

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The new form of the oral examination with only two sections was well received. It gave students an opportunity for more relaxed and realistic conversations and discussions. It provided time to elaborate and expand in greater depth and allowed students greater control over the content and the areas discussed. Well-prepared students benefited from this, whereas those not so adequately prepared had difficulty maintaining a conversation for the required length of time.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – General conversation

Most students were able to talk fluently about their personal world, particularly about their families, schools, hobbies and the future (those topics given as examples in the study design). Some had difficulty handling other areas, which were not anticipated, e.g. driving. The words *Autofahren* and *Führerschein* were often not understood. Given that there are no set topics, students need to prepare widely on a variety of aspects of their personal world.

More successful students volunteered much information and expanded willingly without constantly being asked questions. It was commendable when students introduced something unusual into their general conversation such as talking about caring for a handicapped child at weekends or making and selling dolls as a hobby. Those who did well demonstrated the capacity to carry the discussion forward and to speak in detail about their personal experience. Others had difficulty both in responding at any length to general questions and in showing initiative in advancing the conversation. An over-reliance on short answers is inappropriate in a conversation of approximately seven minutes, as are constant monosyllabic responses.

It is important that students listen very carefully to what the assessors are asking and respond relevantly and at some length. Some raced in without waiting to hear what was being asked. When talking about their families, more sophisticated facts than names, ages and occupations are required. Students need to go beyond these and give ideas and opinions. It is helpful if students reflect before the examination on the opinions they might express, e.g. on the advantages and disadvantages of school uniform, on being in large or small families and co-education or be prepared to make comparisons between being in Year 7 and Year 12 and being the eldest or youngest in the family. Because one of the criteria requires ideas and opinions, students should be prepared to elaborate on these. They need to know words like *Vor- und Nachteile*, *Vergleich* and the verbs *gefallen* and *vergleichen*.

Students should not revert to English for such words as Legal Studies, Human Development and Physiotherapy. There is ample time in advance to learn the German names of their subjects, their parents' occupations and the courses they hope to study. Knowing words like *Arbeit*, *Beruf*, *Berufspraktikum* and *Zukunftspläne* is an advantage. Students should also be familiar with questions words, such as *wann*, *wo*, *wohin*, *wie*, *warum*, *wer*, and *wen* which were often misunderstood.

It is unwise for students to learn long rehearsed slabs of information in the hope that there will be a suitable question to elicit them. The assessors invariably interrupt and the student becomes confused and lost. Some students corrected their own mistakes and used effective repair strategies (an essential skill). It is counter-productive to keep asking the assessors to translate English words into German. Students are also not allowed to bring a dictionary and look up words during the oral, nor are they permitted to bring stimulus material for the general conversation.

The accuracy of vocabulary and grammar was often lacking. It is vital to know the genders of key words and correct verb forms and avoid errors like *meine Vater*, *Leute ist* or *wir bin*. *Haben* and *sein* must be known as well as the correct auxiliary and past participles in the perfect tense and the appropriate word order, particularly after subordinating conjunctions. Other examples of errors were *Ich fresse meinen Hund in meiner Freizeit*, *Ich bin gehen zu Bali* and *Es ist viel Spaß* or *Das ist Spaß*. Students often confuse *studieren* with *lernen*, *lieben* with *leben*, *bekommen* with *werden*, *Job*, *Beruf* und *Arbeit*, *eine* with *einige* and *Schüler* with 'Student'. *Ich will studieren* was used when the future was intended and many understood *wer* as *where*. Pronouns proved difficult with *er Vater* and *er Geburtstag* for 'his father' and 'his birthday' and *ich*, *mich* and *mir*, which were frequently confused. *Wer* was often used instead of *der* as a relative pronoun. Cases posed difficulties with such mistakes as *an der Uni gehen* or *nach die Uni gehen*. Pronunciation was sometimes hard to understand, particularly the umlauts, *ch* and *v*, while *e* was confused with *er* at the end of words.

Students should remember that it is inappropriate to address the assessors using the *du* form. They should also use correct greetings and farewells.

Section 2 – Discussion

Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

Students had to state what their topic was, indicate the texts they had used (with exact titles and authors) and show any picture or diagram they had brought with them. They also had to indicate that they had studied 'Language and culture through texts'. Many did not do this.

The choice of the sub-topic for the detailed study is very important. It has to be something that can be studied for 15 hours in class, that has sufficient resources in German and lends itself to an eight-minute discussion, in which ideas and opinions as well as facts are expressed. Many topics were well chosen such as *Berlin vor, mit und nach der Mauer*, *Umweltschutz*, *Deutsche in Australien*, *Ausländer in Deutschland*, *Deutsche Filme und Problematik der Jugend*. Less successful topics were *Weihnachten*, *Nationalsozialismus*, *Warum Deutsche gerne reisen* and *Deutsches Schulwesen*, although some of these topics were successfully handled by good students. It is important to choose topics suitable for particular students, as certain topics can be beyond the language capacity of some.

