



GCSE
German

8668/SF Paper 1 Speaking Foundation Tier

Report on the Examination

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Introduction

It is pleasing to report that the 2024 GCSE German Foundation tier speaking test was successful in its primary aim of allowing all students to demonstrate a level of oral proficiency commensurate with their ability. Nearly all students had been entered for the appropriate tier. The overall impression is that student performance continues to improve, probably due to increased familiarity with the specification and improved techniques for tackling the Role-play and Photo card tasks.

The following report aims to give a comprehensive overview of the Foundation tier speaking test, both in terms of teacher conduct and student performance. It will highlight best practice as well as signposting areas for future improvement. The content of this report has been informed by senior examiners listening to a wide sample of student performance and is therefore representative of the entry cohort as a whole.

Quality of recordings

Nearly all tests were conducted in a suitable venue with a quality recording device. However, there were a small number of cases where external background noise and/or poor-quality recordings affected the audibility of what the students said. Centres are advised to check the quality of their sound recording devices before conducting speaking tests.

Timings

Nearly all students completed the Photo card task comfortably within the Foundation tier time limit of two minutes. On the rare occasions that not all five questions were asked within the allotted time, this was due to a very slow delivery by the student and/or an overlong and repetitive type of answer to the first question eliciting a description of the photo.

Most General conversations adhered to the minimum and maximum timings. Very few failed to reach the minimum time; however, there were some occasions when coverage of the second theme did not meet the minimum time requirement. This impacted on the mark awarded for communication.

Centres are advised to note that the timing of the second General conversation theme starts immediately the first question on that theme is asked. All time used up to this point is allocated to coverage of the first theme. Centres are also reminded that anything said by the student beyond the maximum time limit is disregarded for assessment.

Conducting the Role-play task

The prescribed role in the teacher's booklet was adhered to by most teachers. However, despite this issue being flagged up in previous reports, some teacher-examiners re-worded the script, thereby invalidating any subsequent response by the student.

In the case of two-part questions, often ones requiring an opinion and reason, it is good practice to elicit the two elements separately. This was not always common practice even though it is helpful to students.

Conducting the Photo card task

Most teacher-examiners asked the questions as they appeared on the card. Paraphrasing is allowed but any change of wording must maintain the exact original meaning of the question. For example, on Photo cards A and C Task 3, it was permissible to substitute *'in letzter Zeit'* with *'neulich'* and on Photo card H Task 4, *'Schulmannschaft'* could be replaced by *'Schulteam'*.

Despite clear guidance in last year's report, there were still attempts at rephrasing questions in an unacceptable way. This sometimes took the form of repeating the key interrogative at the beginning of the question. For example, on Photo card C, Task 5: *Wie oft ... wie oft lernst du Informatik?* On other occasions, a key element of a question was fronted and repeated, as in Photo card B: *Letztes Jahr ... Welche Geschenke hast du letztes Jahr gekauft?* On a few occasions, an additional element was added to the question, often to signal a future time frame. For example, on Photo card I: *Möchtest du in der Zukunft mit alten Leuten arbeiten?* Such questioning technique provides an unfair advantage to those students; to maintain fairness any subsequent student response has to be invalidated.

Teacher-examiners are reminded that, if a student has started to give a wrong but still incomplete answer, the full question can be re-asked. However, if a complete and wrong answer has been given, any subsequent answer to a repeated question will be disregarded for assessment.

Conducting the General conversation

Most teacher-examiners asked questions that were appropriate to the ability of the student. There was still, on occasion, the sense of a set list of questions being asked without consideration of the ability or interests of a particular student.

Questions were consistently asked that allowed all students to give and explain opinions, necessary for accessing the Foundation tier top band for Communication. Higher attaining students were nearly always given the chance to use three-time frames and thereby access the 9-10 band for Range and accuracy.

A few teacher-examiners persisted in asking low attaining students a succession of tense-orientated questions, which left them confused and resulted in unclear or even unintelligible responses. It is worth noting that the successful use of three-time frames is only required for a top band mark in Range and accuracy, and that some students will be more successful answering a range of simple questions in the present tense.

At times, students misunderstood a question and gave an understandable but inappropriate response. When this occurs, it is important for the teacher-examiner to curtail the response by rephrasing the question or asking a subsequent question. Any irrelevant information offered by the student cannot be credited and will count against the accuracy of the performance.

