



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2008

GERMAN

ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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General Introduction

1.1 The Syllabus

The Junior Certificate German syllabus is common for both Ordinary and Higher Levels. It was devised in the early Eighties as the syllabus for Intermediate Certificate German, with a one-level examination, and formed the basis of that examination for all candidates from 1987. In 1993, when the Junior Certificate replaced the Intermediate Certificate, a second level of examining (Ordinary Level) was introduced. The syllabus is grounded in the communicative approach to language learning, based around the needs and interests of pupils.

1.2 The Examination

German at both Higher and Ordinary level is assessed by a terminal written and aural examination of two and a half hours duration, marked out of 320 marks. This represents 100% of the examination for most candidates. An optional school-based oral assessment component, marked out of 80 marks is also available. This option is availed of by a small number of candidates. Candidates who avail of this option are marked out of 400 marks.

1.2.1 Terminal written examination

The paper is divided into three sections – I, II and III. Sections I and II are answered in Irish or in English. The sections are as follows:

- Section I, marked out of 140 marks, assesses the skill of **listening comprehension** over a range of five subsections, A-E, and eleven items of increasing level of complexity. All questions on Section I are compulsory. The material includes monologues, announcements, short verbal exchanges of a transactional nature, such as seeking/giving directions, organising shopping lists or recipe ingredients, and more developed conversations, some of which are telephone conversations. Section E is dedicated to aspects of the topic of school and learning. The CD recording is common to both levels. Greater detail of answering and complexity of understanding is required of Higher Level candidates.
- Section II, marked out of 100 marks at Higher Level and 120 marks at Ordinary Level, assesses the skill of **reading comprehension** over a range of seven subsections, A-G, all of which are compulsory. The material covers a range of reading skills, from recognition of public signs, comprehension of short advertisements, notices, advertisements, magazine articles and a semi-literary narrative. Some testing of spoken material is included in this section.
- Section III, marked out of 80 marks at Higher Level and 60 marks at Ordinary Level, assesses the skill of **written production**. Candidates are assessed on their ability to write accurately and appropriately in German. Candidates are required to answer two questions. At each level, candidates work from stimulus material in German to compose a letter. In addition to the letter, Higher Level candidates are required to write a short note or postcard.

In the case of Ordinary Level, there is a choice between B (gap-filling) and C (dialogue completion).

1.2.2 Optional Oral Examination

Guidelines for the optional school-based oral examination are provided by the State Examinations Commission. The oral examination is administered and assessed by the candidate's teacher. The test lasts between five and ten minutes. Teachers may opt to use their own format or to use the format suggested by the SEC, which is as follows:

- General Questions
- 2 Role Plays (one where candidate initiates, one where candidate responds)

The oral examination is recorded on tape or digitally. These recordings are retained in the schools and are available to be forwarded to the SEC. Where a teacher opts to use his/her own format, a copy of this format and of the marking scheme used are forwarded to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) with the results.

1.3 Candidature

The following table shows the number of candidates taking Junior Certificate German for the past five years.

Year	German candidates	% of total JC candidature	Higher Level		Ordinary Level	
			Candidates	%	Candidates	%
2004	10,897	19.2	7,651	70.2	3,246	29.8
2005	10,343	19.1	7,132	69.0	3,211	31.0
2006	10,476	18.1	7,278	69.5	3,198	30.5
2007	10,134	17.7	7,135	70.4	2,999	29.6
2008	9,507	17.0	6,705	70.5	2,802	29.5

Table 1: Numbers of Junior Certificate German candidates 2004 – 2008

2. ORDINARY LEVEL

2.1 Introduction

A total of 2,802 candidates sat the German examination at Ordinary Level in 2008.

