

November 2013 subject reports

German B

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 25	26 - 41	42 - 55	56 - 69	70 - 83	84 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 27	28 - 43	44 - 56	57 - 71	72 - 85	86 - 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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

On the whole the images were relevant and students responded well to the stimulus, as well as the questions. In some cases the image was barely mentioned, and it seemed students had prepared a presentation on the topic - this must not be encouraged; the opening description of the image and the conversation are meant to flow naturally. In some individual cases the image was not particularly stimulating and not even I could have said more than a couple of sentences about it - that should not happen, if possible.

Candidate performance against each criterion.

A - Generally the command of spoken language was very good. In some cases candidates had quite strong accent, but spoke grammatically correct German and used some authentic idioms; here I felt

teachers had marked too strictly, obviously judging against the native speaker level.

B - On the whole, complex ideas were understood well and the interaction was very good. Only rarely was the discussion halting, or did students misunderstand a question. In some cases students answered on quite a banal level, but these were obviously the weaker students who may have been inhibited by language problems.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

Students should practise the description of a visual stimulus as much as possible. It is important to understand that an image can communicate in many ways, and that the angle, colour, subject etc of the photo is part of its message. The more the student can develop ideas within the topic on their own initiative the better.

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

While the vast majority of teachers seem to have studied the new Guide and the various supporting documents, and are therefore able to submit orals which comply fully with the guidelines, there are still a small number who do not quite have all elements of the new individual oral in place.

Most of the problems revolve around aspects of photo selection. The Guide clearly states that it should be a photo (not a drawing, a computer-generated image or a diagram) and that it should be related to an option topic. While the Guide does not give specific advice on suitable photos, it should be apparent that a static uninspiring photo of a rabbit and a few Easter eggs will not elicit a stimulating presentation or discussion. The photo should be something that the candidate can easily relate to an option topic and something which will generate some discussion and the development of ideas.

The overwhelming majority of photos were related to German-speaking culture/society, although there is still the occasional one which is perhaps a little too general. In such cases it becomes all the more important to ensure that the caption supplied with the photo attempts to guide the candidate towards the culture and society of the language they are studying. There were also several photos with no obvious link to an option topic, along with captions where the option topic remained unclear. Two such examples were 'the position of women in the workplace' and 'children and advertising'. Candidates were not penalised for such teacher errors, but ignoring the procedures set out in the Guide does little to preserve the integrity of the course or the examination.

With regard to captions, most were appropriate, but some were unnecessarily short. It is little help to the candidate to have a photo of a gym with the caption "Fitness", or a photo of an open-air music festival with the caption "Musikfest". The caption should be a trigger to help candidates initiate their own interpretation of the image in relation to the topic studied. At the same time, it is important for candidates to make use of the caption in some way. In one case a candidate described a photo of a Christmas market in intricate detail for 4 minutes, without once referring to the caption of "Tradition oder Kitsch?". This caption, quite rightly, was attempting to provoke discussion. A few teachers mistakenly specified the option topic in connection with the caption; this should not be mentioned explicitly.

With regard to the forms, there are still a few teachers who give few or even no comments on reasons for marks awarded, or who focus on the candidate's nerves or health, although the majority of teachers use the forms appropriately.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Despite the above comments, the majority of the work submitted was appropriate to the new format, with suitable photos, captions, presentations and discussions. The format is thus clearly accessible to all, with a little planning. Some teachers need to give a little more thought to issues of timing: a discussion phase lasting 9 or 10 minutes is quite simply too long, and it is by no means beneficial to the candidate to exceed the guideline length by so much.

There was a wide range of topics, most of which were relevant to option topics. Many of the old traditional oral presentation topics have found their way into the new format, with several examples of Christmas markets, nuclear/alternative energy, the Berlin Wall and of course the Oktoberfest, but in this session a large number focused on aspects of the Leisure option, possibly because of the wider availability of suitable images related to this option. As mentioned above, some failed to retain any connection with German society/culture, but these were few. It was more frequently noted that candidates approached photos from the perspective of a core topic, rather than an option. While there is much overlap between the core and the options, if the presentation goes in the direction of the core the teacher should aim to direct the candidate back to the option topic at the discussion stage.