It is important that teacher-examiners employ a questioning technique through which students are clearly able to demonstrate spontaneity. Some tests were conducted in such a way that allowed this to happen and the result was a conversation that had a pleasing feel of authenticity. However, examiners noted that this was the exception rather than the rule and too many performances were dominated by pre-learnt responses.

In some examples of best practice, teacher-examiners allowed even the lowest attaining students to demonstrate spontaneity through the use of simple follow-up questions, such as ‘*Und wie findest du ...?*’ ‘*Warum?*’ and ‘*Wie oft?*’ This kind of questioning technique can really help low attaining students sustain a conversation.

Most teacher-examiners were aware of the requirement for the student to ask a question during the General conversation. Some students asked the question at a moment of their choice while others waited for the teacher to elicit it at the end of the test. Unfortunately, some questions were elicited and asked beyond the maximum time limit, or the student was not prompted at all to ask a question.

Some students had been trained to ask a question through adding *Und du?* to the end of a response. For example: *Ich spiele Fußball. Und du?* This is a legitimate technique as long as the question tag corresponds to the preceding response. On occasions, this was not the case and so the task was not fulfilled. For example: *Fußball ist toll. Und du?*

There were a few occasions when a question asked by the student was invalid as it was not relevant to either of the two General conversation themes.

Student Performance

Student Performance in the Role-play task

Most students appear to have been well-trained, were able to understand the target language bullet-points and formulated an appropriate and succinct response including a verb. It is pleasing to note that there were very few examples of a student lifting and using the subject pronoun (*du/Sie*) or possessive adjective (*dein/Ihr*) from the bullet point. This is definitely an area which has seen improvement during the course of this specification.

It was pleasing to see that students of all abilities recognised and responded appropriately to the standard formulation of *Deine/Ihre Meinung über ...* The most common opinion structure used was ‘*Ich finde ...*’ with a simple adjective. As was noted last year, there were very few examples of ‘*Ich finde ...*’

Some students developed responses beyond what was necessary and this was not always to their advantage. It is important to note the number of details required to fulfil a task, which is always indicated in brackets at the end of a bullet point.

Some students found the transactional Role-plays more challenging than the informal scenarios. However, most were well-trained in recognising when a request has to be made, denoted by the words ‘*für Sie.*’ For example, on Role-play 6 Task 1: ‘*Ein Boot für Sie.*’ The most frequent structure in the student response, ‘*Ich möchte,*’ had been well drilled and was mostly accurately pronounced. On occasion it was rendered as ‘*Ich mochte,*’ which creates ambiguity and can only score a maximum of one mark.

On the transactional Role-plays 1 and 6, there was a phrase (‘*Kein Problem.*’) to acknowledge the student response to the first task but no direct question to prompt a response to the second task. This is a technique for trying to elicit a response with a verb from the student and has been seen in previous series. Students should be prepared to address the next task once the teacher-examiner has responded to the previous one, whether there is a direct question or not.

Quite a few students did not fully accomplish a task when the bullet point included a key element after a hyphen and this was disappointing. The most common example was Role-play 8 Task 1: *Die Mittagspause – wie lange*. This was often read as a prompt for an opinion, which did not fulfil the task. The same misunderstanding also occurred quite often on Role-play 4 Task 4: *Ihr Haus im Moment – wo*. It is important for students to read each task very carefully during the preparation time so that they give relevant and complete responses.

Encouragingly, many students were able to form a question effectively from the prompt word(s) provided on the question (?) task. As in the previous series, examiners noted that many students had been tactically trained to apply a *Wie findest du ...?* formulation. This worked perfectly for some prompts, such as Role-play 7: ? *Hausaufgaben*. There were, however, other prompts where an article was needed, such as Role-play 3: ? *Online-Shop*. When an article was omitted, 2 marks could still be gained for Communication, with the error being considered under Knowledge and use of language. Teachers are advised to remind students to consider the need for an article with the question prompt.

Some students found it challenging to respond appropriately to the unprepared (!) task. Students who succeeded were those who easily recognised key question words and had been trained to give a short but appropriate response, even if the rest of the question may not have been fully understood. For example, Role-play 4 Task 2: *Wie viele Schlafzimmer möchten Sie? Drei*.

