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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned**.

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GERMAN

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Papers 8683/01 and 9717/01
Speaking

General comments

There was a wide range of entry, from candidates who had a German-speaking parent or relative to candidates for whom German was a completely foreign language acquired at school.

The overall performance of candidates was fair to very good. On the whole, candidates were well prepared and there were some very interesting conversations.

Teachers at Centres which have entered candidates for Speaking in the past seem now to be aware of the various requirements and regulations for this component, in particular the need for the candidate to ask the Examiner two questions in both the Topic Conversation and the General Conversation. On the whole, tests from these Centres were well examined and assessed.

There are two aspects, which need to be considered by new Centres:

- The candidate must ask at least two questions in the Topic Conversation and in the General Conversation. The syllabus states: "Candidates are required to seek information and the opinions of the teacher." If the candidate fails to ask a question, no marks can be awarded under the heading "Seeking information and opinions". If only one question is asked, then the maximum mark is 3 out of 5. If no question is asked, then no mark can be awarded.
- All timings of the test should be adhered to. The Sustained Speech should last 3 minutes, the Topic Conversation 7 to 8 minutes and the General Conversation 8 to 9 minutes. Some parts of the test lasted too long, and so the examination as a whole was allowed to run on much longer than the stipulated 20 minutes.

Specific issues

Individual Centre Reports will highlight specific issues.

Papers 8683/02 and 9717/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

There was a wide range of performance, from candidates who wrote fluently and accurately in stylish German to those who had difficulty in answering the questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section One

Question 1

Answers to **(b)** and particularly to **(c)** were those which were most frequently incorrect. Candidates had greater success with **(a)**, **(d)** and **(e)**.

(b) The most common incorrect answer was *weniger*. Candidates offered this, even though a verb was required as a synonym of *reduzieren*.

(c) A number of candidates wrote *deutlich* here.

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Question 2

Good candidates found various ways of paraphrasing the sentences successfully without making language errors even though paraphrasing was not in fact necessary. Candidates are required here to use the same form of words with a different grammatical construction. For example:

(b) Question: *Die Bundesregierung will Arbeitslosenhilfe senken, weil sie Geld sparen muss.*
Answer: *(Die Bundesregierung will Arbeitslosenhilfe senken, um …) Geld zu sparen.*

Answers to **(c)** and **(d)** were those which were most frequently incorrect.

(c) The correct answer was: *unter dem Arbeitslosengeld liegen*. A number of candidates wrote the opposite: ***über*** *dem Arbeitslosengeld liegen*.

(d) Some candidates may have understood "*sie*" to mean *die Regierung*, whereas it in fact referred back to *ihnen* in the given sentence, which related in the text to the unemployed. Those who thought it meant the government answered incorrectly: *Weil sie keine Arbeit mehr* ***vermitteln*** *können*, instead of *Weil sie keine Arbeit mehr* ***bekommen*** *können*. The modal verb here would also of course have needed to be in the singular: *kann*, in order to refer to *die Regierung*.

Questions 3 and 4

The main problems in these two exercises were as follows:

Firstly, some candidates failed to mention enough relevant points. Candidates are reminded to give full details in questions worth 3 or more marks.

Secondly, candidates needed to beware lifting from the text, answering instead with original wording, something that candidates of average to less than average ability in the language found particularly difficult to do. The rubric for **Questions 3** and **4** states: *ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben*. Where the candidate merely copies the relevant part of the text, no mark is awarded.

Thirdly, a few candidates this year were inclined to make a personal commentary on the issues raised, which should have been reserved for **Question 5**. In **Questions 3** and **4** candidates are required to follow the argument in the texts.

More able candidates made the most of the relevant points and also gained 4 or 5 marks for language in **Questions 3** and **4**.

The points below in italics were the least frequently conveyed adequately to gain a mark:

(a) *(Arbeitslose) die in der Arbeitssuche Erfolg haben könnten.*

(b) This was mostly correctly answered, but weaker candidates made only one of the two points needed.

(c) *Die (meisten) Deutschen wollen keinen faulen Leuten helfen* (1)

sondern nur denen, die arbeiten wollen. (1)

Either one of the above points was required (in addition to the other three which were more often mentioned) for the candidate to gain all four marks on this question.

(d) Again, not all points were made. The most obvious one was often omitted: *Er würde einen Alkoholtest machen müssen.* Candidates described the consequences of failing the test without stating that the test takes actually place (in Lübeck).