2.2 Performance of Candidates

The following tables show the number of candidates sitting Ordinary Level German in 2004 - 2008 and the percentage of candidates achieving each grade in those years:

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
2004	3,246	6.7	35.0	32.0	17.1	6.9	2.2	0.1
2005	3,211	7.6	34.3	32.8	17.0	5.6	2.5	0.2
2006	3,198	5.7	37.2	35.2	16.3	4.1	1.3	0.2
2007	2,999	5.3	34.7	35.4	17.6	5.1	1.5	0.4
2008	2,802	5.6	39.9	31.8	16.3	4.6	1.5	0.3

Table 2: Results for Junior Certificate German, Ordinary Level 2004 – 2008

Year	Total	ABC	D	EFNG
2004	3,246	73.7	17.1	9.2
2005	3,211	74.7	17.0	8.3
2006	3,198	78.1	16.3	5.6
2007	2,999	75.4	17.6	7.0
2008	2,802	77.3	16.3	6.4

Table 3: ABC, D, EFNG rates, Junior Certificate German, Ordinary Level 2004 – 2008

Candidates have performed well over the years. Approximately 40% of candidates consistently scored over 70% in the paper, while some three out of every four candidates achieved a Grade C or higher on the paper.

2.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

2.3.1 Section I - Listening Comprehension

Part A: Grid filling from two monologues

This part was generally well answered, although many candidates confused *vierzehn* with fifteen, losing two marks.

Otherwise, candidates gained marks for the simpler details of where the two holidayed and what activities they took part in. Very few candidates gave 'chess' or 'cards' and few appeared to understand the idea of building a castle in the sand. Some candidates wrote that Sandra was engaged with 'high school musical'.

While family relatives, activities and food items were well done by most candidates, place names were not. Many candidates did not recognise *Nordsee*, *Insel*, *Nordtirol* or *Österreich*.

While *Gemüsesuppe* and *Krabben* (prawns) were often not understood or mistranslated, the mark available was usually gained for the alternative food item. 'Carrots' was frequently given.

Part B: Short transactions

Most candidates answered well in this part.

B1: Getting directions:

Where the answer was incorrect, candidates tended to opt for (*d*), though Examiners noted that some candidates had difficulty identifying right from left or *rechts* from *links*.

B2: Doctor's appointment:

The symptoms of illness were well answered but many candidates made an error in the time, answering 10.30 rather than 11.30. In general, candidates coped well with the spelling of the caller's name.

B3: Buying ice-cream:

Candidates scored well on this question. However, questions (iii) and (iv) asked for answers in the plural, but many candidates gave only one flavour and/or one drink. 'Lemon' was often written for 'lemonade'.

Part C: Candidates generally answered well in this part.

C1: Invitation:

'Bremen' was not often given. Most candidates recognised 'Munich'. A number of candidates answered the mode of transport incorrectly and a number answered 'train' for *U-bahn* or said they got a lift with his brother.

C2: Announcement:

'Babysitting' and 'car washing' were the most frequent correct answers. *Fenster putzen* gave rise to the answer 'fencing'. The phone number was often incorrect.

C3: Recipe

Candidates scored very well in this section. The most common error was 'sugar' for *Honig*.

Part D: Candidates generally attempted this part and answered quite well.

D1: Summer holidays

Examiners noted that the main difficulties occurred with number. Time periods in (i) were frequently incorrect. Responses ranged from ‘a couple of weeks’ to ‘three months’. Activities and weather were well answered.

D2: Special Olympics 2008

(i) Many candidates answered ‘July’ instead of ‘June’. Otherwise most candidates scored well in this section.

Part E: Student Exchange

Candidates who attempted this part generally scored high marks, although a small number of candidates did not make any attempt.

The question least well answered was question 2. Some candidates did not have an English or Irish equivalent for *Rathaus* and *Altstadt*.

In question 3, some candidates appeared to confuse *Grammatik* with *Mathematik*, and some candidates responded that the Irish group would learn ‘Maths’. *Irisches Tanzen* may not have been recognised and ‘Irish dancing’ was the most infrequent answer in question 4.

2.3.2 Section II - Reading Comprehension

Candidates tended to perform well in parts A-E of this section. The quality of responses in Parts F and G was more varied.

Part A: Matching signs and pictures

This was well answered by most candidates.

Part B: Advertisements

This question was very well answered, and most candidates were awarded full marks.

Part C: True/false advertisement

Questions 1 - 3 were incorrectly answered by some candidates. Marks awarded generally in the mid range.

Part D: Matching captions to pictures

This question involved some decoding of pictures, a graphic literacy skill, as well as understanding the captions.

While candidates in general scored well here, some offered incorrect captions, especially for pictures A-D. Most candidates had the correct caption for pictures E-H.

