

German (continuers)

2 0 0 9 A S S E S S M E N T R E P O R T

Languages Learning Area



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

GERMAN (CONTINUERS)

2009 ASSESSMENT REPORT

GENERAL COMMENTS

This year 208 students completed the examination. Most students were very well prepared and generally coped well with conversational, everyday German and could express themselves adequately. However, presenting ideas, opinions, and concepts in German is much more challenging, and students are advised to practise the more complex kinds of writing (e.g. persuasive) and text types (e.g. speeches, articles, and formal letters to the editor). Vocabulary and expressions regarding *Meinungsäußerung* should be acquired and practised in the normal course of the Year 11 and Year 12 program.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3: ORAL EXAMINATION

Section 1: Conversation

Most students were able to speak well and interestingly about topics such as family, interests, school life, and future plans. The relevance, depth of treatment of information, opinions, and comments depended largely on the student's level of proficiency. The more successful and better prepared students were able to respond in depth and give opinions and thoughtful and detailed answers and take the initiative in the conversation. Less successful students answered very superficially. More probing questions revealed quickly whether students had simply rote-learned or were able to move beyond the well-known lists of questions and answers.

Students' capacity to maintain a conversation varied. Most could offer information but left it to the examiner to 'lead' the conversation. Many students relied on simple answers and had to be encouraged to respond in more detail and depth. True interaction was achieved only with students who had excellent communication skills and a high level of proficiency.

Teachers and students are encouraged to practise examination style conversation and are advised to refer to the support material on the SACE Board website. There is, however, a danger for students to overprepare their answers, which may result in a more artificial conversation.

An examination is a formal situation and students should be able to differentiate between formal and informal address and use the formal address confidently and correctly. Students should also have had the opportunity to develop strategies to compensate for an unexpected or difficult question. There is nothing wrong with occasionally asking *Könnten Sie bitte die Frage wiederholen?* or *Ich verstehe Sie nicht ganz, meinen Sie . . . ?* It is only when this happens repeatedly that it adversely affects the outcome of the conversation.

Linguistic/Grammatical Comments

Even though students generally communicated quite well, overall attention to detail and grammatical correctness could be improved. There were frequent errors in basic elements of sentence structure that one would not expect at this level. Many students lacked some basic vocabulary (e.g. simple time phrases). The following is a selection of the most common errors:

- problems with basic subject-verb agreement (e.g. *die Schüler hat*)
- incorrect auxiliary verb (e.g. *er hat nach Melbourne gefahren*)
- errors with word order, in particular verb second rule, word order in subordinate and relative clauses
- problems with tenses, in particular perfect tense (e.g. *er hat ... sehen, ich hat ... gefahrt*)

- incorrect use of pronouns, possessive pronouns, gender (e.g. *meine Bruder und ihre Hund*)
- use of anglicisms (e.g. *In die Zukunft ich bekomme eine Lehrer*).

The overall mean for this section of the examination was 77.05%, a little lower than in 2008. This section of the examination was handled the best, with just under 50% of the students achieving an A grade and twenty-nine students attaining 20/20.

Section 2: Discussion

Because students have the opportunity to prepare and work with the required vocabulary and content, they should handle the discussion confidently and competently. Seventy-one students scored nine or 10/10 in this section. These students were able to discuss their dot points on the in-depth study outline form at length. Some students, however, had not studied their topic in depth and were able to handle the discussion on only a superficial level, and without enough relevant vocabulary to express themselves effectively. Fifty-two students scored less than six in this section, which suggests inadequate preparation.

The in-depth study outline forms can play a vital role in the discussion. Students are able to list the points they have researched and are prepared to discuss and the examiners are then guided by these points. It is imperative that students think carefully about the details listed on this form and are prepared to discuss them at length.

The choice of topic is vital, and teachers must offer guidance and direction when selecting the topic, the texts, and the assessment tasks. Teachers should encourage a broader approach to research and topics as well as depth of study and understanding. There is a danger, however, that some topics can be too broad, which results in only superficial treatment of the subject (e.g. *Lifestyles of Germany and Australia*). Some students chose very interesting and original topics and were able to present ideas and opinions very competently. It was very pleasing to see so many well-prepared students who could talk about their topic passionately, at length, and in depth.

It was quite obvious when students had not chosen the topic themselves. Although they may have been well prepared, they lacked interest and/or the ability to comment independently or with opinion and conviction. This somewhat limited their potential to get top marks. Some umbrella topics make it very difficult for students to demonstrate in-depth research as well as personal opinion. Teachers and students are encouraged to refer to the support material on the SACE Board website for a wide choice of topics.