Specific Foundation tier Role-play comments

The following Role-play tasks generally caused the most issues for students.

Role-play 1

Task 2: Quite a few students used ‘*Uhr*’ instead of ‘*Stunde(n)*’. This did not communicate a relevant message.

Role-play 2

Some students gave an anglicised rendering of ‘*Freunde(n)*.’ This created some ambiguity and scored 1 mark.

Task 2: Some students could not state an age with a clear number.

Role-play 3

Task 2: Some students did not recognise the meaning of ‘*Marke*’.

Task 3: Quite a few students gave a number without a currency or gave a very anglicised pronunciation of ‘*Euro*’. Both errors created some ambiguity of meaning.

Task 4: Some students did not pronounce the Umlaut on ‘*Computergeschäft*’. This was classed as a minor error and considered under Knowledge and use of language.

Role-play 4

Task 1: Some students used *'kaufen'* instead of *'mieten'*, which was fully accepted. When *'mieten'* was used, it was sometimes rendered as *'meiten'*, which caused some ambiguity and scored 1 mark.

Task 3: *'Garten'* was sometimes anglicised as 'Garden'. This scored 1 mark.

Task 4: The phrase *'im Moment'* was often anglicised, but this was not penalised under Communication.

Role-play 5

Task 2: *'Aktivität'* was often pronounced without the Umlaut, but this was classed as a minor error not affecting communication.

Role-play 6

Task 1: *'Boot'* was often pronounced as an English footwear item, but this was not deemed to affect clear communication of the message.

Task 3: As in Role-play 1, quite a few students used *'Uhr'* instead of *'Stunde(n)'*, which did not communicate any relevant message.

Task 4: *'Preis'* was sometimes pronounced as *'Pries'*, which created some ambiguity.

Role-play 7

Task 2: An unsounded Umlaut on *'Aktivität'* was classed as a minor error whereas a very anglicised rendering of *'Buch'* created more ambiguity of meaning.

Task 4: There was often a mix of a singular noun and plural verb or vice versa. Such an error was considered under Knowledge and use of language.

Role-play 8

Task 1: Some students who recognised the need to state a length of time did not communicate a relevant message as they used *'Uhr'* instead of *'Stunde(n)'*. *'Mittagspause'* was also often anglicised, reducing the potential of the task to 1 mark.

Task 2: A relevant message in which *'Kantine'* was rendered as 'Canteen' scored 1 mark.

Role-play 9

Task 1: A surprising number of students offered an opinion using the anglicised *'Skoole'*. This was considered to create some ambiguity of meaning.

Task 2: One mark was scored when the *'für meine Zukunft'* element was omitted in an otherwise appropriate response.

Task 5: An accurate pronunciation of *'Universität'* was rare. The mark scheme was quite forgiving, allowing *'Yooninversität'* or *'Universitat'* to score 2 marks and *'Yooniversitat'* to score 1 mark. However, the interesting creation of *'Yooniversistadt'* was too far removed to gain any credit.

Student Performance in the Photo card task

Most students had been well trained in preparing suitably developed responses to the first three seen questions. A fully developed response comprises three clauses including a verb. A few students either offered too little information or gave over-long responses where a lack of clarity had an impact on the mark awarded.

Most students were able to give a simple three-clause response to the first prepared question ‘*Was gibt es auf dem Foto?*’ Many made reference to the setting, number of people, description of people and the weather. Occasionally, students stated the mood of a person based on facial expression. For example, in Photo card D, ‘*Der Junge sieht glücklich aus.*’ A few students went on to make statements that could not be credited as they did not refer directly to the content of the photo.

It was encouraging to note that most students began their response with ‘*Es gibt.*’ As in the previous series, the very ambiguous ‘*Der ist*’ was rarely heard. However, an invented present continuous form to describe activities was still quite prevalent. For example, in card A: ‘*Sie sind Fußball sehen.*’

Most students were able to give and explain opinions. There were few students who were restricted to the 1-3 band through the inability to offer an opinion or could not access the 10-12 band because no opinion was explained.

There was a rather mixed picture in terms of students’ ability to recognise and respond appropriately to the question eliciting a response in a past or future time frame. At Foundation tier, this question will always be the second or third prepared bullet point.