(e) This was mostly correctly answered, but weaker candidates made only one of the two points needed.

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Section Two

Question 4

The same comments apply here as to **Question 3** above. However, it must be added that the majority of candidates answered this exercise less well than **Question 3**, making fewer relevant points and more language errors.

The points below in italics were the least frequently conveyed adequately to gain a mark:

(a) *Sie werden in die Sozialhilfe abgeschoben (werden).* (1)

and particularly: *Sie werden denken, dass sie für den Arbeitsmarkt ungeeignet seien.* (1)

Just three points were necessary, so candidates could omit one of the above.

(b) Candidates tended to concentrate on the idea that the long-term unemployed should still be able to hope that they would be able to work again, omitting the following:

Wenn man 50 Jahre alt ist, (1)

sollte man nicht warten, bis man eine Rente bekommt. (1)

(c) Candidates usually referred to the tendency of some young people to have disagreements with their teachers, parents and employers, but they failed to mention the consequences, namely that these young people have no school-leaving certificate, fixed address, apprenticeship or work.

(d) Many candidates answered correctly, a number giving all four points needed here. Weaker candidates made just one or two points correctly. Some gave their own opinion which was not required here rather than focusing on a detailed response relating to the text.

(e) A number of candidates forgot to state that *older* unemployed people ought to receive training.

Question 5

The essential task is to summarise the two texts with original wording, according to the question set. Ten marks out of 20 are awarded for this aspect, as is stated on the question paper. Then the candidate is asked to give his or her own opinion on the issue for 5 marks. Indeed, some very able candidates express their own views whilst summarising the texts, in order to avoid repeating details.

Candidates are reminded that it is important to organise their response like a mini-essay in order to fit everything in to the stipulated 140 words. The answer is cut off at around 150 words or at the end of the sentence after 140 words are reached, and no further marks can be awarded for the remainder. Some candidates wrote at great length and failed to mention enough points in 140 words. Others gave their own opinions with relatively little regard for the set passages, thus losing most of the 10 content marks available. A few summarised the passages very well but did not devote enough space to their personal response to the texts, thereby gaining only one or two marks out of the 5 available.

Finally, 5 marks are awarded for language. Language marks awarded here were broadly comparable to those awarded in **Questions 3** and **4**, with candidates maintaining their consistency. However, on some scripts more errors appeared than in previous exercises. Candidates should bear in mind the need to allocate time carefully to the different questions, including allowing time for checking their answers.

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Papers 8683/03 and 9717/03

Essay

General comments

All questions were attempted. Most popular was **Question 4**, *Chancengleichheit*, closely followed by the questions on *Arbeitslosigkeit*, under the heading *Zeitgenössische Aspekte der deutschsprachigen Gesellschaft*, *Der Generationskonflikt* and *Krieg und Frieden*. *Essen und Trinken* had a small number of takers and the question on *Kulturelles Leben* very few indeed. There were only a small number of linguistically very weak essays, although a good many candidates still have problems with word order, inflected endings and with more specialised vocabulary.

Previous reports have pointed out that titles set are intended to provoke discussion. It is not advisable for candidates to state their conclusions at the outset. One essay, for example, began: *Meiner Meinung nach wird es innerhalb einer Familie sicher Generationskonflikte geben*, effectively excluding any need for making a case. It may be helpful to quote a good opening paragraph in full, as follows (reproduced with errors as in the original):

Seit der Gleichberechtigung für Frauen zum Thema geworden ist, war es immer schwierig für Frauen, eine gute Ebengewicht zwischen ihre neu-erworbene Rechte als Frau und ihre Pflichte zu Hause zu finden. Früher nahmen Männer an, ihre Frauen würden zu Hause bleiben, das Hausarbeit machen und auf den Kindern passen. Heutzutage fangen Partners oft an beide zu arbeiten, aber sobald sie Kinder bekommen, muss die Frau ihre Karriere aufgeben. Ist das wirklich notwendig? Vielleicht ist es auch möglich für Frauen Karriere zu machen während sie Mütter sind.

This paragraph sets out to explain how the title has been understood, summarises the background so as to present the issues clearly and points the way forward to the next phase of the essay. It allows for a case to be presented and a conclusion to be arrived at after debate.

The main criticism of many essays is that they fail to construct an argument that sets out the issues and arrives at a conclusion. There is a tendency to rely on generalised, or even random, statements which are not supported by evidence.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Welche Probleme gibt es für Arbeitslose in Deutschland?

