



Interactive Sign Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2007 students generally performed well in the interactive sign examination. As in past years, students who were well prepared were able to communicate with confidence and advance the exchange effectively with the assessors. Conversely, those who were less well prepared found the task more difficult. Students who chose topics that were relevant to them and their life experiences generally performed well. Many students still finger-spelled too many very basic signs.

It is imperative that students are familiar with all components of this examination, the examination criteria used for assessment, and the correct form of address to use when speaking to the assessor at the start of the exam and when leaving at the end of this exam. They must remember to sign their student number in Auslan.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The Interactive sign examination is designed primarily to assess the students' knowledge and skill in using Auslan for conversation, reporting and discussion purposes.

The Interactive sign examination has two sections – Conversation and Discussion, and Presentation and Response.

Section 1 – Conversation and Discussion

The examination should begin with introductions and continue onto a conversation between the student and the assessor, based on the student's personal world; for example, life, family and friends, interests and aspirations and current events. This section should last for approximately seven minutes.

Good preparation allowed the conversation to flow naturally. Students who had explored the topics thoroughly were able to link effectively with the assessors, and express and expand on information and ideas appropriately. However, there were still some students who had not prepared adequately and could not elaborate on their responses or expand the conversation. They could only give very limited answers and therefore did not perform well.

Students who relied solely on memorised material found it difficult to continue the conversation when the assessor interacted with them. These students were more likely to give irrelevant responses as they relied solely on pre-prepared material in response to any question asked. A conversation is an interaction between two or more people and cannot be learned. Therefore, rote-learning slabs of information is not recommended if students are to do well.

Students need to be reminded that they:

- are required to sign their student number as soon as they are seated
- must not sign their name
- must not reveal their own name when describing their family, or the names of family members
- should not ask the assessor questions about his or her family
- should not overuse rhetorical questions.

If any of the above were to happen students should not panic, but just continue with the interaction. Students will not be disadvantaged in any way.

Teachers need to teach students:

- how to use 'enumeration' correctly when listing family members (there was some phonologically incorrect use of movement)
- common finger-spelled words such as 'so', 'do', 'but', 'too', 'it', etc. as this is part of the Auslan vocabulary
- **not** to look at the marking assessors when signing
- finger spelling orientation.

Common areas of difficulty faced by students included:

- reading/understanding the assessor's question 'what-do?' They often had problems understanding the finger-spelled sign for 'do' and asked several times for it to be repeated



- signing 'age' numbers – most were not clearly defined and were quite sloppy
- finger spelling orientation
- read-back in finger spelling.

Section 2 – Presentation and Response

Following the informal Conversation and Discussion, students should indicate to the assessors the topic chosen for Presentation and Response from the student's area of interest.

The student may support the Presentation (three minutes) and Response (five minutes) with objects such as photographs, diagrams and maps. Notes and cue cards are not permitted. Upon completion of the Presentation the student should respond to questions raised on the presentation by assessors. Note: in South Australia, the in-depth study forms the basis of the Presentation and Discussion.

The focus of this discussion is to explore aspects of language and culture.

Students are given three minutes to clearly and briefly complete their presentation. Some students assumed that they would be allowed to present an extended monologue of their topic and were surprised when the assessor interacted with them.

The choice of topic was often an important factor in determining students' success in the Response section. Students must choose a topic that they are familiar with or interested in as it is important that they feel comfortable with the topic they choose. Topics needed to be broad enough to allow for a discussion, but not too difficult in content and vocabulary requirements. When selecting the topic, it is advisable to avoid topics that will already have been covered in the Conversation section, as many students merely repeated what had already been discussed. If the topic studied is related to a theme that may be covered in the Conversation, then it is important to provide a clearly different focus.

Students are expected to have a wide range of information to discuss. Students who devoted adequate time to their topic were able to effectively support and elaborate on their ideas, information and opinions while discussing the topic studied.

When presenting the title of a book or movie, students should be aware that it is not necessary to sign 'next' between each word; for example, 'the' ('next') 'red' ('next') 'house'.

