



Interactive Sign Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The interactive sign examination assesses students' ability to communicate in Auslan. Students who had thoroughly prepared were able to participate in this task successfully and effectively. It is important that students are familiar with both the specific requirements of this task and the language associated with it. Students should familiarise themselves with the *VCE Auslan Study Design* for the grammar and language requirements appropriate for this level. It is imperative that students at Unit 3 and 4 level are able to use the set grammar as stipulated in the study design in order to effectively meet the criteria for this assessment.

In 2008 students performed well in the interactive sign examination. Students who were well prepared were able to communicate with confidence and advance the exchange effectively with the assessors. It was evident that teachers had used the procedural video in preparing students for the examination. Conversely, those who were less well prepared found the task more difficult. Many students still finger-spelled many very basic signs.

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

Students are required to converse with the assessors about their personal world including family, school, future aspirations, hobbies, interests and work.

Students who performed very well in this section were thoroughly prepared and able to link well with the assessors. They needed minimal support to communicate their ideas and information related to their personal world. These students presented an excellent range of information, opinions and ideas in a logical and clear manner, using reasons and examples to advance to the conversation. These students were also able to communicate using an excellent range of vocabulary and grammar that was appropriate to the context and task.

However, it was also noted that some students had not prepared well and lacked the skills needed to adequately meet the examination criteria. They were not able to link with the assessor, could not advance the conversation when interrupted and relied on rote-learned information. Their lack of preparation meant that these students experienced difficulty clarifying or elaborating on opinions and ideas and needed frequent support from the assessor. Students who performed poorly in this section displayed a limited range of structures and vocabulary.

Students need to be reminded that they:

- must remember to sign their student number in Auslan
- 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, the school they attend nor their teachers' names
- should not ask the assessor questions about his or her family
- should not overuse rhetorical questions
- need to familiarise themselves with all components of the examination and the criteria used for assessment
- must use the correct form of address when signing with the assessor at the start and end of the examination.

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 and to interact only with the assessor conducting the exam
- the correct finger spelling orientation.



Common areas of difficulty faced by students included:

- reading/understanding the assessor's question 'what-do?' They 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
- understanding the assessors' finger spelling orientation
- read-back in finger spelling
- linking with the assessor
- lack of preparation
- clarifying or elaborating on opinions and ideas and needing frequent support from the assessor
- a limited range of structure and vocabulary
- using rote-learned information for the conversation.

Section 2 – Presentation and Response

Following the informal Conversation and Discussion, the student 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.

A few students brought materials to support their presentation but forgot to use them with the assessor. Students need to be able to cross-link their resources in order to give some depth to the discussion.

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

Students are given three minutes to clearly and briefly introduce the 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 should also choose topics that are relevant to them and their life experiences. 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 covered. If the topic studied is related to a theme that may be covered in the Conversation section, 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 referring to the topic studied.

When presenting a 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'.

2008 saw a big improvement in the use of classifiers, role shift, colloquialisms and use of space.

Sign Comprehension and Sign Production Examinations

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall students preformed well in the Auslan Sign Comprehension and Sign Production Examination in 2008.

2008 was the first year the examination was presented on DVD. Students had no problem using the DVD and the computer software.

Teachers **must** instruct students to only do **one recording** of their work and to ensure that the whole response has been recorded.



Students sitting the Auslan examination need to be familiar with all aspects of the paper. They must make effective use of the 10 minutes of reading time in order to be fully aware of the requirements of each task. During the reading time they can access their dictionary if necessary. When reading the task questions, students should carefully refer to both the DVD and the hard copy of the examination paper to ensure that they fully understand the questions.

Once again it was noted that some students lacked the ability to provide succinct responses to questions, instead giving responses that went beyond the required answers. This weakened their responses and demonstrated a lack of comprehension skills. Students need to practise effective dictionary skills during the year so that the dictionary becomes a valuable tool in the examination.