After describing the photo in some detail, most candidates widened their presentation to address the topic and the caption. 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. However, there were several candidates who remained at the level of factual description of the photo, and failed to expand their ideas beyond this. In one rather extreme example, a candidate with a photo of young people smoking and a caption questioning whether this was 'cool', described the photo for over two minutes without even mentioning smoking.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A

One teacher commented on the absence of complex structures from the candidate, even naming the desired structures as subjunctive, passive, indirect speech and subordinate clauses. It should be remembered that this is Language B SL. Close reading of the assessment criteria will show that complex structures are only mentioned in the 9-10 mark band. At most, therefore, one might expect *some* attempt at *some* complex structures from candidates aspiring to the highest marks in criterion A. Otherwise, many candidates were able to achieve 7+ with the use of reasonably straightforward, clear and accurate constructions and some variety of vocabulary and expression.

B

Good interaction and some complexity of ideas are necessary to achieve the upper mark bands (7+). Complexity of ideas is often dependent on the topic, and the choice of photo. It is also dependent on the candidate overcoming any urge to restrict their contributions to factual and descriptive statements. The oral is not a test of factual knowledge. When candidates (and at times teachers) insist too much on factual accuracy and detail, they lose sight of the primary aim, which is to demonstrate linguistic ability. In one example occurrence, a personal and emotive image of enforced separation on the construction of the Berlin Wall gave rise to a candidate presentation about the history of the Berlin Wall, including full details of length, height, escape attempts etc which had been clearly memorised for the oral. Unfortunately, the ensuing discussion became something of a quiz, with the teacher asking for more facts (such as 'Name the countries bordering the former GDR') and praising correct answers with "Gut! Das ist korrekt." This was a missed opportunity, and although it is perhaps an

extreme example, it had echoes in quite a few orals. Any focus on factual and descriptive detail is always to the detriment of discussion and analysis of the topic matter. In this aspect, even the best candidates are often reliant on an appropriate lead from the teacher, who needs to probe effectively to elicit developed ideas.

Criterion B also focuses on interaction in a conversation. Brief teacher questions with long candidate responses begins to sound more like a series of mini-monologues, particularly where none of the points raised by the candidate are then taken up by the teacher. Interaction requires the active participation of both parties, with aspects developed a little like rallies in tennis. Where candidates and teachers achieved this, they were able to access the higher mark bands in this criterion.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should practise responding to a photo/caption directly and then developing their presentation out of this organically as much as possible. They should be reminded to relate their presentation to Germanic society/culture where possible, and to avoid too great an emphasis on descriptive or factual detail.

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.

Finally, remember that at the upper end of Criterion B candidates are expected to show evidence of the ability to express complex ideas – but that this is not the same as using complex language structures.

Further comments

Some teachers in the discussion phase try to extract more factual information out of the candidate in relation to the photo/caption. Unless dealing with a particularly weak candidate, this does not help the candidate, particularly in relation to criterion B, where interaction and the complexity of ideas are the key.

During the course of the discussion phase, teachers are permitted to move on to the second option topic studied if the conversation dries up. However, this is not a requirement, and it is certainly not advisable to spend 2-3 minutes on the photo option and then move on to the other option studied. This results in two topics being discussed superficially rather than one in depth.

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The choice of literary texts reflected the canon of 20th century modern classics (mainly limited to Dürrenmatt, Süßkind and Schlink), quite a few WAs were based on one short story (Böll) and some on teenage literature, none on poetry. In regard to text types, the range was predominantly limited to:

diary entry, letter, new ending, inner monologue. Some schools with a large cohort doubled up tasks or based more than 20 WAs on one literary text, sometimes even using the same text type. However, having said this, there was no malpractice involved. The writing of the rationale posed some problems and students need more practice in writing them.

In general, the majority of the work submitted was of good to very good and excellent quality.

Candidate performance against each criterion.

A: Most assignments showed good to very good or excellent language skills. The weaker students performed satisfactorily; very few had poor language skills.

B: Many students made good use of the literary text. However, I had the feeling that quite a few would have done better with more guidance or in some cases with less guidance.

There was a certain amount of “doubling up” in both task and text type. Only very few tasks were way off the mark. Kafka’s *Verwandlung* should only be chosen by very good candidates as it is too easy to misunderstand Kafka’s story, for example, an interview with Gregor Samsa when a beetle is not advisable.

C: As mentioned above, the range of text types was limited to “diary”, “letter”, “inner monologue” or “new ending”, only very few text types were NOT “appropriate to the task”.

D: The majority of students scored 2/3 because they did not introduce the literary text or even name the text, almost all of them mentioned the text type and usually gave reasons about what they wanted to achieve and why. Some students were trained to use formulaic phrasings which reflected too much teacher guidance.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

As this was the first November session with WAs, the main problem for teachers was about how much to guide and when to let the student decide. Work shop training as well as checking WA samples on the OCC ought to help clarify this.