It was not absolutely essential to have facts and figures at one's disposal when answering this question, but such facts could often buttress an answer and provide a context to the problems discussed. Candidates showed knowledge of a range of problems, and were able to quote cases from their own families in some instances. The best essays were written by candidates who were aware of recent developments in the policy of Kanzler Schröder's government towards a reform of laws and social security for the unemployed and were able to discuss the pros and cons of the proposed changes.

Question 2

«*Es gibt keinen Generationskonflikt innerhalb der Familie.*» *Ist das auch Ihre Meinung?*

Almost universally, candidates disagreed with the premise of the question. Candidates had no doubt that a conflict between the generations had always existed and continued to exist. There is, apparently, no way that parents can hope to understand their children, whether this applies to clothes, music or going out. Several candidates used the word *hedonistisch* to refer to their own generation and contrasted this with the outdated values of a bygone age. Some candidates showed how prevalent conflict between the generations is by pointing to problems between their parents and grandparents. Responses to the question were thus quite powerful though wholly one-sided. Perhaps candidates are right, and the answer is as clearly defined as they think.

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Question 3

«*Essen und Trinken hält Körper und Seele zusammen.*» *Was ist für Sie die Bedeutung dieses Sprichwortes?*

This was not a popular title and was not well understood by those candidates who attempted it. The problem was that few could explain what *Seele* might signify in this context. So the essays tended to be constructed around the notion of healthy eating with no real attempt to get at the meaning of the proverb. One candidate attempted to meet the terms of the question with the following interpretation:

Meiner Meinung nach isst und trinkt der Körper das, worauf die Seele eines Menschen sich sehnt. Zum Beispiel, wenn es der Seele gut geht, dann möchte sie eventuell etwas gesundes essen und trinken...Oder wenn es der Seele schlecht geht, greift der Mensch oft zu Alkohol und ungesundem Essen.

This is not entirely clear, but is interesting as an effort to understand the meaning of the proverb.

Question 4

Ist es wirklich unmöglich, dass Frauen die gleichen Chancen im Beruf haben, wenn sie auch ihre Rolle als Mütter erfüllen wollen?

This was a popular title and was generally well done, with candidates showing a good understanding of the issues involved.

Question 5

Was sind für Sie interessante Aspekte des kulturellen Lebens?

The title was intended to be very open, so that candidates could choose to write on themes of real interest to themselves. In the event, it was the least popular title, and the essays produced were rather rambling and unfocused.

Question 6

«*Krieg wird es immer geben. Das gehört zur menschlichen Natur.*» *Sind Sie auch so pessimistisch?*

The answer is that yes, most candidates are pessimistic. On the evidence of history, they see war as never-ending. Several drew attention to the fact that even between individuals, and within families, quarrels are bound to occur, so between nations there can be no hope. One candidate tried to argue that it was not human nature that was at fault, but economic and social circumstances. Others laid the blame at the door of national leaders rather than of humanity in general.

Papers 8671/04 and 9717/04
Texts

General comments

Candidates who did well on this paper were able to demonstrate sound knowledge of the texts studied, choosing good examples to illustrate points made and arguing coherently. A number of the difficulties encountered by candidates were similar to those highlighted in previous reports, notably a tendency to retell the story and an inability to adapt their material to the question chosen.

Focus on the terms of the question

Candidates are reminded of the importance of writing answers relevant to the question, deciding first of all when tackling a question on the significance of the words used. They need to engage with the terms of the question set and to focus on the issues raised by it. In many cases candidates retold or summarised the story but did not produce an answer to the question set. It is a useful strategy for candidates to write the title of their essay at the top of their answer as a means of reminding themselves about their choice of task while writing.

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Structuring the essay

In structuring their essays candidates need to remember that an essay should be seen, first and foremost, as an argument. The writer is seeking to persuade the reader of the validity of the argument he/she is putting forward. An argument must be properly structured, introducing the theme, presenting evidence and leading to a conclusion. It is not generally advisable to start an essay as some candidates did by agreeing with the title. Candidates are also reminded of the need to write a clearly identifiable conclusion as well as about using paragraphs to help them achieve a coherent structure.

Storytelling

Thorough knowledge of the story as demonstrated by candidates scoring well is obviously crucial. At the same time it is clear from the published criteria for marking the essay that simply retelling the story gains low marks. Knowledge of the story needs to be tied in with the title of the essay, and evidence from the book must be *relevant* to the title. A candidate gains few marks if their knowledge of the text is not examined critically in the light of the question asked. Candidates may presume that the Examiner has detailed knowledge of the text and that they can therefore concentrate on their analysis.