It is also vital to select appropriate resources. There need to be at least three, different kinds of texts as stated in the Study Design. Texts are expected to be in German and might include photos, poems and songs. However they should be of sufficient length to allow students to have a meaningful discussion. Teachers should choose topics which allow students to fully exploit their language knowledge and skills.

For the introduction, some classes learnt a list of texts, but not all students had studied them. When asked about a particular text, some students said they had not read it. Some simply gave their topic and then started to talk about it, so that the assessors had to question them to find out what texts they had used. Others started to talk at length about the first text before they had indicated what the others were. Some stated a general topic, when in fact they had only studied one aspect. It would have been better to give that particular aspect as their topic, otherwise they were asked questions which they could not answer. One student said her topic was Austria, when in fact she wished to talk about Mozart and Salzburg.

Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

It was necessary to show the relevance of the texts to the theme. A story about a child during World War II is not an appropriate text when the period of the Berlin Wall is being studied. The texts had to tie in with the theme and ideally present different details about it. A useful technique was to compare and contrast information from the texts. Some students learnt paragraphs off by heart and stated these, even if the information was unrelated to the questions asked.

Where resources were inadequate, the discussion often lacked depth. Previous reflection was needed in order to express opinions and ideas effectively. Some did this very well, but others could neither support their viewpoint from the texts nor interpret what they had studied. Basic facts, some of which were essential to understanding the topic, were often incorrect, e.g. assessors were told that the Berlin Wall still divides East and West Berlin and that Alexander von Humboldt could not speak German.

Accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Vocabulary pertaining to the particular topic should be known. Gender was often incorrect such as *das Mauer*. It is important to use the appropriate tense when discussing the topic. The present tense was frequently used instead of the past tense. It is helpful if students are trained to paraphrase and say something in a simpler way, as many came to a full stop when they tried to express complicated ideas in German. Those who had thought deeply about their subject and previously formulated their opinions performed well.

Clarity of expression

Students should clearly state and correctly pronounce their topic and resources, otherwise assessors have difficulty understanding and framing meaningful questions. Some students had long pauses while they strove to understand a question or frame a response.

The successful students spoke fluently, supplying interesting details, ideas and opinions and referring frequently to their texts in the discussion of the detailed study.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students coped well with the new form of the end-of-year examination. Most of them read the questions carefully and responded in the appropriate language, although a few answered in the wrong language and thus gained no marks for that particular section. The use of English for some answers made the responses easier. In the Listening and Reading sections students were able to understand and convey general and specific aspects of the texts. In the Writing section there were some creative and entertaining responses.

Section 1 – Listening and responding

More successful students read the questions carefully before they heard the texts, in order to anticipate what aspects they needed to listen for. They noted these and answered the questions accurately giving all the required details. Sometimes short answers were required, sometimes full sentences and most students responded accordingly. The cue for the length of the answers is the number of lines provided and the marks allocated.

Text 1 Answers in English

Question 1

two of *Basel/Heidelberg/Karlsruhe/Freiburg*

Question 2

The front of the train

Question 3

7 minutes

Question 4

Be careful as the train comes in/the first class carriages are at the front, middle and end of the train.

Text 2 Answers in English

Question 5

There has been a serious accident. It has closed the Autobahn/it has caused a 15 km traffic jam/drivers need to leave the Autobahn and drive on the highway to *Ochsendorf*.

Question 6

Helmstedt

Question 7

Drive slowly (to avoid further accidents)

Text 3 Answers in English

Question 8

In the morning/at breakfast time

Question 9

He says there is probably nothing wrong/he eats her muesli.

Question 10

She has problems with her love life – no, because she spoke to Peter on the telephone last night and looked happy afterwards. She has problems at school/with maths – no, because her mother talked to her maths teacher/*Frau Neumann* and she didn't mention any problems.

Question 11

Young girls think they know everything better. Young girls all want to look very thin.

Question 12

They will speak to Julia about it (in the evening).

Text 4 Answers in German

The better students not only selected the necessary information but also answered the questions in correct German. Difficulties occurred with using the correct verb forms, word order, cases and adjective endings. In this section it is better to use simple language, as the second criterion assesses ability to convey information accurately and appropriately rather than depth and sophistication of language.

Question 13

Katja has a part-time job/earns money/delivers newspapers and buys clothes. Florian gets money from his mother and buys CDs.

Question 14

Frau Schubert thinks her son is neither lazy nor stupid.

Text 5 Answers in German**Question 15**

- *Herr Wagner* from *Softwarehaus/DIT*
- Computer/IT
- very good employment future as there is a shortage of workers in the computer field
- three of: knowledge of computers/knowledge in a range of areas, e.g. sciences, economics, technology, law/ability to work in a team/skill in communicating.