The IB recommendation of using one literary text per 12 students should be adhered to, if there are 36 students (even when organized in 3 classes) they count as one group and 3 different texts should be used, this of course requires team work amongst the teachers. Teachers should also encourage students to complete at least a couple of practice creative assignments so that they develop a sense of relevant engagement with the text.

WAs must not be typed (yet) but hand written!

Choosing suitable texts is as important as sensitive and measured student guidance. The whole range of text types should be used and although writing a new ending is popular, it is difficult to do so convincingly. Secondary sources may be used to help the student understand the background of a text or to help with understanding political situations mentioned in the text but it must not lead to literary analysis or an essay style piece of work.

The rationale needs some attention as many candidates clearly were not quite sure how to approach it or why it was needed at all. It should be placed in front of the task in order to introduce the assignment (see IB BHL guide p 42).

Further comments

Clear hand writing and good overall presentation of the WA are essential.

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 the majority of schools have come to terms with the requirements of this new component for Language B. There were no instances where material submitted did not at least come close to the expectations laid down in the Guide, although in a few cases there were aspects where the procedures need some closer study. A significant proportion of the work submitted reached a relatively high standard, and standards in this component again compared well with standards in other areas of assessment.

Where teachers had studied the Guide and other support materials thoroughly, the result was some excellent pieces of work based on well-chosen source materials. Where there were weaknesses, this often lay either in the selection of sources which did not easily lend themselves to a tightly-planned integrated response, or in a response itself which failed to pay sufficient attention to having a clearly defined audience/readership and perspective/purpose.

The Range and Suitability of 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. Areas of weakness focused primarily on command of the language and in relation to a clear indication of the aim(s) of the piece of writing. As in May, certain text types were particularly problematic in this respect: above all articles and speeches need clear context, audience and purpose, otherwise they quickly descend into a thinly disguised essay.

Assignments were submitted based on a variety of topics, illustrating how wide-ranging the teaching of these core themes is across schools. While topics will by their nature be quite general, such as cyber-bullying and homelessness, 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.

In a very small number of cases candidates from the same school with the same set of texts produced assignments of a very similar nature – for example, in one school with 10 candidates, 8 of them chose to write a blog. Teachers and candidates should be aware of the requirement that assignments should all differ in some way. It is of course acceptable to have more than one blog, for example, but the aims etc should then be sufficiently different to distinguish them from each other. This is difficult to achieve with eight responses in the same format.

Candidate Performance against each Criterion

Criterion A – Language

In this Criterion most candidates achieved at least half marks, often by keeping their language simple but sufficiently clear and accurate. However, the higher reaches of the marks in this criterion were achieved by a minority. A command of basic structures is essential at this level. Many responses were characterised by shaky verb forms, word order and pronouns in particular. Other common failings lay in choice of words and expressions, and here Anglicisms were often at fault. In general, the advice should be to keep the language clear and simple and to avoid being over-ambitious with structures, but then at the end to read through what has been written. It should also be remembered that use of a dictionary is permitted, but this needs to be used with care.

Range and complexity of language cannot be credited if it is copied direct from the source texts. Although words and phrases will obviously be needed, entire structures and sentences should not be copied. This did not occur too often, but when it did, the meaning was frequently clouded in the new context, thus affecting the assessment of Criterion B.

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 some 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. However, more often candidates either felt able to fulfil their aims without adequate reference to the source texts or merely produced an extended summary of the source text information. Alternatively, some candidates wrote well in relation to the source texts, but without fulfilling any clearly stated aim. If there is no clear aim, a piece of work cannot be judged to “fulfil the aims” and thus achieve the higher mark bands. Similarly, when candidates recycled the wider generalisations from the source texts rather than focusing on a specific aspect, the result was a rather rambling response, or one which resembled an essay on the topic rather than an article, a speech or a blog.

One consistent weakness with regard to Criterion B lay in the absence of a clear and specific aim. The other weakness was unfortunately outside the control of the candidate. The selection of the source materials is absolutely crucial to success with the WA and must not be underestimated. Source texts of a suitable level of language closely linked to a well-defined topic area led to candidates scoring high marks. However, low-scoring responses were often in part linked to less than ideal source texts – usually texts which were too generalised, too poorly related to each other or conversely too close to each other in content, style and perspective.

