

German (continuers)

2 0 1 0 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)

2010 ASSESSMENT REPORT

GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2010, 176 students completed the examination. The majority of candidates were very well-prepared and generally performed well using 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 acquire and practise more complex and sophisticated vocabulary and structures. Students should know expressions regarding *Meinungsäußerung* at the end of a 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, and their school experiences and future plans. The relevance, depth of treatment of information and opinions, and comments depended largely on the student's level of proficiency. The more successful and better prepared students were able to take the initiative in the conversation, respond in depth, and give opinions as well as thoughtful and detailed answers. Less successful answers were very superficial. Further questions revealed quickly whether students had simply learned materials by rote or were able to move beyond expected questions and answers.

Students' capacity to maintain conversation varied a great deal. Most students could offer information but left it up to the examiner to 'lead' the conversation, and many relied on simple answers, needing encouragement to respond in more detail and depth. True interaction was only achieved with the most proficient students, who had excellent communication skills.

Teachers and students are encouraged to refer to the support material on the SACE Board website (www.sace.sa.edu.au) and use the sample questions to prepare for the oral exam. Students should be aware of the risk of over-preparing their answers, which may result in a less spontaneous conversation.

As the examination is a formal situation, students should be able to differentiate between formal and informal address and use formal address correctly and with confidence. Students should also take opportunities to develop strategies to respond to an unexpected or difficult question. Although there is nothing wrong with occasionally asking *Könnten Sie bitte die Frage wiederholen?* or *Ich verstehe Sie nicht ganz, meinen Sie...?*, when this happens repeatedly it adversely affects the conversation.

Linguistic/grammatical comments

Although students in general communicated quite well, attention to detail and grammatical correctness could be improved overall. There were frequent errors in basic grammar and many students lacked some basic vocabulary, for example, simple time phrases.

The overall mean for this section of the exam was approximately 75%, slightly lower than last year. About 35% of students achieved an A grade, and seventeen students attained 20/20. The majority of students achieved in the B grade range.

Section 2: Discussion

As students could work with the required vocabulary and content before the examination, they were expected to handle the discussion confidently and competently. Fifty-one students scored 9/10 or 10/10 in this section, and generally students were able to discuss the main points of their in-depth study at length. However, some were able to handle the discussion only on a superficial level, without using enough relevant vocabulary to express themselves effectively. Approximately 38% of the cohort scored less than six in this section, which might reflect inadequate preparation. Many students relied frequently on rote-learned responses and could not progress beyond them when questioned about opinions and ideas.

The in-depth study outline form plays an important role in the discussion as students are able to list the points they have researched and are prepared to discuss, and the examiners are guided by these points. Teachers should provide advice to students on how to provide enough meaningful detail on the form, and should challenge students with in-depth questions for analysis or opinion of the topic, in preparation for the oral examination.

The choice of topic for the in-depth study is vital, and it is important that a topic is interesting and not too narrow or too broad. Teachers should offer students guidance and direction in selecting the topic, the texts, and the assessment tasks. Some students chose very original topics and were able to present ideas and opinions very competently, and many students were well-prepared and could talk about their topic at length. For a successful discussion, it is important that students are able to offer more than information, including further analysis and expression of personal opinion.

The overall mean for this section of the examination was approximately 69%, a better result than last year.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 4: WRITTEN EXAMINATION

Section 1: Listening and Responding

Text 1

In question 1 (a), most students were able to explain the purpose of the text.

In question 1 (b), the majority of students chose 'eating less meat' as the measure with the greatest impact and were able to support their answers with the evidence from the text.

Text 2

In question 2 (a), students were generally able to answer this question well and explain what Stefan and Christina have in common. Successful answers included at least two pieces of information.

In question 2 (b), successful answers included at least four ways in which Stefan's time in Australia differed from Christina's.

The majority of students received between 3 and 5 out of 5 marks for their responses to this text.

Text 3

Nearly all students answered question 3 (a) correctly.

In question 3 (b), good answers were produced on both sides of the argument. Students scored well when they provided sufficient relevant information from the text to support their opinion. Some students used prior knowledge rather than supporting their answer with reference to the text as was required in the question.

Text 4

Responses to question 4 (a) were the most varied in terms of relevance and quality. Several students did not identify the key issues and listed a few facts without identifying their relevance to the question. The better answers used information from the text and related it to the effect on day-to-day living.

Successful answers to question 4 (b) included reference to figures relating to costs, the cost of road repairs, increased unemployment, and the closure of agricultural and building industries.

Most students answered this question well although only eight students received full marks.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A

Text 5

In question 5 (a), many students did not describe the development of the sport and simply gave their opinion. Many confused the issue of the reserve parachute, talking about two parachutes in base jumping. Some students quoted from the text in German without any explanation or translation, both of which are essential in order to establish that the student really understands the question.

In question 5 (b), most students understood the issues involved but many left out the detail about the need for written permission to jump. Some students gave very general advice and did not refer to the text at all; others addressed the friend directly, and gave very considered advice, supporting their answers with ample reference to the text. There was a touch of humour in some responses, which asked the friend 'why can't you just go surfing?'

The overall mean for this question was approximately 55%.

Text 6

In question 6 (a), most students understood that the lack of language stood in the way of Süleyman's progress at school. However, few could expand on this with reference to the text.