Picture C was the one most often incorrectly answered. Examiners noted that some candidates did not know the illness vocabulary *Mir ist schlecht?*

Part E: Grid filling: Texts about school pupils

This question was well answered. Areas of difficulty for some candidates included:

Käsebrod, Sportlehrerin, Erdkunde, reisen, Reisebüro, Straßenbahn, Tierärztin, Geschichte.

Candidates who did not know the meaning of *Käsebrod* (cheese sandwich) tended to write either 'cheese' or 'bread'. Examiners reported that candidates seemed to confuse *Erdkunde* and *Geschichte* while a few did not appear to know the word *Kunst*. Many candidates recognised the *Büro* within *Reisebüro*, writing 'work in an office'.

Part F: Jumbled dialogue

This question, which tests comprehension of individual sentences and the understanding of the logical structure of dialogues, was a challenge for some candidates. While a small number of candidates scored full marks, Examiners noted that some candidates did not attempt the question. It was also noted that some candidates had not mastered simple everyday greetings. Some candidates followed *Wie geht es dir?* with *Also gut, ...* or *Oh super,*

Part G: Semi-literary narrative *Henning hat einen Unfall*

Some candidates answered the questions in German rather than in English or Irish and a small number of candidates did not attempt the question.

A number of candidates took Henning to be female, in spite of the frequent occurrence of *er* and *sein*. Some candidates appeared to have some difficulties with the story line. Some did not note the various mentions of *Auto and Autofahrer, bremsen* and *fahren.. Zusammenschlagen* was translated in the footnotes, as Thomas threatened to 'beat up the driver if he found him', and candidates may have allowed themselves to be lead astray by that.

The least well answered question was 4 (a), where few candidates appeared to understand either *malen* or *Bild* and many did not give the detail about 21 elephants representing the classmates. In question 5, some candidates did not understand *vor*, answering instead 'after the holidays'. Some candidates incorrectly stated that his return had been made possible by his mother.

2.3.3 Section III - Written Expression

Examiners noted that the performance of candidates in this part of the examination has improved in the past few years.

Part A: LETTER

Candidates addressed themselves systematically to each of the questions asked and many were awarded good marks for content.

Most candidates attempted to answer all ten questions. However, many candidates neglected to complete the letter with a closing phrase such as *Schreib mir bald* and *Dein* or *Deine* with a name.

Candidates most often lost content marks in questions (5), (8) and (10). Examiners noted that candidates did not know the verb *bekommen*. They answered with *ich komme*, *ich habe* or omitted a verb entirely. Some candidates did not indicate a choice in point 10, writing *ich fährst im Sommer und bleibst Hause*.

Expression

In general, the expression mark awarded was lower than the content mark.

Examiners noted that some candidates used *ich* when answering, but lifted the second person verb-form from the question and reproduced it, rather than providing the first person verb-form (*ich wohnst*, *ich machst* etc.). Some spelling errors arose where words given in the questions were inaccurately transcribed into the letter.

Common language errors

Examiners noted the following common errors:

- Incorrect verb endings (especially second person for first person)
- The misspelling of *ist* as *is*
- Non-capitalisation of nouns, even where present in the stimulus letter
- Word order rules not respected, especially inversion of verb and subject but also time, manner, place
- Use of English or Irish ('Spain' written for *Spanien* etc.)
- Wrong choice of verb where the verb in the question was automatically chosen, i.e. *Wie siehst du aus?* (Haare? Augen?): Candidates wrote *ich sehe braune Haare* rather than *ich habe braune Haare*

Part B (NOTES / SENTENCES) or Part C (DIALOGUE)

Candidates were required to answer either B (Notes/Sentences) or C (Dialogue). The majority of candidates attempted B and a proportion of these also attempted C. Examiners noted that candidates tended to gain higher marks on B than on C.

Part B: NOTES / SENTENCES

This gap-filling exercise tests certain aspects of transforming memo-style notes into full sentences. Candidates are required to respect correct word order and, in some cases, to supply appropriate verbs with correct endings.

Examiners noted that this question was more successfully answered in 2008 than in previous years. Examiners noted a tendency on the part of some candidates to lift the word *Sprache* from the first column and insert it, rather than using the appropriate verb *schreiben* from the second column.