Many assignments dealt with global issues. It would have been good if all of these could have been given a perspective/slant which drew some relationship with German-speaking societies and cultures. While it is perfectly acceptable to write about the exploitation of textile workers in Asia, for example, the perspective and audience should then clearly relate to a German-speaking context.

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 all text types listed in the Guide, although by far the most popular were 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. 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.

Specifically on some of the more common text types chosen:

Letter/Email:

Almost without exception, those who chose to write a piece of correspondence had no problems with most of the associated conventions, but many failed to observe the appropriate register (e.g. du/Sie) and style. It is also always beneficial for candidates to show an awareness of audience and levels of formality in their writing, for example through formal connectives and longer, more complex structures in formal correspondence or shorter, simpler linking devices and colloquialisms in informal contexts. An impersonal tone or style in an informal letter is not appropriate.

Blog:

There were some imaginative and effective representations of a blog, with a personalised, reflective, emotional or even polemic response to the source material. However, there were also several examples of blogs which were little more than a disguised essay: candidates frequently wrote in the rationale that they had chosen a blog because it allowed them “freedom to express myself”, but then remained on the level of generalised summaries of the contents of the source texts.

Speech/Presentation:

When the audience and purpose were clearly defined, this popular format was well done. However, candidates often failed to specify why they were giving a speech, or where, or to whom, and at times confused speech and presentation. As a result, the speech descended into vague generalisations.

Article:

The article was a popular choice, and where it was done well, the context of the article was clearly specified, for example “for a teenage magazine”. On the other hand, 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.

Some candidates produced articles including many aspects characteristic of an article, with attention-grabbing headlines, introductions and clearly defined sections, with pleasing results. Others relied largely on the existence of a title to represent a headline, and lacked clear aims to their writing, with correspondingly disappointing results.

Interview:

This was 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.

Diary:

While it is perhaps less common now for teenagers to keep a diary, the format remains fairly popular and is generally well done. This suggests that the format is still taught, analysed and practised extensively in schools. As with other formats, where the diary was less convincing it was because it verged on becoming an essay, with an absence of self-reflection.

Brochure/Flyer

Some candidates chose this text type to communicate their aims, although with limited success. Both of these text types should aim to be inviting and persuasive as well as informative. Examples met in this session tended to be merely informative, and in one case the candidate attempted to give a balanced view of both sides of an issue in a flyer format, which is hardly credible.

Criterion D – Rationale

Most candidates in this session seemed to have grasped the core purpose of the rationale, and this was discussed at length in the May 2013 Subject Report. Where there were weaknesses, these were largely due to a failure to be specific enough, either in reference to the source texts, in giving reasons for the chosen format, or – more often – in stating the precise aims of the piece of work. This last aspect also then had a consequential effect on the marks awarded for Criterion B. While there is no requirement under the current Guide to summarise the content of the source texts, there should be some reference to each of them and to how they are to be used to contribute to the aim. On the whole, however, most candidates wrote an adequate rationale which referred to the sources, established an aim (including reference to the target audience) and attempted to explain the choice of format.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Students should 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)
- allowing time at the end to read through and check the work, and using a dictionary effectively in this time, as well as in the planning and writing phases.
- Above all, however, the teacher should ensure that the source texts are accessible. It is vital to have suitable source texts if a meaningful and successful response is to result. On this aspect the following points are of note:
 - source texts should not be too generalised, nor should they be overburdened with facts and statistics
 - case studies and texts with specific examples yield good results
 - care should be taken to avoid topics which are too simplistic or, conversely, too challenging
 - it would perhaps be best to avoid texts of a general nature on topics such as the environment – such texts rarely add to the general level of knowledge on the topic, making it difficult for the candidate to show the effective use of sources and produce a convincing and at least in part original piece of writing.

The selection of source texts, as noted above and in the previous Exam Report, is crucial to candidate success. This is something over which the candidate has no control, but it is essential that teachers take heed of advice offered here and elsewhere. The best source texts were related closely on a clearly defined aspect of a core theme, and offered different perspectives on this aspect. They were rooted in reality with concrete examples, case studies and facts, rather than vague and abstract philosophical generalisations.

Where texts are not closely linked thematically, candidates are unable successfully to integrate ideas from at least 2 of the texts in their work. The topic focus should be more narrowly defined than, for example, “the environment”, and the texts linked and accessible. On this final point, teachers should remember that candidates are working at Standard Level in Language B and that they have to read and digest these 3 unseen short texts independently, and find ways of using the ideas and information

in their own writing. Incidentally, several schools submitted source texts taken from textbooks. This should where possible be avoided.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 20	21 - 28	29 - 36	37 - 44	45 - 60

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

On the whole, the N13 HL Paper 1 was very challenging. All 5 texts demanded a high standard of German and some of the vocabulary, which focused on politics in Germany, defeated many students. The literary text (text E) was very demanding as well and needed very careful reading and deduction in order to work out details.

