

University of Malta

Secondary Education Certificate

SEC

GERMAN

May 2012

Examiners' Report

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

EXAMINATIONS BOARD

**SEC GERMAN
MAY 2012 SESSION
EXAMINERS' REPORT**

Introduction

A total of 378 candidates sat for the SEC level German in May 2012 (there were 469 candidates in 2011 and 473 in 2010.) This shows a drop in the number of candidates compared to the last two years. This year 236 candidates applied for Paper 2A (62.4%) while 142 (37.5%) opted for Paper 2B.

The examination papers had the same format as last year. In the reading sections, three items were the same for Paper 2A and Paper 2B. All the written sections in Paper 2A and Paper 2B were marked separately by two different markers and the final mark in each case was calculated considering both marks. In the very few cases where a discrepancy was noted, the opinion of a third marker was decisive.

Overall Performance

Table 1 below shows the distribution of grades obtained in the May 2012 session. Tables 2 and 3 show a comparison of grades obtained in the 2011 and 2012 sessions.

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	Abs	Total
1& 11 A	20	35	37	39	47	--	--	55	3	236
1 & 11 B	--	--	--	11	25	37	33	30	6	142
TOTAL N	20	35	37	50	72	37	33	85	9	378
TOTAL (%)	5.3	9.3	9.8	13.2	19.0	9.8	8.7	22.5	2.4	100.0

	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	U	Abs	Total
2011	1 & 11 A	30	36	44	35	75	--	--	70	5	295
	1 & 11 B	--	--	--	12	30	34	52	38	8	174
	TOTAL N	30	36	44	47	105	34	52	108	13	469
2012	1 & 11 A	20	35	37	39	47	--	--	55	3	236
	1 & 11 B	--	--	--	10	26	37	33	30	6	142
	TOTAL N	20	35	37	49	73	37	33	85	9	378

Table 3			
		Paper 1 & Paper 11A	Paper 1& Paper 11 A
	Paper 1 & Paper 11A	Paper 1 & Paper 11B	Paper 1 & Paper 11B
	Grades 1 – 5 (%)	Grades (1 – 5) %	Grades 1 – 7 (%)
2011	74.6	55.9	74.2
2012	75.4	56.6	75.1

Part 1

Spoken Interaction

The oral examination consisted of three parts and two candidates had to interact to the tasks set.

There was a slight improvement from last year. However the students need more practice in the spoken language. In fact simple vocabulary was lacking e.g. das Pfeffer, das Salz und das Erdbeereis. Such lack of vocabulary effected performance.

Candidates still do not know very common and basic expressions when starting conversations e.g. Mir gefällt, Ich finde, etc. Circumlocution strategies and turn-taking are frequently absent and need to be practised.

Listening Comprehension

Examiners and markers felt that the texts set were thematically interesting and linguistically suitable for SEC level students.

A positive note: Markers noticed considerable improvement in this section. Students who opted for Paper B did quite well in this section and a number of candidates who opted for Paper 2A obtained full marks, particularly in the first two exercises (Durchsagen/ Interview).

At times, the poor knowledge of the basic question words, e.g. "wer, wo etc.", hindered candidates in task 3. Some candidates do not read the question well and this results in wrong answers.

Paper 1 – Grammar (Sprachbausteine and Satzbau)

As in previous years, this part of the examination has proved to be a stumbling block, especially for a great number of the candidates opting for Paper 2B. Better training is required in grammar and vocabulary to perform such tasks. It would be helpful if grammar and vocabulary are learnt in context form.

In this section, marks ranged from as low as 5 to a maximum of 38.5. Most candidates obtained marks below 20 out of a possible maximum of 40 marks.

Since candidates generally did not understand the texts set, they were not in a position to insert the correct words in the blanks provided and had to rely on guess work.

In the example in exercise 3, the definite article was inserted. For some students it was misleading as they thought that the definite article had to be inserted in all the given blanks. This was due to lack of understanding of the text.

Particularly bad was the performance in part 4 (Satzbau). An utter lack of logic was shown as well as little or no understanding of the basics of German syntax, in particular the proper use of conjunctions. The words were given in the correct order, according to the German sentence structure. Students made unnecessary changes in this sequence which resulted in incorrect sentence structure.

