



2010

LOTE: German GA 3: Examination

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2010 German oral examination illustrated how well students can perform when communicating in German. Most students completed both components of the examination very well and responded confidently with genuinely interesting answers. Students were able to converse spontaneously, cover a wide range of ideas and information, and use largely accurate grammar and language structures. Students who had thought through the conversation themes and prepared their discussion thoroughly were able to achieve excellent results.

While most students spoke clearly and with good pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo, some students' pronunciation was difficult to understand. While individual pronunciation and accent strength will vary, it is important that students practise the standard German accent where possible. Common errors included confusion of *ei/ie*, *er/ay* and how umlauts are used on vowels.

During the examination, assessors will ask a range of questions at varying levels of difficulty. Starting with simpler questions, assessors will try to ask questions at a level that corresponds to the student's stage of proficiency, increasing or decreasing the level of complexity as appropriate. Students should expect some difficult questions during both the Conversation and Discussion in order to show whether they can manage more complex questions. Students should think very carefully before they respond: if the student does not understand a question, they may need to ask for it to be repeated or expressed in a different way. Requests for clarification will not have a negative impact on a student's assessment; however, giving irrelevant or inappropriate responses due to misunderstanding a question without asking for clarification will not assist a student's assessment.

Section 1 – Conversation

The Conversation is an opportunity for students to use the many structures they have practised during their German language studies and to demonstrate their proficiency in using German. The conversation usually starts with general questions, but students should expand on these. When answering questions such as *'Könnten Sie Ihre Familie beschreiben?'*, rather than simply giving the names and ages of their siblings, students might describe how well they get along with family members, whether they have similar/different interests, family activities or typical family holidays.

Communication

During the Conversation, students are assessed on their capacity to maintain and advance the conversation appropriately and effectively. The clarity of their expression is also being measured.

Where appropriate, students should try to direct the conversation, proffering information, ideas and opinions rather than waiting for the assessors to ask questions. Assessors will interrupt at various points, usually when they are interested to know more about a comment or when they would like to change the general flow of the conversation. An interruption does not mean that the student has answered incorrectly, simply that the assessors would like lead the conversation in another direction.

Some students tried very hard to ensure that the grammar and pronunciation of every word was correct; however, this resulted in halting expression and unnatural intonation, stress and tempo. Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar is important but should not dominate the examination.

Content

It was clear that students had prepared and practised very well for the questions in the Conversation about themes such as family, free time and hobbies, school, work and future plans.

While the majority of students had prepared well, it was evident that some students had overprepared their responses as they appeared surprised when the assessors interrupted their prepared 'speech' on a typical question. Some also found it difficult to adapt when a question was asked in a different way to the one anticipated. Students should be aware that assessors might ask a question using other wording or a different slant and they should be prepared to answer appropriately. For example, instead of *'Wie finden Sie Ihre Schule?'* the question might be *'Glauben Sie, dass Ihre Schule eine gute Schule ist?'* These are similar questions but the responses require a different approach.



Some students struggled to express their hopes or career plans and were surprised with questions such as *‘Was möchten Sie werden?’* or *‘Welchen Beruf/Welche Karriere möchten Sie ergreifen?’*

As increasing numbers of students participate in student/school exchanges, assessors often ask questions seeking a comparison of students’ experiences in Germany and Australia. Some students appeared reluctant to say that they had gone on exchange; however, a question such as *‘Waren Sie schon einmal in Deutschland?’* is not a test, but simply seeks to determine whether this line of questioning is appropriate.

If assessors ask a question relating to the student’s Detailed Study topic, then the student should explain that this is their topic and that they would rather leave the question until the Discussion.

The Content criterion assesses the relevance, breadth and depth of information, ideas and opinions, as well as the capacity to support or elaborate responses with reasons, examples, evidence and new ideas. Therefore, students need to anticipate the question *‘Warum ... ?’* and justify their comments. Students might consider why they like/dislike subjects, enjoy a particular hobby, what their parents think about them participating in an activity or if their friends have similar opinions to theirs. Questions about advantages/disadvantages and individual preferences are typical and students should include the reasons for their choices in their response.