On the whole, candidates were more successful in inserting nouns and prepositions in the appropriate gap; where verbs were required, candidates had to both identify the appropriate verb and produce the correct verb form; they sometimes failed to insert the appropriate verb-ending. Examples were *lesen* and *tippen*.

Sentences 1- 5 were well answered. However, few candidates correctly picked *das* for the last gap.

Part C: DIALOGUE

Candidates were required to supply one half of a dialogue, following given guidelines.

Candidates attained some marks for content but in general, Examiners noted some issues of grammatical inaccuracies and sentence structure. Some candidates had difficulties in producing basic vocabulary items, such as *Geschenk*, *Junge*, *lesen*, *nehmen*. In some instances, the words were known but were misspelt.

This question required candidates to use at least one form of the verb *mögen*, e.g. *ich möchte* in the first sentence and possibly *er mag lesen* in the third, although they could also have said *er liest gern*.

Examiners noted candidate performance both on this question and on II F, the jumbled dialogue, could be improved by the further development of oral work at Junior Certificate level.

2.4 Conclusions

- The overall performance of candidates in this examination was good and Examiners noted an improvement on performance in recent years, particularly in the letter writing section. The performance of some very good candidates indicated that they could have done well on the Higher Level paper
- Candidates performed especially well in the earlier parts of Section II, Reading Comprehension
- The questions which act as effective discriminators of performance tend to be F and G of Section II, Reading Comprehension, and the expression mark component of Section III, Written Expression.

2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

Recommendations to Teachers:

- Refer to the published marking schemes, available at www.examinations.ie
- Use German regularly in the classroom and provide regular opportunities for practice in short dialogues and role plays
- Reinforce basic vocabulary as often as possible. Include days of the week, dates, months, numbers - especially clock time - place names, school subjects, hobbies, colours, food, pocket money, weather etc., as set out in the syllabus
- Provide regular “tape work” as well as oral practice to improve listening skills
- Ensure that students can differentiate between *die Bahn*, *U-bahn* and *Straßenbahn*
- Familiarise students with the location and spelling of major cities and regions in the German-speaking countries
- Ensure that students can recognise the language clues indicating gender – personal pronouns (*er, sie; ihm, ihr; ihn, sie*) and possessive adjectives (*seine, ihre*)
- Encourage students to practise the use of basic verbs in sentences
- Provide regular opportunities for students to practise unscrambling jumbled dialogues
- Remind students that they should always complete the letter appropriately
- Encourage students to develop good examination technique. This includes reading questions carefully to check exactly what information is being looked for and, where appropriate, transcribing words and phrases accurately; “if the question asks about *dein Lieblingsbuch*, there is no excuse for writing *meine Lieblingsbuch*”
- Encourage students to attempt all sections and questions on the paper
- Students should be discouraged from using pencil or correction fluid in the examination.

Recommendations to Students:

- Read all instructions carefully
- Attempt all questions on the paper and do not leave blanks
- Read the questions carefully noting the information that is looked for in the question, e.g. if two details are required, then ensure that you give two details
- Check that your spellings are correct
- Regularly revise basic vocabulary of everyday topics like days of the week, dates, months, numbers - especially clock time - place names, school subjects, hobbies, colours, food, pocket money, weather etc., and also descriptive adjectives for appearance
- Remember to complete the letter with a suitable ending such as *Schreib bald! Dein Michael* (or *Deine Michaela*)
- The use of pencil or correction fluid in the examination should be avoided.

3. HIGHER LEVEL

3.1 Introduction

A total of 6,705 candidates sat the German examination at Higher Level in 2008.

3.2 Performance of Candidates

The following table shows the number of candidates sitting Higher Level German in 2004 to 2008 and the percentage of candidates achieving each grade in those years:

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
2004	7,651	12.0	28.5	32.3	21.3	5.5	0.4	0.0
2005	7,132	11.6	31.2	32.4	19.4	4.8	0.6	0.0
2006	7,378	11.8	29.7	31.9	22.0	4.2	0.4	0.0
2007	7,135	12.6	30.3	32.5	20.5	3.9	0.2	0.0
2008	6,705	10.0	29.6	33.2	21.8	4.6	0.7	0.1

Table 1: Results for Junior Certificate German Higher Level 2004 – 2008

Year	Total	ABC	D	EFNG
2004	7,651	72.8	21.3	5.9
2005	7,132	75.2	19.4	5.4
2006	7,378	73.4	22.0	4.6
2007	7,135	75.4	20.5	4.1
2008	6,705	72.8	21.8	5.4

Table 2: ABC, D, EFNG rates for Junior Certificate German Higher Level 2004 – 2008

The tables above show that candidates sitting this paper level have performed well over the years. Some 40% of candidates have consistently been awarded over 70% in the paper, and about three out of every four candidates have been awarded a C grade or higher.