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

Due to the fact that candidates were challenged throughout, many could not show off their very good command of German as only the very best (close to native speaker level) succeeded in scoring sufficient marks to get a very good grade. However, there was evidence that all candidates were familiar with different formats of questions (R/F, multiple choice etc.) and could apply them throughout, unless they were defeated by the lack of vocabulary or by misreading questions.

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

Text A: Interview mit dem Präsidenten des Umweltbundesamtes, Jochen Flasbarth (Q1-13)
Q1 was difficult for most students.

Q2-9 demanded careful reading and many succeeded, so not too difficult.

Q10-13 was a grammar exercise and many had problems using „wobei“ or distinguishing between „aber“ and „jedoch“.

Text B: Deutsch oder Denglisch? (Q14-24)

Many lost points through careless reading of the questions; especially Q15 was a pitfall as „Verkehrssektor“ was either misunderstood or not read properly and so triggered a wrong answer.

Q16 was another hurdle as candidates tended to give their own opinion rather than checking the text: „respektlos“ instead of „ungenau“. Q17 very often was misunderstood as well („American Way of Life“ was not the answer required.) Q19 was easy and many knew what „Imponiergefasel“ meant, but then Q20: „Sprachhunzer“ was definitely difficult and many thought that it referred to someone who knows the language well rather than the opposite.

Q21-24 tested vocabulary and all proved difficult except Q24. However, for a good BHL candidate these should not have been too difficult, weaker students obviously guessed: „engstirnig“ was often seen as „arrogant“ instead of „intolerant“, similarly „würdelos“ was paired with „achtlos“. I suppose exam pressure/time management (or lack of) played a part as well.

Text C: Deutschland braucht einen neuen Patriotismus (Q25-34)

Q26 was answered correctly by very few students, „Abgesänge anstimmen“ was too difficult to work out for most, many candidates opted for „debattieren“.

Q29 was tricky as many candidates did not read the question properly or did not know what „wofür“ meant, something BHL candidates should know.

Vocabulary matching in Q31-34 they also found difficult and only too often they matched „verzichten“ with „ablehnen“ instead of „aufgeben“ or as in Q32 „ausgesetzt“ was matched with „gesetzlich“.

Text D: Ein klimaneutrales Deutschland – kein Luftschloss (Q35-46)

While the first questions in this text appeared to be fine, Q43 was a stumbling block as „Wärmeisolierung“ was either not understood, or the question was not read properly. Q44 posed a special problem, in this case, the mark scheme required an answer that had partly been used somewhere else already and therefore may have caused confusion. (This was taken into consideration at grade awarding.)

Text E: Jens Sparschuh – Der Zimmerspringbrunnen (Q47-59)

This text not only required careful reading but in addition the candidate had to visualize the scene in question (role play) in order to arrive at the correct answer and this discouraged many students and quite a few just guessed (especially Q55-59).

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

Candidates must read questions/instructions carefully and need to learn a routine of double checking the texts. In cases, where candidates still have no idea of what/how to answer, any answer is better than leaving a space – this leads to NR (= no response) and the examiner cannot even guess what the problem might have been. Sometimes a wrong answer still shows that the language skills are good and that there is some understanding of the text. Widening the vocabulary and grammar revision must be regular tasks in the program as well as reading original texts from news papers and magazines.

It is invaluable to write practice exams at regular intervals, it also gives the candidate a good indication of their time management. And apart from attempting to answer all questions (see above) it also must be noted that when only one letter (preferably capital letters) is required, it must be absolutely clear and readable and not leave it to the examiner whether it is F or E, B or D. The scanning process blurs handwriting slightly, so good hand writing skills are essential!

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 13	14 - 18	19 - 24	25 - 30	31 - 36	37 - 45

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

The paper was straightforward. More than the level of difficulty of the text, the type of questions proved to be the deciding factor of candidates' success. In this paper, as often, candidates found cloze passage and synonym finding the most challenging question types.

As always, the question type selection follows the prescribed rules of language paper setting across all languages. There is no trend to more open-ended questions. Font, spelling and expressions (e.g. "host" in text B) are according to the sources of origin.