Candidates who opted for Paper 2B did not fare well at all in exercise 4. In fact, their performance was very poor. Most of them did not conjugate the verb correctly although a clear example was given. In cases where students had to write the adjective endings, the vast majority of students opting for Paper 2B did not write the correct ending or left the adjective without an ending.

Paper 2A and Paper 2B

Paper 2A and Paper 2B are made up of a reading comprehension section and a written section that comprises a letter or an e-mail and a report in Paper 2A and a note in Paper 2B.

The last three tasks in the reading sections are the same for both papers.

Reading Comprehension Section

Examiners noted that the texts were interesting, within the linguistic competence of SEC candidates and had current authentic content.

Candidates who opted for Paper 2A performed much better. Marks were reasonably high in this section. The worst performance was registered in Teil 1D and in Text 3.

Students who sat for Paper 2B did quite well in Part 1a of the reading comprehension. However, when it came to the 'Stundenplan' in 1c, most of the students wrote the wrong answer in the blank space no. 24. They forgot that for Claudia, German is the mother language and answered that she is learning 3 foreign languages. Nevertheless, most of the students achieved high scores in this exercise.

Written Section

Paper 2A : Letter " Brief an Freundin Martina"

Many candidates still find difficulties in this section as they have to express themselves freely. This section tests the written productive skills.

The theme of the letter was very much within the candidates' competence. As usual many candidates use the incorrect expression " Ich bin gut / Meine Familie ist gut " instead of "Mir geht es gut/ Meiner Familie geht es gut." This comment has appeared in most of the previous reports. The correct expression has to be stressed to avoid using the incorrect one every time in letters.

Many students were inconsistent when using verbs. They switched from one tense to the other throughout the writing task without a valid reason for doing so. However, a good number of candidates wrote a decent answer to the points set, but quite a few missed out a point or two. In self-expression and grammar, candidates were awarded a minimum of 1 mark to a maximum of 11 out of 12 obtainable marks. Mistakes were a mixed bag of grammatical errors (gender, plural, verb in the second position, word order, etc.). Some candidates misunderstood the contents of the letter they had to reply to and wrote irrelevant answers.

Second Task: Bericht über ein Schulfest.

This task still presents a stumbling block for many candidates. Some failed to write something about each point set, e.g. "Was ihnen am besten gefiel". Most candidates did not understand point 2 regarding "Vorbereitung". Again students were inconsistent when using tenses. Many grammatical mistakes were made, syntax was poor and word order was ignored.

Paper 2B

E-Mail: Even though the theme "Music" is an interesting and popular topic for young people and candidates should have been able to write about such a topic, the performance was rather poor and many candidates wrote less than the number of words required. Many of the candidates just mentioned the points given but were not able to write about them or alternatively did not go into enough detail. Thus marks had to be deducted.

Again candidates made many grammatical mistakes and syntax was poor.

Second Task: "Nachricht"

Although this year's "Nachricht" was very similar to that of the previous year, candidates still found it difficult to tackle this task correctly. In general, candidates performed much worse in this exercise, with marks ranging from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 15. A couple of candidates did not obtain any marks because they simply did not understand what they had to do.

Some students wrote nothing about the last two points or gave totally irrelevant answers. A good number of students left this exercise out and others simply copied chunks from the introductory text given.

Conclusion

Going through the previous statistics, there was a drop in the number of candidates who sat for SEC German this year. This is a matter of concern and one should probe the reasons why German is becoming less popular.

The analysis and comments in this report show that certain problems seem to be recurring. The correct learning of verb conjugation and endings seems to be a problem throughout. It seems candidates find difficulty, or rather are reluctant, to learn verbs and tenses. After

learning new verbs and tenses, practice of their use in context is beneficial. This also goes for grammatical rules. It is important that students acquire training not only in the communicative aspects but also in grammar and writing skills, including use of syntax.

Limited vocabulary seems to be another stumbling block when it comes to the writing of letters, e-mails and reports. Reading and surfing the internet should be encouraged. There are several German websites which can help students improve skills needed for language acquisition.

On a positive note, students seem to have done better than last year in understanding listening comprehension texts.

Chairperson
Board of Examiners

July 2012