3.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

3.3.1 Section I - Listening Comprehension

Part A: Grid filling from two monologues

While this question was well answered, few candidates got full marks. Higher marks were, in general, gained on extract 1. Some candidates did not recognise basic vocabulary.

- *Where from:* This was well answered, though *Wien* was a common response (or other attempts at the German form of ‘Vienna’)

- *Height*: This was generally answered correctly
- *Brothers and Sisters*: This was well answered
- *Where relatives live*: Some candidates answered ‘uncle, aunt, grandparents’ or gave relatives’ names rather than where they lived. Candidates had difficulty with *Insel*, *Nordsee / Küste*, *Nordtirol*, even with *Berge*, and answered ‘hotel’ rather than ‘ski hotel’
- *Where sleep*: Many candidates gave fewer details than were expected, and few candidates gave ‘under the roof’
- *Three activities*: Many candidates scored full marks here, though they rarely answered ‘building a sand castle’ and some candidates did not appear to know *angeln*. Some answered ‘volleyball’ rather than ‘beach volleyball’
- *Food*: ‘Prawns’ (*Krabben*) was very rarely answered, though the mark was awarded for ‘crabs’; *Pizza* was confused with *Pilze* and *Gemüsesuppe* was often not recognised. Few gave the answer ‘soup’, but many mentioned ‘vegetables’ or ‘supper’. ‘Potatoes’ and ‘carrots’ were among the answers commonly given.

Part B: Short transactions

Most candidates answered well in this part.

B1: Getting directions: The venue was usually correct. A number of candidates failed to recognise *Kreuzung* (this was also commented on in the 2005 Chief Examiner’s report) and many omitted the ‘junction’.

B2: Doctor’s appointment: The doctor was sometimes thought to be ‘busy’ rather than ‘absent’ that afternoon. Symptoms of illness were well answered, although a number of candidates added in ‘headache’. While the majority of candidates answered the time correctly, some incorrectly gave 10.30 rather than 11.30. The spelling of the caller’s name was almost always correct.

B3: Buying ice-cream: Candidates scored well on this question. Some candidates called the *Eisdiele* a ‘shop’. A number of candidates did not appear to understand that the female speaker had ‘sore feet’. Examiners noted some lack of detail in the responses to subsection (iii)

Part C: Candidates generally answered very well in this part.

C1: Invitation

While most candidates correctly named the ‘Munich’ team, ‘Bremen’ was recognised less frequently. A number of candidates answered ‘by train’ for the *U-bahn*.

C2: Announcement

The majority of candidates listed three tasks correctly but few got four correct. ‘Babysitting’ and ‘minding children’ were sometimes both listed as separate tasks. *Zeitungen austragen* was the job least frequently given. Some candidates gave an incorrect phone number.

C3: Recipe

Most candidates received full marks in this section, although some lost marks by writing ‘vanilla ice’ rather than ‘vanilla ice-cream’.

Part D: While most candidates did well in D1, some candidates found portions of D2 somewhat challenging.

D1: Summer holidays

- (i) This question was well answered by most candidates.
- (ii) A number of candidates omitted the detail that her sister was at university, but most understood that her stay was involved with music. Examiners noted that some candidates had difficulty with *Innenstadt* and *Etage*.
- (iii) The *Landeskunde* aspects of this part may be of value in future teaching. A number of candidates coped well with *Stefansdom*. Some candidates wrote that they visited restaurants rather than the famous Viennese cafés. A number of candidates mentioned a ‘Spanish school’. The correct answers most frequently given here were ‘galleries’, ‘cafés’ and ‘concerts’.
- (iv) Most candidates were awarded full marks for the aspects of weather.