There was a tendency overall for students to recite information that they had learnt by heart, but the more successful students were able to respond to probing questions and think 'on their feet'. Some students knew so much about their topic they felt that they did not have anywhere near enough time to discuss it in depth!

There were many interesting and unusual topics, for example, *Der Wolf in Deutschland*; *National identity amongst young Germans*; *the Baader-Meinhof gang*; *Heavy Metal music, a German subculture*; *Das deutsche Museum München*; *Social Democratic Party of Germany and 2009 election*. However, a number of topics were not relevant, or were too broad or too narrow, which made the discussion rather difficult. Students are reminded that their personal exchange or travel experience is not relevant as a research topic.

Capable students did very well in this section. They had opinions, interesting information, and were passionate about their chosen topic. The general consensus was that there was a wide variety in the depth of treatment of information, opinions, and comments. In many cases more preparation and practice are needed to prepare students adequately for this examination.

The overall mean for this section of the examination was 61.83 %, which is lower than in 2008.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 4: WRITTEN EXAMINATION

Section 1: Listening and Responding

Text 1 (advertisement for a language school)

Almost all students were able to state the purpose of the text in part (a) but the amount of detail provided determined the result.

For part (b), students should be reminded to support statements like ‘the program offers many languages’ with concrete examples from the text (e.g. Turkish, Italian). Many selling points were listed.

Most students received 2/3 marks for this question.

Text 2 (Peter’s phone call to invite Elke to the concert)

Students generally answered part (a) well and were able to explain that Elke remembers him because of the explosion in chemistry and his ‘funny’ hair.

In part (b), most students were able to identify why Peter rang, but for full marks they had to include that the concert was on Sunday in the Ostseehalle. It was interesting to note that many students confused Sonntag with Samstag.

In part (c), students managed to explain why Peter felt frustrated/angry/let down as he was hoping to organise a date. Some students mentioned tone of voice and the use of words such as ‘verdammt’.

Text 3 (the job interview)

This question was answered well, with many students achieving 4–5/5. Most students identified in part (a) that Michael applied for a job at a radio station, Radio DEF; some were able to state that it was a German language radio station; but relatively few also identified the ‘Deutsch Stimme’ team.

In part (b), many students were able to explain why Michael was an ideal applicant for the job and were able to support their statements with reference to the text.

Text 4 (the birthday celebration)

In part (a), nearly all students were able to state that the occasion was an 18th birthday.

Many students were able in part (b) to give their impression of Michael. They pointed out that Michael was sporty and intelligent, but this only gained part scores. Students who added that he played soccer and gained high grades at school scored more highly.

In part (c), more successful students supported their statements with quotes from the text (e.g. he calls Michael his favourite son).

Overall students performed quite well in this section. Attention to detail separated the higher scorers from other students. There was a tendency for less successful students to generalise their answers without giving specific details from the text to support their statements.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A

Text 5

There were many excellent, detailed answers to the two questions. The overall mean for these questions was 73.26%.

Part (a) was generally answered well, but not all students addressed the 'how' part of the question. They gave a detailed recap of the content rather than analysing the techniques that the writer used. The most successful answers included information on language features used, for example, emotive words, direct speech, and exclamations.

There were many excellent, detailed answers to part (b). Some students added a lot of extra information from their own knowledge of the topic. Students are reminded that marks are not awarded for information that is not drawn directly from a text provided.

Text 6

This text proved to be considerably more difficult for students and overall the marks were lower than for Text 5.

In part (a), a large number of students did not target 'positive' memories. They went into much detail making comparisons and mentioning the husband's perspective rather than Irmgard's. It is interesting to note that many students thought that Irmgard was male.

There were many excellent and detailed answers with appropriate content and excellent expression for part (b). A few students used dot points rather than prose. The more successful students again supported their statements with examples from the text. A significant number of students misinterpreted the statement 'So wollten die Westdeutschen nicht wohnen'. They thought that the Ossies moved into apartments with poor facilities rather than that they were renovated so that the Wessies could live there.

In part (c), nearly all students were able to describe the tone as negative using a large number of very specific adjectives and expressions. Only a small number of students did not seem to understand what was meant by 'tone'.

Students should practise finding details from texts to support their opinions and statements. They should read the questions carefully and avoid giving similar/repetitive answers for different parts of a question.

Part B (Der Kummerkasten)

General Comments

On the whole it was clear that students understood the source text and most were able to respond to at least some of the information. However, very few responded in great detail or demonstrated any analysis of the problems presented. Many students referred to their own experience with their siblings but did not convincingly link it to the task.

Accuracy of language was found in only the high scoring responses (in the 13 to 15 range). Nearly all responses had a number of grammatical errors. The mean for this part of the examination was 61.97 %, which shows that this was the most difficult part of the examination.