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 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 DVDs 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 or light blue is 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 time. The texts are repeated three times.
- students **must** only complete **one draft**. They must label their draft clearly by signing their student number and 'Draft 1'
- answer the question rather than repeating the resource presented
- check signs in the resources on the DVD if they are unsure of signs
- start their answer in an appropriate way, remembering that Auslan is a visual language. If they get stuck or are not sure how to start, they should just imagine the scene visually.

Students are still:

- producing too many drafts. Usually the first draft is the best. Those who do more than two drafts seem to leave out 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 need to keep short reminder lists
- confused about the difference between formal and informal signing (although there was an improvement in 2008)
- signing very short responses. Students should aim to produce a response in the time allocated in the study design
- overusing signs which are culturally inappropriate
- using few current Auslan fillers
- voicing or mouthing English words, rather than culturally death mouthing their responses
- 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 the '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 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 1 is designed primarily to assess the 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 DVD-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 the student could take notes.

Students were expected to respond in Auslan to a set task, for example, responding to a message or an announcement. The length of the response should have been approximately two to three minutes. The questions were available to the student on DVD in Auslan and written in English in the examination booklet.

As in past years, many students:

- continued to take on the wrong role play, instead acting as themselves
- ignored the question
- did not use the information on the DVD
- 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.

Task 1 – Informal – Trip

The following are possible answers for Task 1.

Turkey	Fiji
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trip – it is a long trip by plane but there is plenty of food and drink and videos to watch. It is a cheap trip because airfares, accommodation and a bus tour are included • various accommodation • various tourist attractions – the white mineral springs rock house, the market which sells cheap jewellery and craft items • historical attractions such as the rock house and Anzac Cove (there is a link with the great grandfather). There are activities such as scooter riding, swimming and dancing and a bus tour at a good price • the culture/custom is different; the clothing and food are very different • weather 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiji is relaxing and stress free • accommodation – good price at \$1790 which includes six days free scooter hire, accommodation, fares, breakfast and dinner • culture/custom is different, food is served on leaves, Lai entertainment, walking on hot coals, fire sticks • social activities and entertainment including islands, beach, pools, bars, free jet ski hire, snorkelling (reef coral, free camera, scuba diving not deep shark swimming), romance island, a four-poster bed that did not have a net • the market is cheap – he can take his items through Australian customs easily

The following are examples of why students might have chosen one country over another.

<p>Negative – stuck in the bus, it is a long trip</p> <p>Positive – it is cheaper and can stop over in other countries</p>	<p>Negative – there may not be enough opportunity to meet people on the islands</p> <p>Positive – it is a short trip</p>
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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 the students' knowledge and skill in analysing and responding to information from formally signed texts.

Students watched a pre-recorded formal signed discourse of between three and five minutes. Students were required to produce a response to the signed 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 set up the introduction, main body and conclusion well. However, students still failed to extract, classify or reorganise the information with only a minority of the students completing the task effectively.

Students are again reminded to read the questions carefully as many took on the wrong role play. Many students ignored the question and failed to identify and analyse the information on the DVD 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. Some students had difficulty observing the appropriate cultural way to structure the response. There was also an inability to structure the task correctly. Responses should have commenced with an informal greeting or opening, followed by the main body of discussion and concluding appropriately with an informal parting.

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

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 included a few signed English words. When role shifting, students' body shifts were inappropriate and exaggerated.

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

Task 2 – Formal – Technology

The following are possible answers for Task 2.

How technology has changed the lives of deaf people

- hearing aids – old models are **inconvenient** and visible, new models can be hidden and are small/flat/invisible
- cochlear implants
- have to **rely** on others to contact other people (family), no privacy
- more choices of modes
- TTY – increase in independence, are able to make calls themselves and have privacy. Before NRS, they could only contact other deaf people or people who had TTY and NRS
- fax – is hard for deaf people with LLN, can communicate with anybody
- computer – email, Internet
- SMS – quick, can be done anywhere
- MSN – chatrooms (for example, English)/webcams where people can talk with signs – can sometimes communicate with two or more people, can contact other deaf people overseas
- subtitles