D2: Special Olympics 2008

- (i) (a) Relatively few candidates got *Karlsruhe* correct
(b) Of the five options given, the most frequently correct answers here were that Sebastian’s brother Kai was taking part and that he helps his brother. The idea that help(ers) was/were needed was rarely mentioned. Some candidates stated that Sebastian wanted to help.
- (ii) (a) While ‘June’ was usually correctly identified, many candidates responded that the commitment was for 20 hours (or 20 hours in the month) rather than 20 hours per week.
(b) This was in general poorly answered as candidates failed to identify the tasks listed.
- (iii) Candidates coped well with the questions regarding wages and added benefits, with many getting the full four marks.

Part E: Long conversation with school focus (Student Exchange)

This part was well-answered, with candidates performed particularly well in questions 1, 2 and 4. However, some candidates incorrectly stated the time (*18.00 Uhr*) to be 8 o’clock. In question 3, some candidates omitted the detail of ‘meeting at’ the market. Examiners noted that some candidates had some translation difficulties with *Sportplatz* and ‘sports place’ was a common response. In question 5, relatively few candidates mentioned ‘Irish dancing’.

3.3.2 Section II: Reading Comprehension:

Candidates performed well on this section.

Part A: Understanding public signs

This question was very well answered by most candidates. Most candidates correctly identified *Briefmarke* for postage stamp, though a few answered *Stempel*. In the few cases where *Friseur* was not known, *Stempel* was the alternative most often selected.

Part B: Recognition of small ads

This question was well-answered, and most candidates were awarded 10 or 12 marks out of a total of 12. Some candidates opted for ‘boat trips’ instead of ‘boat show’.

Part C: Information retrieval from short article

This question was well attempted by all candidates.

1. (a) Candidates usually gave one point correctly, it was rare to find an answer which showed an understanding of *gesund isst*.
(b) This was well answered.
2. (i) (a) *Eine Viertel Million* was often given as ‘four million’.
(b) Most candidates correctly understood *zweieinhalb*.
(ii) *Schulen in Afrika* was often translated as ‘students’ rather than as ‘schools’.
3. Some candidates stated that the campaign was to *motivate children* rather than to motivate them *to run*. Some candidates wrote that *40% of children watch TV* without making the point that they do so *for much too long*.

Part D: Classroom language

This was well-answered. A common error was a failure to distinguish between *du* and *ihr* forms, and, indeed, the *Sie* form, in (ii).

Part E: Grid filling: German youth hostels

Candidates scored high marks in this part.

The Federal States were usually given in German, as in the example. Not all candidates gave sufficient additional activities/details.

2. The height of the *Fichtelberg* mountain was given as its distance from the youth hostel, as if *Fichtelberg* was a village. A number of candidates wrote ‘play place’ (not accepted in the marking scheme) for *Spielplatz*. Some candidates interpreted *Speisekarte* as playing cards.
3. *Nordrhein-Westfalen* was sometimes mistranslated as ‘Northern Westphalia’. The nature park *mit vier Seen* was described by some candidates as having ‘four seas’ rather than ‘four lakes’.

4. *Stadtzentrum* was sometimes translated as the ‘town’ with ‘centre’ omitted, or as ‘town stadium’. *Mosaik* was sometimes read as ‘music’.

Part F: Journalistic text

Examiners noted some excellent responses in this part.

1. and 2. (a) were very well answered by all candidates.
2. (b) Some candidates stated topics but omitted the questions. Some appeared not to understand *Wie siehst du aus?*, and answers such as ‘What do you watch?’ or ‘What do you like looking at?’ were in evidence’.
3. This was very well answered, although some candidates wrote ‘all chats must be registered’ rather than ‘all chatters must be registered’.
4. This was well answered. A common error, however, was to ‘use the name of your favourite book’ rather than ‘use a name from your favourite book’. In (b), some candidates omitted the detail of ‘of yourself’.
5. While this was mostly well answered, the responses of some candidates were not sufficiently specific, such as ‘tell your parents’ rather than ‘ask your parents to come with you’. Examiners noted that some candidates appeared to answer from the perspective of general knowledge rather than from the text.

Part G: Semi-literary narrative

Examiners noted that some candidates did not attempt this section.