A general rule for handling open-ended questions:

It is possible to answer open-ended questions with a minimum of candidate-generated language and minimal (if any) adaptation of the words from the text. Candidates who seek to put everything in their own words run the unnecessary risk of producing an obscure answer. For example: In Q16, the essential elements of "nie gesehen" or "Fremde" are the words which get the marks. A correct answer that is copied straight from the text would be: Man muss "Menschen, die man zuvor nie gesehen hat,... in die eigenen 4 Wände...lassen". Hence, there would be no need to change it to "Personen, die der Couchsurfer/Gast gar nicht kennt".

If a single word or short phrase from the text is sufficient to answer a question clearly, then this is perfectly acceptable as well.

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

1. Careful reading not only of texts but also the choices of answers remains crucial. See rubric 3 – Q 20

2. Cloze passages and synonym finding question types require a sound acquisition of general vocabulary and language understanding. Students are encouraged to take the initiative to constantly build up their "treasure chest" (Wortschatz) over the course of the program, e.g. through indirect (text reading) and direct (word lists) vocabulary learning.

3. The true/false format with justification again proved to be prone to pitfalls: Students have to be aware of nature of the "Begründung": If the answer 'richtig' was chosen, the "Begründung" must consist of a quote from the text that expresses the same meaning as the given statement. If the answer "falsch" was chosen, a quote from the text is required that shows that the given statement is incorrect. The purpose of the "Begründung" is, however, **not** to quote text passages which would explain or give further evidence, **why** a given statement is right/wrong.

E.g. in Q 10 the correct Begründung is "Pablo schwärmt von den Wellen des Atlantiks" and not "Es fühlt sich an als wäre ich gerade selbst auf einer Rucksacktour um die Welt."

4. In general, students should be encouraged to answer all questions and not to leave blanks. While nobody can get a point with NR (No Response), there is at least a chance to score with an answered question. (Wrong answers don't score a mark, but no further points will be deducted for wrong answers.)

(For more advice on various questions types, please refer to the examiners report from May 2013 SL p1 in the same rubric)

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

The majority of candidates appeared well prepared for the format of this paper. Overall, candidates seemed to be well versed in how to find the answers to questions, even if they were not entirely sure of meaning, suggesting much work has been done in teaching candidates how to select appropriate text.

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

Some of the questions were more straightforward than others, and these were distributed across the four texts. Similarly, there were questions which were more challenging. In most cases, these two sets of questions were good discriminators between candidates of differing abilities.

The most challenging questions were:

Q2 and 3 –These questions required a “very good understanding of the meaning and purpose of the text” (grade descriptor 7) and only a few candidates produced a correct response.

Q13- Some candidates overlooked that there was a more precise quote in the text than “Geld sparen”, which is “gratis übernachten”.

Q20 – Many candidates overlooked the particle “nicht nur” (bedienen zu lassen)” and voted for the straight opposite “seinen Gastgeber immer bedienen” instead of the correct answer A. Careful reading not only of text but also the choice of answers was needed.

Q 31 tested a precise understanding of the text, which only the best candidates were able to do.

Q34 was often wrongly answered, suggesting that the range of vocabulary must be broadened to score highly in this question type of synonym finding.

Q 38 – 42 required again a good understanding of the text and a good feeling for text coherence (conjunctions, in particular) and many students failed to do this cloze passage satisfactorily with Q 38 being the most difficult one.

Recommendations and guidance 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 in particular the importance of general language mastery for high scores in paper 1. Questions types like synonym finding and cloze passages require a sound acquisition of general vocabulary and divided good from very good students. Regular paraphrasing exercises in the course of the program and guided analysis of elements of text coherence are recommended.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 15	16 - 21	22 - 27	28 - 33	34 - 39	40 - 45

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

There were no significant problems in this paper.

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

Students generally were able to express themselves very well in writing, and had many relevant ideas to express.

However, much as students were well prepared for Section A of the paper, they often gained less marks in Section B. Obviously, this could not have been revised for in advance, but there was also a lack of structure, organization and argument which could have been practised in class.

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

1. This question was rarely attempted, possibly because the task was quite specific, the content aiming towards TOK, and the text type, a review, may not have been considered one of the 'easy' ones.

2. This task was attempted by the vast majority of the students with considerable success. It seemed that in this region most students had been on an exchange to Germany and had very clear views on the topic of school uniforms, sometimes even surprisingly detailed information on the history and origin of uniforms in Germany. Most impressive! The text type of an informal email was clearly considered to be an encouragement to choose this question; obviously many teachers had chosen this as one of their options.

