonable balance between sport and nutrition was necessary in order to gain access to the highest mark band. In some cases, nutrition was covered, but in a rather abstract manner, as if importing a previously prepared answer or the content of lessons on healthy eating into the task. More often, the aspect of nutrition received little more than a cursory mention in one of the three entries.

A number of responses also lacked any detail about progress over the three months and conclusions about the consequences for the candidate's own health. This was particularly evident where candidates chose to write an episodic response with three largely unrelated entries describing three completely different activities.

One point of note in relation to the content where there are certain parallels to task 2: it is

perfectly acceptable to write a blog about a failure to maintain a drive for healthy living over the period, but then the focus still needs to be on the task. In one case a candidate abandoned the topic completely and wrote a whole blog entry about a family wedding. This can be made relevant, but it was not.

The blog format was generally handled well, with some creative interpretations including inviting readers to join in the venture and including reader comments to individual blog entries. It is not sufficient simply to write the heading “*Blog*” and then ignore other characteristics. Very few candidates presented their entries in reverse chronological order, thus replicating how entries would appear online. This aspect was often used as the deciding factor when awarding either 4 or 5 for Criterion C.

Question 4

This was a relatively popular task, and good candidates aimed to win over their audience with a range of attractive activities designed to sustain their interest, although there were few really convincing answers which combined enthusiasm and information. The majority simply described activities – at times in a fairly uninspiring tone – or focused too heavily on one single activity or aspect. Listing activities without developing them was also a common failing. A successful response needed to encourage and persuade the audience to participate, and also to address the ‘whole family’ aspect rather than simply trying to encourage fellow pupils to come along on the day.

To achieve this, the speech format needs to be handled well. It is not enough simply to address the audience directly at the start and say ‘thank you’ at the end. The audience needs to be addressed both directly and indirectly throughout the speech, for example with judicious use of rhetorical questions, and the general tone should be one of enthusiasm, with repeated reminders of the call to participate and spread the word. It was also important to remember that the audience was a combination of pupils and teachers – the involvement of the latter (and their families) in the day should not be overlooked.

Question 5

This was perhaps the most popular choice amongst candidates, despite a perhaps slightly convoluted task setting. It was possibly this aspect which led to the most problems, as many candidates failed to take sufficient account of key aspects. Successful responses included reference to the brother’s problems, the parents’ concerns, the dangers of exposure to violent computer games, and advice to fellow pupils, but few responses achieved this breadth of content.

Many candidates overlooked the issue of violent computer games, preferring to write a general piece on the negative aspects of spending too much time in front of a computer, with perhaps reference to the brother as a concrete example. There was a consequent tendency for the response to degenerate into an essay on computer use, with ideas which are to some extent relevant but which do not directly address the task. In such cases, the maximum mark for Criterion B was 6, as it was if the response became an anecdotal account of the brother’s obsession with computer games with no general conclusions drawn to involve the readers.

Rather surprisingly, the article format was sometimes poorly handled. Several candidates produced an indefinable text type, without even bothering with a heading, and as already noted, many produced what was essentially an essay. An article needs a headline (preferably catchy), and then at least some of the other typical characteristics such as a sub-heading, an author byline, and clearly-defined sections. Other features which help to create the impression of an article include quotations (e.g. from the brother, the parents or other pupils), statistics, graphics, captions for pictures, etc.

The context of the article should also be given some attention. In this task (as is often the case in Paper 2) the article was to appear in a school newspaper. Some of the articles produced seemed to be aimed at a general readership, or at best at parents, rather than at pupils. This was particularly evident where reference was made to “*Jugendliche*” in the third person – the article should not be speaking about young people but to them, engaging them in the content and the issues raised.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers are clearly skilled in giving their students exposure to different topics and written formats and in practising writing from a variety of perspectives. However, the language itself remains the one central aspect where there are significant weaknesses. As stated above and in previous reports, there is a need for basic grammatical and lexical accuracy in order to score high marks. A lack of awareness of the fundamentals of German sentence structure will often obscure the meaning, thus affecting the marks for both Criterion A and B. When command of the basics is relatively assured, students can then begin to work on using cohesive devices such as linking words and expressions, and on varying sentence openings, sentence length and tenses. On the lexical front, students should be discouraged from resorting to Anglicisms and word-for-word renditions – “*austür spielen*” is not recognisable to anyone other than an extremely sympathetic native speaker with good knowledge of English.

It is of course essential that students are familiar with the various text formats which they could meet in the exam, although for most it would appear that this aspect presents relatively few problems. The one area where more care should be taken is the propensity of some students to revert to a generic essay-like format – as much in the content of the response as in the adoption of any particular conventions.

Finally, as ever, a word on the importance of planning. It is always encouraging to see evidence in the exam that this skill is taught by many teachers and invariably these candidates score more highly in Criterion B, where both the development and organisation of ideas are assessed. In this context students should also be taught to read and understand the task fully, rather than to hone in on one aspect and neglect others. Students should be trained to recognise the different aspects of a task – format, perspective, audience and content focus – so that they can address them all adequately in their response.