Question 6 (b) appeared to be a hard question. A small number of students only explained the play on words in the statement. Many students talked rather vaguely about integration but did not explain the statement in the context of the text. Some were unclear on the meaning of integration.

In question 6 (c), many students did not understand the type of answer that was required. A large number recounted information from the text, without giving their impression of Süleyman as required by the question. Students should remember to read questions carefully to ensure that they respond to the specific requirements.

The mean for this text was the lowest in the examination at approximately 43%. Most students were able to summarise information reasonably well but found it difficult to evaluate and give opinions. Giving evidence from the text to support responses is an area for improvement.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B

Text 7

Students seemed to understand the text quite well. Most students had something to say about the matter and coped well with the task. However, many students made no reference to the source text. They set out their arguments but did not engage at all with the arguments the text presented. However, a large number of students presented ideas and arguments and justified their positions quite persuasively, using a systematic approach. Some were able to express sophisticated and often quite subtle points of view in German. An excellent standard was reached in this question by some of the non-native speakers. The less successful responses often quoted whole sentences from the text or incorporated so much vocabulary from the text that it was difficult at times to gauge the student's real ability to write German.

Many students talked about their own experiences but few indicated what their part-time job was, why they found that particular job useful, and what the skills were it taught them. Accuracy of language was found only in the most successful responses and nearly all responses had a number of grammatical errors. The mean for this part of the exam was approximately 67%, considerably better than last year's result.

Capacity to convey information coherently (structure, sequence)

On the whole students were able to structure information to suit the task and convey the meaning, even if it was not always logical or reflective of the source text. Students are reminded that use of paragraphs is essential and, when a question asks students to argue a point, a few minutes spent thinking about and organising arguments is likely to improve the quality of the response.

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

Many students kept to quite basic language and structures in written German (for example, simple sentences, regular verbs, present tense). However, it was pleasing to see that some students were able to effectively use more complex grammatical structures (for example, subordinate, infinitive and relative clauses, passive and subjunctive mood). Some demonstrated considerable knowledge of words and phrases appropriate to this section and useful in conducting an argument or a discussion.

Many students displayed problems using dictionaries. Frequently they did not distinguish between verbs, nouns, and adjectives. Where the dictionary did not offer a German equivalent of an English expression, some students simply translated the phrase literally, for example, *Leute Fähigkeiten* translated as 'people skills', or *Kinder brauchen eine Waage in ihrem Leben* as 'children need balance in their lives'.

Capacity to convey information appropriately (relevance)

Most responses were relevant, but a number of responses were clearly copied from the text and then amended. Very rarely students analysed and discussed the failings of the

arguments in the source text and rebutted them with opposing evidence. Mostly they set out their own arguments and quoted their own experience.

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

Generally students realised that they were required to write an email response to the forum post about school students engaging in part-time employment, but few understood that even in this fairly informal context formal register is required. Many students switched between *du* and *Sie* at random. Not all students chose the right tone in their response. It is important that they are able to distinguish between arguing persuasively and being abusive, for example, *Du bist ein Idiot. Dein Sohn tut mir leid, herzliche Grüße..., ein paare gute Punkte, aber du bist falsch und bin richtig.*

Grammatical Observations

Sufficient or thorough grammatical knowledge was rare in this year's examination. Too many errors were evident at this level, for example, in a conjugation of *haben* and *sein*. Word order was a problem, even in basic sentences. Most sentence structures were very simple, and conjunctions were rarely used. When more complex structures were used they seemed to be 'rehearsed', and, although accurate, students then continued to express their ideas using simple sentence structures with many errors.

Students are reminded to be careful in the following areas:

- subject–verb agreement
- use of polite form of address
- reflexive and separable verbs
- distinction between *das* and *dass*
- placement of commas
- subordinate clauses and conjunctions
- word order
- gender (many students defaulted to the feminine this year)
- use of tenses, in particular the present perfect
- use and conjugation of modal verbs
- prepositions and cases.

Students should take care when they use expressions from the source text and make sure they copy them accurately.

Section 3: Writing in German

Answers in this section of the examination ranged from excellent to less than adequate.

In this section, good knowledge of grammar and structures and a broad vocabulary are required for students to express their ideas fully. Proper planning, structuring, and sequencing of responses, including the use of paragraphs, are also important. This year this section was a significant test of linguistic competence, and to be successful students also needed to demonstrate original thought or creativity. It would be beneficial for students to have more practice in this area.

Students are reminded to indicate clearly the question they are answering. Most students chose Question 10, followed by Question 8 and only a small number of students chose Question 9. Students performed similarly in all three questions with the means for all three

alternatives being approximately 60%. All of these results are well below the mean for Section 2: Reading & Responding Part B, which goes against the trend of recent years.

Question 8

Markers indicated that students did not respond in depth or breadth. Almost all students responded with the same, predictable content and their responses did not demonstrate the imagination or creativity that was required to do well.

Question 9

This topic demanded some rather specific vocabulary but many students managed to write thoughtful and interesting texts. However, a number of students did not produce the required text type.

Question 10

This was the most popular choice but was less successfully answered. To achieve high marks a response needed to be creative and original as well as in depth.

Chief Assessor
German (continuers)