3. Again a topic some students were very well informed on, especially in some Latin American countries. On the whole responses were passionate, informative and detailed, but the text type presented a serious problem. It seemed that some student did not wait to read the question carefully is ignored the 'Einleitung für eine Diskussion', which is really the opening for a speech and should have those characteristics. Few students scored highly under criterion C.

4. This question was only attempted by two students, who wrote very well on the topic. Perhaps this is not a popular choice as an option? Perhaps the flyer was also not a text type that students felt inspired by.

5. A few students responded to this question, and wrote clear and stimulating interviews with some interesting ideas about the future of books. A good choice, as the text type was easy to make lively and convincing.

Section B

Many students wrote about the internet in a general way, mentioning personal friendships rather than wider issues such as freedom of speech, censorship etc. A few students wrote interestingly about the role of politicians, with some recognizing the difference in nature between a politician and a medium ... Perhaps it is too ambitious to expect some intelligent arguments in 150 to 250 words, but there has to be some recognizable argument - random thoughts cannot score highly. Often the language marks were lower than in Section A, the reason possibly being that here no phrases and idioms could be prepared in advance and the topic may not have been 'rehearsed' in some cases. The text type is open for choice, and a few students wrote excellent letters or emails; generally, however, the standard mini-essay was the preferred option, and there was no reason not to do this.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

For section A I had the impression students were well prepared, and have no suggestions other than to continue with the good work.

Section B, however, could use some more attention and practice: even in 150 plus words there has to be an opening statement introducing the 'thesis' in response to the question, and then there have to be two or three different aspects mentioned and briefly explained. For this session politicians could have been shown to have a wide agenda, mainly concerned with interior matters and focusing on (re-)election, the internet obviously transcends borders and enables friendships across culture, but also has a political relevance (Egypt?) that links to two areas.

Further comments

On the whole a very strong cohort in this session. Most essays were a pleasure to read.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

General comments

Standards of achievement in this session equated well with standards over recent sessions, and the relatively minor changes to Paper 2 compared with previous years seemed to present few problems. With tasks assigned to topic areas, candidates were more easily able to select appropriately in relation to their studies, and few responses failed to address the task at least in part. Candidates continue to be assessed on how well they can formulate a clear and structured response and develop a range of relevant ideas in an appropriate format.

The ability to write reasonably accurate German remains central to Paper 2. Examples of both well-written responses and poor attempts were to be found in answer to all five tasks. By far the most popular was task 4, followed by tasks 1, 2 and 3. Task 5 elicited the smallest number of responses.

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

The majority seemed well prepared for this exam, and there were hardly any responses which failed to reach the minimum word-count, and very few which significantly exceeded the maximum. It was again encouraging to see that many candidates planned their responses before writing them, although 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. One candidate commented in task 2 on German 'Trachten', but then rather spoiled matters by confessing that they did not know anything about them. As in all matters, both language and content, the exam is there to show what you know, and where necessary to seek to conceal what you do not know.

In this respect candidates need to make sure that they read the task carefully. The scenarios are invariably quite long and detailed, and candidates should unpick the question to determine text type, purpose, perspective and audience, as well as ensuring that aspects of the task are not overlooked.

Most candidates seemed reasonably well-prepared in their approach to text formats, none of those in this Paper 2 presenting major problems. Refreshingly, few descended into writing a thinly disguised essay for any of the tasks, although a couple of task 1 came close to being an essay, and one candidate produced a task 5 response which was a balanced argument with a conclusion – hardly the most persuasive of letters.

As in previous sessions, the biggest weakness lies in overall standards of written accuracy. Responses in largely well-written German remain the minority. There are still many candidates who display little understanding of the fundamentals of German sentence structure and grammar, with frequent and 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), poor formation of derived words, and at times an excess of Anglicisms also impinge upon the marks awarded for Language. Conversely, with solid verb forms and agreement, competent main clause word order and a reasonable range of vocabulary, it is easily possible to score 7+ for Language without venturing too far into the realms of complex structures and clauses.

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

Question 1

This, like tasks 2 and 3, was chosen by nearly 20% of candidates. The subject matter should have been very accessible, and indeed a high proportion of responses, compared with other tasks, scored highly, but there were also a significant number of marks at the lower end of the scale. Good responses addressed all aspects in a convincing article format, including quotations from a range of people. Many others, however, failed completely to include "wie reagiert die Umgebung" in the response, which limited the marks in Criterion B, and details of specific activities for young people were at times limited. There was also some rather unrealistic interpretation of "Treffpunkt für junge Leute", including locations offering a range of shops, cafes, discos and cinemas. This is the town centre, not a place in the centre where young people meet.