1. In this question, many candidates addressed both ‘where’ and ‘when’. While ‘Schwarzwald’ was generally correctly given, incorrect answers included ‘Switzerland’ and ‘Black Wood’. *Vor zwei Stunden* proved to be difficult for some candidates. Some candidates wrote ‘two hours’. *Auspacken* was sometimes interpreted as ‘packing’ rather than ‘unpacking’. Many did not recognise the *-kuchen* element of *Schokoladenkuchen*, and called it a ‘cookie’ or ‘chocolate’.
2. While candidates correctly identified the bracelet, few got full marks for the explanation and there were many actual break-ins and past thefts alleged. Few candidates appeared to recognise *verstecken*.
3. The vast majority of candidates correctly answered ‘ice cream’, but part (b) of the question was poorly answered. Many candidates did not appear to know *Kühlschrank*. *Plastikdose* was often translated as ‘can’. However, this meaning of *Dose* was not appropriate in the context.
4. (a) Some candidates appeared not to have recognised the second person singular of *lesen*. (b) Most candidates scored well here. However, some candidates did not write the correct prepositions.
5. The responses to this question were somewhat varied.

3.3.3 Section III: Written Expression:

Part A. Letter:

Candidates tended to address all questions posed in the stimulus letter on a range of accessible themes. The most problematic area was in relation to question (5), about a language course they allegedly had completed in the Easter holidays. Some candidates wrote instead about a sports course or just about their Easter holidays in general. Despite that, the majority of candidates were awarded high marks for the content aspect of the letter and included an appropriate beginning and end to the letter.

(1) Describing the house: Candidates were awarded good marks for content here, but many failed to mention physical features or contents/furniture of their bedroom. There was a tendency to give rather vague descriptions such as *groß, schön* or to mention a colour.

(2) Holiday travel: Some candidates wrote of their plans in the past tense. Some candidates treated *Ausland* as if it were the name of a country. A small number of candidates did not elaborate sufficiently, especially in regard to what they will do – *Was machst du dort alles?* Present tense was generally well used in its function of conveying the near future, while some candidates used the future tense forms.

(3) Uniform: Some candidates appeared to lack the vocabulary for basic items of clothing and used English words instead, yet most were able to describe their uniform using at least two and up to five appropriate nouns. Expressing an opinion in German on the uniform posed a difficulty for some candidates, though many wrote extensively and expressed strong feelings. Where the construction *ich finde, dass* was used, many candidates forgot that *dass* puts the verb to the end of the sentence.

(4) Favourite subject: This was very well answered, with most candidates answering in sufficient detail to gain full content marks. However, a small number of candidates omitted to answer about the less-popular subjects.

(5) Language course last Easter: This was the least well answered of the five topics. Many candidates failed to write in the past tense. Some ignored the first question, where the course took place. Many candidates wrote about a football or sports course. Some did not recognise *Osterferien* and situated the course in the month of June. The question *was hast du gelernt?* was intended to elicit a more specific answer (e.g. *Lieder, Grammatik, ...*) than just *Ich habe Irisch gelernt*. The weather was elaborated on appropriately by many candidates, though often in the present rather than the past tense.

Each year the letter contains one theme to be answered in the past tense (*Perfekt* for description of actions undertaken, *Präteritum* for weather and *Zustände*). In the specific section, up to two content marks are lost where the theme is dealt without using the past tense, in addition to the impact on the global expression mark. This feature was deliberately designed to encourage thorough knowledge of the past tense. It is not sufficient to know the *Präteritum*; the *Perfekt* is the more used form in informal communication, the *Präteritum* occurs more in narrative fiction.

Most candidates wrote a suitable closing sentence or phrase to complete the letter.

Expression:

Most candidates gained sufficient content marks to have their expression mark taken from the full rather than the reduced scale. Candidates had an excellent grasp of most of the grammatical structures required to answer this question, but some lost marks due to inadequate application of grammatical accuracy.

Common language mistakes

Examiners noted the following common errors:

- Instances of inaccurate spelling; failure to capitalise nouns
- Incorrect tense usage, especially in questions (2) and (5)
- Word order mistakes:
 - errors in the order of time, manner, place
 - the verb not being in second position (verb third, e.g. *in mein Zimmer es gibt*)
 - infinitive not put to the end of the sentence after use of a modal verb
 - misplacement of the past participle (“often in the middle of the sentence”)
- Incorrect verb forms, especially in the perfect tense but also in more straightforward forms e.g., *der ist* rather than *es gibt*; *ich fähre*; *ich gehe nach Spanien gefahren*; *ich musse*; *mein Lieblingsfach sind Mathe*
- Incorrect article/gender and incorrect adjective endings (especially in (1) and (3) where items had to be described) – e.g., *der Lehrerin*; *eine großes Pullover*
- Failure to use the correct case after prepositions e.g. *mit* with dative
- Incorrect vocabulary - *Bettzimmer* rather than *Schlafzimmer*...
- *Kuchen* rather than *Küche*...