Length

Some candidates' answers were too short. This was unfortunate as what had been written indicated in many cases that higher marks could have been achieved if the candidate had carried on with their argument. A few candidates wrote only two essays rather than three, while in one instance a candidate produced only one essay.

Language

A few candidates were unable to produce language suited to expressing an appropriate argument. Some essays were difficult to follow because of weaknesses in lexis and grammar.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum, Heinrich Böll

(a) The few candidates who tackled this extract were all able to comment on the use of language and had some relevant points to make with reference to **(ii)** and **(iii)**.

(b) This proved to be a popular question, yielding a wide variety of answers. Some candidates showed good insight when addressing the question as to how and why Katharina lost her honour; others were over-dependent on narrative and memorised material, which they could not always relate to the task successfully. Candidates were asked to provide their own opinion and this did not always happen.

Question 2

Der kaukasische Kreidekreis, Bertolt Brecht

(a) Only a few candidates chose this question and provided, on the whole, satisfactory answers. Better answers used the text extract well to back up points made.

(b) Again only a few candidates chose this question, which dealt with the function of *Teil 1* in Brecht's piece. One essay was unfinished and a number of other answers showed a lack of understanding of the question and simply proceeded to retell the story.

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Question 3

Damals war es Friedrich, Hans Peter Richter

(a) This question was, on the whole, tackled well. Many candidates provided a good analysis of the grandfather's character and gave detailed explanations why he did not want his grandson to play with Friedrich. A small number of candidates, however, failed to understand the exact relationship between parents and grandfather. Some candidates omitted to mention that the family was dependent on grandfather's financial help. Some candidates had problems expressing their ideas in a suitable register. One candidate for example started "*Nun ja, das ist leicht zu ersehen*." A less conversational tone and a more precise statement would have been more appropriate.

(b) This question involved discussing the friendship between Friedrich and the narrator. Some candidates argued that their friendship broke down in the course of the story, others argued the opposite. There was no "correct" answer here; the success of their essay depended wholly on their line of argument and the choice of examples provided to back up points made. This question was tackled well on the whole.

Question 4

Saisonbeginn, Elisabeth Langgässer

(a) Examiners were expecting a good focus on the passage and an argument that was coherent, detailed and backed up with well chosen examples from the text, which candidates who did well were able to provide.

(b) Nobody chose this question.

Section 2

Question 5

Der Tod in Venedig, Thomas Mann

(a) A smallish number of candidates opted for this task. Most answers showed fair relevance and knowledge and were well organised. The best essays did not simply provide a list of *Todesboten*, but offered a more detailed analysis as to *why* these characters were perceived as such.

(b) Very few candidates opted for this task. Most answers were rather superficial and indicated a lack of understanding of the task chosen.

Question 6

Der Schimmelreiter, Theodor Storm

(a) A fair number of candidates chose this question. Many started off by agreeing with the statement in the task, when it would have been better to leave this until an argument had been developed. A few candidates found it difficult to choose the right tone for their essay and were too conversational in parts e.g. *Das er für Progressivität steht mag ich da schon gelten lassen*. However, some sound knowledge of the text was shown and in many cases answers went beyond mere story telling and stated coherently why the candidate agreed or disagreed. Candidates' success depended wholly on their ability to provide a sound argument which was backed up by aptly chosen illustrations.

(b) A variety of answers was provided, ranging from very good to insubstantial. Several candidates relied too much on narration, whilst better candidates were able to analyse the themes of *Natur* and *Aberglaube* throughout the text, providing good examples.

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Question 7

Das Gauklermärchen, Michael Ende

(a) Nobody attempted this question.

(b) This question where tackled showed sound knowledge of the text as well as an attempt to analyse and discuss how the relationship between Eli and the other characters changes in the course of the story. Some relevant observations were provided and good examples chosen from the text to illustrate points made.

Question 8

Der Vorleser, Bernard Schlink

(a) Although a relatively small number of candidates chose this question answers on the whole showed a good understanding of the text and some good points were made. The best answers tried to show *why* the title was appropriate for Schlink's book.

(b) Again, a smallish number of candidates chose this task and their success depended on the opinion of the candidate and their ability to back up a coherent argument with appropriate examples from the text. Some good answers were the result here, but also one or two very basic ones, which depended too much on narrative rather than attempting to answer the question.

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