2007 saw a big improvement in the use of classifiers, role shift, colloquialisms and use of space. A few students brought objects/materials to support their presentation but forgot to use them with the assessor.

Sign Comprehension and Sign Production Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall students performed well in the Auslan Sign Comprehension and Sign Production Examination in 2007.

Good responses started with the student number and draft number and then continued on to the actual response.

Responses should contain an introduction, middle and a conclusion. In addition, students must:

- attend the **practice session** for this exam. It is extremely important to attend as it allows students to familiarise themselves with the equipment. Teachers need to encourage students to attend
- practise focusing the camera on themselves. They should be able to see themselves from head to waist and from one shoulder to the other. They must sit up straight while recording and **not** bend forward
- always look into the camera when recording. Where the response is for only one person they need to look straight into the camera. Where they are responding to a group of people they should move their head from side to side, showing that they are responding to a group rather than an individual
- ensure they have recorded a response. They must check both videos to see that they have recorded themselves correctly
- watch the position of their hands. The palms should be facing inward towards the student's chest. They should check whether they can see themselves signing or the signs they are signing
- avoid wearing colourful (florescent coloured) tops; grey, white, light grey and light blue are acceptable. Hair should be tied back. The assessor should be able to see the student's facial expressions



- use their time wisely during the exam. The texts are repeated three times. Many students are still rewinding and forwarding tapes during the exam – this should not be necessary
- clearly indicate at the start of each draft the number of the draft and number their drafts numerical order. Students must avoid completing too many drafts
- sign their student number at the beginning of each draft
- prepare their tape so that it is set at the start of their chosen draft. Many students are still not preparing the video tape at their chosen draft
- answer the question rather than simply repeating the texts
- check signs in the resources on the video if they are unsure of signs
- use signs from the video as part of their response
- start their answer in an appropriate way, remembering that Auslan is a visual language. If they are stuck or are not sure how to start, they should just imagine the scene visually.

Too many students are still:

- producing too many drafts. Usually the first or second draft is the best. Those who do more than two drafts often seem to leave out more information each time a draft is completed. Perhaps they should focus more on preparing the first draft, making sure they have all the right points before recording the response. Teachers must practise exam preparation with students during the year using past exams
- writing out whole responses in English rather than organising their response in Auslan. Students should keep short reminder lists only
- confused about the difference between informal and formal signing (although there was an improvement in 2007)
- completing very short responses. Students should aim to produce a response of the time specified in the study design
- overusing signs which are culturally inappropriate
- using few current Auslan fillers
- voicing or mouthing English words during their responses, rather than culturally death mouthing
- not structuring their responses well
- having problems with clearly defined hand shapes and incorrect movements; some vocabulary was signed incorrectly (for example, 'dream', 'your' for 'you're', 'man', 'typing'/'typist', 'want', etc.)
- using signed English signs (for example, using 'three' hand shape for 'mother')
- using incorrect role-shifting and inappropriate body shifts
- using too many classifiers in the formal presentation, which were more appropriate for informal signing
- not using eye contact and anaphoric indexing correctly
- not sequencing their ideas or information appropriately and therefore repeating the same ideas in their responses.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section I: Watching and responding to informal signed texts

(the use of the term informal signed texts here refers to spontaneous communication, namely that which is not normally recorded)

Description of the task

Section I is designed primarily to assess students' knowledge and skill in analysing and responding to information from informal signed texts. It is related to one or more of the prescribed themes.

Students observed an informal signed discourse, which was a video-recorded performance. The signed discourse was between five and seven minutes in length and was repeated three times, with a two-minute pause between each performance during which students could take notes.

Students were expected to respond in Auslan to a set task. The length of the response should have been approximately two to three minutes. The task was available on videotape in Auslan and written in English in the examination booklet.

As in past years, many students:

- did not take on the wrong role play, instead just acting as themselves
- ignored the question

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- did not use the information on the video
- produced a statement and failed to engage the audience
- did not produce an appropriate informal introduction as required, but began with a formal introduction
- did not use the correct structure of:
 - greeting/opening
 - body of discussion
 - closure of discussion/parting/arranging another meeting, etc.
- did not watch the whole video before rewinding the tape. The resources are repeated three times.