One common difficulty was an inability to recognise questions in the third person or third person plural. Each Photo card will include at least two questions requiring a response that is not in the first person, so it is important that students are trained to respond appropriately.

Specific Foundation tier Photo card comments

The following Photo card tasks generally caused the most issues for students:

Photo card B

Task 2: ‘*Weihnachtsmärkte*’ was often mispronounced. An unsounded Umlaut was classed as a minor error; however, an anglicised ‘*w*’ or ‘*ei*’ sounded as ‘*ie*’ were more serious errors affecting the clarity of the intended message.

Task 3: The reference to presents was widely recognised, but some students misunderstood the context and responded about presents they had received. This could not be credited.

Photo card D

Task 3: Pronunciation errors in the rendering of *‘möchte’*, *‘Familie’* and *‘elektrisches Auto’* often caused a lack of clarity.

Task 4: The question start *‘wohin’* was not widely recognised and students often gave an irrelevant opinion about travel by bus.

Task 5: When students attempted to answer in a sentence, the verb form *‘recycle’* was often pronounced as the English word.

Photo card E

Task 3: The *‘freiwillig’* element of the response was often pronounced with an anglicised *‘w’*.

Task 5: This question was a challenge for many. However, a minority of well-trained students recognised the *‘Wie oft’* question start and gained credit by responding with a simple time phrase.

Photo card F

Task 2: The mangled pronunciation of *‘Ferien’*, mutating into *‘Fahrien’* or *‘feiern’*, sometimes caused a lack of clarity in the response.

Photo card G

Task 2: Some students understood *‘Theater’* to be the building rather than the subject. Furthermore, an anglicised pronunciation of *‘Theater’* was very common.

Photo card H

Task 2: The pronunciation of *‘Musik’* was often anglicised, although this was considered a minor error rather than a lapse in clarity.

Task 3: The pronunciation of *‘Mittagspause’* was sometimes anglicised, which was marked as a lapse in clarity.

Photo card I

Task 3: The phrase *‘mit alten Leuten’* was sometimes misunderstood as *‘mit Eltern’*.

Task 4: There was a general inability to clearly state the timings of an ideal working day. *‘Uhr’* was often used instead of *‘Stunden’* and, when this occurred, no message was conveyed.

Task 5: The switch to the third person plural (*‘deine Freunde’*) in the question confused some students who gave an irrelevant first-person response about part-time work.

Foundation tier General conversation

Generally, students managed to sustain a conversation for the minimum amount of time across two themes. Most students made an effort to develop responses, particularly to prepared questions from the nominated theme, often giving and sometimes explaining opinions in addition to basic factual information. Sometimes basic inaccuracies of structure or pronunciation caused a lack of clarity.

Most students relied on simple structures and vocabulary, which was sometimes repetitive, to convey basic messages. Opinions tended to include the same adjectives ‘*gut*,’ ‘*interessant*’ and ‘*langweilig*.’ Some students did show an ability to accurately incorporate a greater range of structure, including *weil*-clauses and modal verbs. On some occasions, intended messages were not communicated because the attempted vocabulary and structures were too complex for the ability of the student.

Students attempted to demonstrate the use of different time frames with varying degrees of success. When forming the perfect tense, an auxiliary verb was often omitted, resulting in a phrase such as *Ich Fußball gespielt*. A clause without a past participle was also common, as in *Ich habe Hausaufgaben machen*. When referring to a future time frame using *Ich werde*, some students forgot to include a second verb in its infinitive form at the end of the clause, as in *Ich werde Fußball*. Others used a past participle instead of infinitive, as in *Ich werde Hausaufgaben gemacht*.

The standard of pronunciation was quite variable and only some students were able to consistently enunciate basic German sounds such as *ei / ie / ch / j / w / Umlauts*. Many students pronounced words in an understandable way but showed little intonation to support the meaning of what was said.

Some students were able to deliver a reasonably fluent performance by managing to incorporate some pre-learnt responses. A smaller number of students complemented this by showing a clear ability to respond spontaneously to follow-up questions. However, as pointed out earlier, some conversations were conducted in such a way that students were afforded little opportunity to demonstrate spontaneity rather than allowing them the opportunity to show what they could say.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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