Capacity to convey information coherently (structure, sequence)

On the whole students were able to structure the information to suit the task and get the meaning across, even if it was not logical or reflective of the source text. Students are reminded that paragraphing is essential. As students usually type their class work, using double enter to start a new paragraph, this might explain why they generally failed to indent or even skip a line when writing by hand.

Capacity to convey information coherently (accuracy, and variety of vocabulary and sentence structure)

Generally there was a limited range of vocabulary and variety of sentence structures, with only a few students making use of subordinate and relative clauses. Many students struggled with accuracy in even basic language. There was a very high level of English syntax evident. Some students also had difficulty in using the dictionary accurately (or using it at all). Although extensive use of a dictionary during the examination is not expected or recommended, this skill should be reinforced regularly in class.

Capacity to convey information appropriately (relevance)

Most responses were relevant, however superficial.

Capacity to convey information appropriately (use of conventions of text types)

Students in general realised that they were writing a letter, but few understood that they were writing as Frau Erika and as such had to give some advice to Florian. A number of students were unaware that Florian was male and consequently addressed him as 'Liebe Florian'. Paragraphs were used sparingly and most letters did not have a place and date as well as conventional signing off. Many responses finished inappropriately (e.g. Liebe, Grüßen und Küssen).

Grammatical Observations

Overall there is little evidence of sufficient or thorough grammatical knowledge, with too many errors at this level (i.e. simple conjugation with *haben* and *sein*). Word order is a problem even in basic sentences. Sentence structure is mostly very simplistic, and little use is made of conjunctions. If more complex structures are used they seem 'rehearsed' with high accuracy, then students continue with simple sentence structures where high inaccuracy is evident.

Other Problem Areas

- English structure: is/are ...-ing is evident with *ist* plus infinitive
- gender — students seem to default to the feminine
- *mit* generally not followed by the dative case
- use of tenses, in particular the present perfect
- use of modal verbs with *zu*
- possessive pronouns seem to be difficult to use correctly (e.g. *seine Bruder*)
- *man/Mann* interchanged
- relative pronouns lacking — use of *wer* instead
- *wenn, wann, als, ob* used interchangeably
- separable verbs rarely separated (*Ich vorschlage*)
- verb conjugation in general was messy, but very noticeable with modals (e.g. *du muss*)
- difficulty with use of imperative
- use of formal and informal address, students seem to have no understanding what is appropriate when (e.g. *Ich möchte Ihnen sagen, dass sie deinen Bruder ärgern sollen*).

Students are reminded to take care when they use expressions from the source text, and to make sure they copy them accurately

There were problems in translating a number of set phrases:

meine Mutter ist richtig/ist Recht
meine(r) Meinung nach ist dass du
für einen neuen Computer fragen
erzähl deine Mutter herum den Computer.

Section 3: Writing in German

Answers in this section ranged from excellent to less than adequate. As this section is at the end of the paper, it might explain why most students did not achieve their usual standard. Most responses showed inadequate knowledge of grammar, structures, and vocabulary. In particular limited vocabulary prevented students from expressing their ideas fully. Little evidence of planning was noticeable. Attention must be paid to proper planning, structuring, and sequencing of the responses and to the use of paragraphs. It should be noted that writing skills and linguistic skills are two different competencies and both need practice well before Year 12.

Students are reminded to indicate clearly the question they are answering.

Question 8 (email to a friend to make up after an argument)

Many students who were not confident using German chose this question and tended to write clichés in simple German in both vocabulary and syntax.

Question 9 (a short story competition, the story beginning with 'I really should have listened. It all started when...')

This question produced some very good and imaginative writing. In some students' work the relationship of the opening sentence to the story was often tenuous or entirely lacking. '*Alles begann, als*' clearly indicated the tense in which the story needed to continue (i.e. imperfect, which presented problems for a number of students). In addition, the conjunction *als* was rarely handled correctly. A large number of students used this question to relate some of their exchange experiences, which can be done well, but the story text type needs quite careful handling of tone and some formality (e.g. descriptions of places, people, atmosphere, and tone of voice).

Question 10 (Cycling, the green and healthy alternative! Write an article for a newspaper in which you try to persuade people to be more environmentally responsible . . .)

A large number of students, in particular those who had a greater command of the language, chose this question. This topic demanded some rather specific vocabulary but many students managed to write thoughtful and interesting texts. The register for this newspaper article had to be formal, but many students used '*du*'.

As in the other written sections it is apparent that many students lack the foundation of basic grammar. The list of common errors is basically the same as the one under Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B. It should be noted that at Year 12 level students should have a good grasp of basic grammar and should also be able to handle tenses, relative clauses, subordinate clauses, and the like confidently and accurately.

Chief Assessor
German (continuers)