Section 2 – Reading and responding**Text 6 Answers in English****Question 16**

Daylight saving made no difference (in energy use)

Question 17

Daylight saving was extended (by a month, to end of October/from last Sunday in September to last Sunday in October)

Question 18

two of: more energy is consumed overall/less is used for lighting in the evening/more is used for heating in the mornings

Question 19

More carbon dioxide is produced/half a million tonnes more is released

Question 20

People should turn the heating down or put it on later

Text 7 Answers in English

In this section, accuracy and comprehensiveness in answering the questions were required. No marks were deducted for mistakes in English provided the meaning was clear.

Question 21

Potsdamer Platz had the most traffic in Europe (before the war). It was the site of the wall/divided Germany/Berlin

Question 22

It means the cranes moving to music

Question 23

11.30 Speeches; 12.00 The Ballet of the Cranes/Beethoven's 9th symphony; 12.30 Parade

Question 24

three of: pubs, cinemas, musical theatre, casino, (Grand) hotel

Question 25

three of: gospel choir, cheerleaders, Brazilian drummers, dixie bands, samba groups

Text 8

Students had to respond to at least five points raised by the writer: health/school/the topic – tolerance/Semra's text/an instance showing tolerant or intolerant behaviour/the situation in Australia. In order to convey information accurately and appropriately, they had to use the correct conventions for writing an informal letter in German; the structure and sequence of ideas had to be organised within the word limit; the style had to be suitable for a letter to a penfriend; the vocabulary had to be appropriate and the grammar needed to be accurate.

Question 26

To show they had understood the text, students had to write a letter in which they responded appropriately to what Semra had said.

Section 3 – Writing

Assessors were looking for relevance of content with the topic being considered broadly and in some depth. A certain sophistication in the writing was also expected. Structurally the piece needed an introduction, body and conclusion appropriate to the text type with ideas fittingly organised and sequenced. It was important that students showed they were familiar with a variety of sentence structures, using coordinating and subordinating conjunctions and relative pronouns. The vocabulary and grammatical structures needed to be varied and accurate with attention paid to genders, verbs, word order, adjective endings, conjunctions and punctuation.

Teachers should ensure that students have considerable practice in listening and reading skills. They should be able to select main points, details and inferences. In the writing tasks they should plan what they want to say and write first in simple language. The writing could then be made more sophisticated by joining sentences together in different ways and adding adjectives and adverbs to increase the range of vocabulary. Every word should be checked to correct any grammar errors. Simple mistakes detract from the quality of the writing, so attention should be paid to avoiding wrong genders, endings and verb forms, particularly with *haben* and *sein*.

It is important that students learn to work to time, as some students were not able to finish the paper. Students need to practise completing the three sections of listening, reading and writing in one sitting of two hours and 50 minutes. As there is no time to make a rough copy, students might be wise to write on every second line so as to have room to make the necessary corrections. It is also important to keep to the given word limit.

For the writing section, students should practise writing in appropriate styles for different kinds of audiences and be familiar with the techniques for various kinds of writing (eg. persuasive and evaluative writing often present problems. Students are also advised to write clearly, as some students wrote in pencil, which was very difficult to read. It is also important that the handwriting is legible, so that students gain credit for what they can do. More successful students managed to complete all the tasks and yet have time to ensure that careless errors were corrected and that the language used was varied and interesting.

Question 27

The task was to write a persuasive letter encouraging a friend to go on a holiday with the writer. Various aspects of the holiday were mentioned and students had to be sure to say something about each of them – the duration, destination, transport, accommodation, meals, activities and cost. Most students did this effectively, although some did not deal with all areas. The correct conventions for a German informal letter were required and the style needed to be friendly and persuasive, so that the friend was convinced that a holiday together would be a good idea.

Question 28

The task was to write an article for a youth magazine about the environment in the year 2100, concentrating on four or five aspects. It was important that the aspects covered were clearly stated and considered in detail. The format had to be suitable for an article with a title, introduction, meaningful treatment of the topic and a conclusion. The paragraphs had to be linked sequentially. Some students found it difficult to imagine the situation in 2100 and wrote about the environment today, while others successfully and creatively transported the readers into the future.

Question 29

The task was to write a journal entry about a significant day, including a date, personal feelings and reactions as well as details of what had happened. The events needed to be sequenced chronologically with an appropriate introduction and conclusion. Some wrote about a day that was quite normal; while others presented really significant events and depicted their reaction to them.

Question 30

The task was to write the text for a talk to a youth club about an admired person including details of his or her personality, special qualities and achievements. The style had to be suitable for talking to a group of young friends. More successful students managed to convey a real admiration for the person described.