Below are points from each of the signers in the video that students could have used as part of their note-taking while watching the video.

Signer 1	Signer 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name of fund – HC (Health Community) • general policy – complete package combined • level 3 • extras included • cost \$40, \$20, \$15 • no excess • covers all of Australia • extras – physio, massage, dentist, optical • less service if a lower level of cover is chosen • hospital – single, and four beds ward share • inoculation injection free • offers cheaper travel insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name of fund – HIC (Health Insurance Cover) • separate • level 3 • cost \$15, \$13, \$10, \$6 • \$25, \$50 • covers all of Australia • other extras (optional) travel • insurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will pay family and friends to travel overseas to support you • basic level – go to public hospital • top level – single and own room, top doctor/specialist and no excess, \$25 per night, \$50 per night

The above information could then be summarised as follows.

Health Fund 1	Health Fund 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no stress, everything included • no decision • restricted for young people • includes dental, optical, etc. which may be important for young people • cost may be cheaper for bottom cover • student's mother's fund • may be discounted • no family agreement • mother might pay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flexible, can pick what is needed; for example, hospital only • includes travel • includes extras • cheaper for top cover • like to choose own doctor

Students' responses also needed to specify which health fund they would prefer.

Section II: Watching and responding to formal signed texts

(the use of the term formal here refers to a communicative act prepared prior to presentation)

Description

Section II is designed primarily to assess students' knowledge and skill in analysing and responding to information from formally signed texts.

Students watched a pre-recorded, formal signed discourse that was between three and five minutes in length. Students were then required to produce a response to the text of approximately three to four minutes in Auslan. The task needed to specify a purpose, context and audience.

Student responses had a similar pattern to the informal responses. Students generally understood the nature of formal discourse and more students this year set up the introduction, main body and conclusion. However, many students failed to extract, classify or reorganise the information, with only a minority of students completing the task effectively.

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Students need to be reminded to read the questions correctly, as many took on the wrong role play. Many students ignored the question and failed to identify and analyse the information on the video and identify the task appropriately. This also resulted in confusion over the context and audience.

Capacity to convey information

Students often produced a statement and failed to engage in a discussion. Many students had difficulty observing the appropriate cultural way to structure their response. There was also an inability to structure the task correctly. Responses should have commenced with a formal greeting or opening, followed by the main body of the discussion and concluding appropriately and with a formal parting.

It was disappointing to note that many students were unable to accurately extract and then use the ideas presented on the video. The poorer students simply reiterated small sections of the video.

Accuracy and use of vocabulary and grammar

The standard of student responses fell in areas including clearly defined hand shapes; incorrect movements; and correct signing of some vocabulary. Some students inappropriately included a few signed English words.

Too many classifiers were used in some of the formal presentations – these are more appropriate for informal signing. Some students did not use ‘referents’ in space or anaphoric pronouns. Students may have missed the simultaneous use of eye contact and anaphoric indexing.

Below are points from each of the signers in the video that students could use as part of their note-taking while watching the video.

Signer 1	Signer 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is confident, the best person, deaf • is Australian • has previous experience as a CEO overseas • talked without notes • encourages deaf staff • has a vision • is a good staff manager • has links with the deaf community → give all → encouraged deaf community independence, with support if needed • has overseas experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is confident, deaf • is Australian • has previous experience as a CEO in Australia only • focused on service provision; for example, mental health, welfare, country deaf, deaf children • established old traditions; for example, deaf club • promotes deaf organisation • has knowledge of community needs and fundraising • is very experienced • is a communicator • is a good staff manager • uses notes to assist with the statement • has experience at different levels of management

Responses could have included the following information.

Applicant 1	Applicant 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates less coherence between aims; for example, how will giving them a hall benefit the deaf? • is not clear about what she would do • signs down to the committee but encourages communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gives clearly defined aims • identifies goals and problems for the future • gives a plan for future action