

GERMAN B

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 15	16 - 22	23 - 28	29 - 36

The range and suitability of the work submitted

In general, the essays in German this year were very well-researched and appropriate, and, I felt, an improvement on previous years. A good, well-focused and carefully thought-through research question usually led to a good or very good essay; conversely, there were a number of examples of essays (although this number was limited) where the topic was too broad to be treated effectively and in a focused enough way, within the word limit. In these circumstances, the essay usually became superficial and inadequately referenced. Literary topics, of which there were, as usual, a significant number, were often very well-treated, as they can lend themselves to a precise research focus, but there were also some very good examples of essays which dealt with contemporary culture, most notably the issues associated with the growth of national pride in Germany, and the role played in this by football. Some of the least successful essays attempted to compare a German-speaking culture with a non-German-speaking culture, partly because the focus was not always on a German-speaking culture, and partly because the topic was often too broad; there seemed to be fewer of these, however, this year.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: research question

Some candidates experienced difficulties in narrowing the focus of their research questions, but the majority had been well advised and had well-focused questions. Without a well-focused question, the rest of the essay most decidedly suffers, as it can be difficult to analyse and investigate in sufficient depth without an appropriate question.

B: introduction

This was usually well done, although not all candidates had read the mark scheme clearly in this respect.

C: investigation

This inevitably varied depending on the calibre of the candidate, but there were some excellent responses – a good, well-focused research question made a good investigation much easier to accomplish.

D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Performance here varied considerably, but was mostly in the top two bands.

E: reasoned argument

As with Criterion C, this inevitably varied depending on the calibre of the candidate – again, a good, well-focused research question made it much easier to develop a good reasoned argument.

F: application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject

Some candidates experienced difficulties in analysing their topics in sufficient depth, and sometimes more emphasis was placed on description or narrative rather than analysis, even by some of the best candidates. This was one of the criteria in which fewer candidates scored the highest marks

G: use of language appropriate to the subject

In most cases, the use of language communicated clearly and was used sensitively.

H: conclusion

Candidates' conclusions varied considerably, and some were very weak indeed. Again, much depended on the quality of the research question and on how the candidates had approached the question; very few conclusions pointed ahead to unresolved questions or other potential areas of interest to emerge, however.

I: formal presentation

Although the formal presentation was generally very good indeed, sometimes the quality of the referencing and even the references themselves were weak – even the best referenced essays could rely very heavily on Wikipedia, and it would be worthwhile if teachers warned students of the dangers of this.

J: abstract

The vast majority of candidates were very well aware of the formal requirements of the abstract, and followed them.

K: holistic judgment

Many candidates wrote interesting essays in which they demonstrated a genuine personal interest, and which were a pleasure to read.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

Teachers need to ensure that their candidates are entirely familiar with the mark scheme and its breakdown, so that they can judge their own output against it. Sometimes the nuance is in the different levels of mark awarded under each category, and candidates would be well-advised to read and be thoroughly conversant with these levels, so that they are in the best position to match their essays to the requirements of this examination. Above and beyond this, the best help that teachers can be to their students is to ensure that the students have narrowed the focus of their research questions appropriately.