Part B. POSTCARD:

The postcard was attempted by the majority of candidates although a small number of candidates did not make any attempt.

Some candidates did not convey the idea of past in how they approached the first two points of this question.

Point 1: Some candidates did not appear to know the German for ‘tired’ or ‘journey’. A number of candidates attempted to convey the idea in other ways, such as sleeping in bed for a long time. Some only managed to gain one mark for *sehr*.

Point 2: This was more successfully handled by most candidates. The points most frequently correct were ‘home/back in Ireland’ and the time, although some candidates used a preposition other than *um*. Some candidates were creative in how they conveyed the idea of having got home the previous day, while a few omitted this notion or did not seem to know *gestern*. A number of candidates using the present tense wrote *ich komme (gestern)*...

Point 3: Most candidates scored two out of three for content here, with many expressing ‘to meet’ usually using *treffen* or *kennenlernen*.

Point 4: The invitation was not well handled by some candidates. Where a modal verb was used e.g. *möchtest du*, many candidates omitted an infinitive verb such as *besuchen, (zu uns) kommen, (bei uns) bleiben/unterkommen*. Few candidates managed to spell 'nächstes Jahr' correctly, with *nexte jahre* being a common incorrect attempt.

In general, candidates were less successful here with their expression mark than had been the case with the letter. The most common errors were in tense, word order and vocabulary.

3.4 Conclusions

The general standard of answering was good. Candidates performed best in the reading section, with the exception of G. Performance in the listening was generally good, but A and D were less successful. While candidates generally wrote good letters, the postcard was less successful. Examiners noted that some candidates would have been better advised to take the Ordinary Level paper.

3.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

Recommendations to Teachers:

- Refer to the published marking schemes, available at www.examinations.ie
- Provide regular practice of German in short dialogues and role plays, to maximise students' exposure to the spoken language and to foster their listening comprehension skills
- Provide regular "tape work" as well as oral practice to improve listening skills
- Guide students to work consciously on building up their vocabulary, to include knowledge of verbs, days and times, number, food, furniture, countries, directions etc.
- Give more emphasis to the teaching of grammar within an integrated approach, especially in second and third years. Attention should be given to verb forms, verb tenses, prepositions and cases, gender of nouns and adjectival agreement; modal verbs (*dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen, wollen*) are vital and help especially in the letter
- Encourage students to construct sentences that are simple, precise and accurate
- Ensure that students can differentiate between *die Bahn, U-bahn* and *Straßenbahn*
- Familiarise students with the location and spelling of major cities and regions in the German-speaking countries and give due weighting to *Landeskunde*
- Ensure that students can identify the language clues indicating gender – personal pronouns (*er, sie; ihm, ihr; ihn, sie*) and possessive adjectives (*seine, ihre*)
- Emphasise that comprehension questions should be answered in relation to what is contained in the texts, spoken or written, and not from the students' general knowledge
- Encourage the development of good examination technique - reading questions carefully to check exactly what information is being looked for, and where appropriate highlighting relevant information so as to include an adequate level of detail in their answers
- Encourage students to attempt all sections and questions on the paper
- Students should be discouraged from using pencil or correction fluid in the examination

Recommendations to Students

- Read all instructions carefully
- Attempt all questions on the paper
- Practice listening comprehension in class and at home
- Develop your examination technique: read the questions slowly, underlining the information that is looked for and ensuring you provide an appropriate level of detail when making the relevant points
- Pay particular attention to learning the meaning of 'question cues – *wann, was, warum, wer, wie, wo, wie viel, seit wann* etc.
- Practise writing in the past tense; this could be done by writing a short diary record in German each week of what you did in the previous few days
- If possible, listen to German music, radio, watch German-language DVDs and read German magazines
- The use of pencil or correction fluid in the examination should be avoided.