The article format was generally handled well, although occasionally the response came close to being an essay and in one case the candidate wrote what seemed to be an advertising leaflet.

Question 2

Responses to this task were characterised by content which was often largely irrelevant to the central issue as expressed in the second sentence of the task. The focus should have been on the people, their appearance, and specifically their clothing. Although this can be rather limiting, there is nothing to prevent candidates widening their response to other aspects of German society, customs and traditions by linking in to appearance and clothing, however tenuously. Instead, however, many focused almost exclusively on aspects which they failed to make relevant, including Christmas, food, the weather, castles, alternative energy and recycling. No doubt these were aspects with which candidates were better acquainted, but the aim is not to reproduce aspects of German life and society studied in lessons but to respond to a given task.

Many were rescued by writing a response in reasonably accurate German and by relatively successful interpretation of the blog format, and there were many responses in the mid-mark range overall, although it was striking how many 'Reiseblogs' just happened to be at Christmas.

Question 3

This task produced the highest number of marks towards the upper end of the range. There were some interesting and novel remedies suggested, many involving various plants and items of food and drink, as well as at times some less inviting and rather incongruous ingredients, and the style was often very well suited. Rather a large number of responses, however, chose to focus on grandmother's tips for a general healthy lifestyle and diet, rather than address the writer's specific ailments. Although this would no doubt help with the writer's general health outlook, it is a rather wide interpretation of the task. One candidate even wrote at length about the importance to the national economy of good health in the population, clearly forgetting that this was an email to a friend.

The email format posed few problems, although in some cases candidates need to make it more evident that this is an email rather than an informal letter. This is not difficult to do, but can mean the difference between 4 and 5 marks for format.

Question 4

This was by far the most popular task, chosen by over 30% of candidates, and elicited marks across the full range. The better responses were characterised by a clear introduction setting the scene and introducing the sporting personality to the radio audience, followed by intelligent and interesting questions which allowed the interviewee to respond in more than simplistic factual terms. With interviews it can be difficult to ensure that the response includes enough complexity and variety of vocabulary, structures and ideas, and this was evident when candidates chose to have a series of short questions and answers on more personal everyday aspects of the sportsperson's life. Two candidates misunderstood the task – one conducted an interview in advance of a radio programme; another had the sportsman interview the pupil. This was treated relatively leniently.

The interview format was generally handled well, with some even reproducing typical features of speech such as interruptions and exclamations. The only significant issues surrounded the absence of an introduction or, at times, the interview coming to a rather abrupt end.

Question 5

Although one might think that many candidates would grasp the opportunity to write a standard formal letter, this was the least popular of the tasks. The spread of marks was comparable with the spread for the other four tasks. Perhaps the task was less popular because candidates could not think of many reasons against introducing laptops into the school, and were therefore unsure how to be effectively persuasive in campaigning against laptops. Indeed some of the reasons advanced were a little spurious (will pupils really forget how to use a pen?) but were nonetheless accepted. However, the content does need to try to persuade the school head, and should not (as was the case in one instance) be presented as a balanced argument outlining all the pros and cons and drawing a conclusion. This response was clearly a thinly disguised essay.

Most of those who chose this task were familiar with the main conventions of formal letter writing, although some failed to maintain the appropriate formality by using “Sie”, and “Alles Liebe” is scarcely an appropriate way to end this particular letter.

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 in previous reports, there is a need for basic grammatical accuracy in order to score high marks. A lack of awareness of the fundamentals of German sentence structure will always affect the meaning, thus affecting the marks for Criterion A and B. Candidates need to show command of key aspects of verb tense formation, word order and cases to access more than half marks in Criterion A. 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 and sentence length. These, along with structural and lexical variety all help to demonstrate some linguistic competence, and if aspects such as verb forms and word order are reasonably accurate, clear and simple language will still score up to 7-8 for Criterion A. It should be remembered that at Language B SL, the concept of “complex” language only occurs in Criterion A in the highest mark band.

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 an 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. Invariably these candidates score more highly in Criterion B, where both the development and organisation of ideas are assessed. It is equally disheartening to read scripts where there is a high incidence of crossings out, later insertions of extra text and redirection arrows. Such scripts are, apart from displaying a lack of planning, also far more difficult to read, with arguments and threads often hard to follow. All students should be encouraged to compose a plan.