Language

The oral examination’s emphasis is on the student’s ability to interact with the assessors, demonstrate knowledge, and express information, ideas and opinions. However, the examination is also an assessment of the student’s language use and the accuracy of their vocabulary and grammar. The language criterion also covers the range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar, the variety of expressions and structures used and the appropriateness of the vocabulary and grammar to the context, audience and purpose of the examination.

Phrases such as *‘Das war gut’*, *‘ich finde...’*, *‘das ist wichtig’*, *‘X ist okay’* and *‘Spaß’* tended to be misused and overused by students. Students should try to consider a range of expressions that indicate agreement or emphasis. Students should also practise the following grammatical structures:

- regular/irregular past participles, including the correct auxiliary *‘haben’* or *‘sein’*
- *‘werden’* not *‘wollen’* for the future tense
- verb position, especially after *‘weil’* or *‘meiner Meinung nach’*
- modal verbs, avoiding the overuse of *‘ich mag ...’*
- subject–verb agreement
- possessive pronouns. Some students still confuse *sein/ihr* or *dein/Ihr*
- idiomatic preposition use; for example, *‘sich erinnern an’* or *‘es kommt auf xxx an’*
- differentiation between the names of countries and nationalities; for example, *Australier/Australien/australisch* or *Deutsche/Deutschland/deutsch*
- correct use of *bekommen*, *finden* and *meinen*
- German word order
- the choice of pronoun. Students should practise correct pronouns; for example, *‘Schule’* is feminine hence *‘sie’*, not *‘es’*, and *‘er/ihn/ihm’* are used for masculine nouns.

Section 2 – Discussion

Students do not need to start their one-minute introduction by describing that they ‘have studied language and culture through texts’.

They should introduce their topic, state the sub-topic and the focus of the Detailed Study. Students are also encouraged to indicate aspects of their topic that they would like to discuss. Students should not mention topics, resources or aspects of their topic they have not prepared as this can lead to confusion, questions the student cannot answer and the impression that the student has a limited range of information, ideas and opinions.

Communication

Competent students were thoroughly familiar with the topic, issues and information. They were very knowledgeable about the topic’s vocabulary and anticipated areas of discussion. It was evident that many students had practised how to express their opinions, and had built ideas and opinions into the discussion.



Some students appeared to have rote-learned large portions of material. Preparing answers can be a valuable strategy; however, students must realise that they may not be asked the questions they anticipate, and they will need to adapt prepared answers to the questions asked.

Content

Competent students considered common points between resources, and considered the topic as a whole rather than separate aspects that did not interconnect. The selection of resources in a well-handled discussion clearly related to the topic.

Some students prepared complex topics that they struggled to explain under oral examination conditions. Some topics may be fascinating for students or teachers but can be very challenging to explain and explore competently in German as a second language.

At the end of the discussion, assessors will usually ask if the student has anything else to say, giving students the opportunity to present any key points assessors might have not covered. Students should not be disconcerted if they have nothing more to say, but it may be valuable to consider a comment about aspects of the topic or issues they found interesting to conclude the discussion.

Language

For the Discussion, students should understand that they are expected to have a range of vocabulary and expressions suited to the Detailed Study selected. The *VCE German Study Design* states that students should have spent at least 15 hours of class time on their Detailed Study topic in order to explore, discuss and explain it using a sound knowledge of the subject matter and appropriate vocabulary.

Materials for the discussion

In 2010, students presented some imaginative and appropriate topics for the Discussion. As students choose texts for the discussion, they should consider:

- how they will explain the issues and information in the resources
- which of the resource's examples, quotes or evidence they might present in the discussion
- whether one resource links with their other resources – common examples, themes or contradictions
- what they have learned from this resource
- how the resource relates to the general topic, the sub-topic, life in German-speaking communities or the student's personal experience
- the appropriateness of the resource for the selected topic.

Resources need to contain material of sufficient depth to allow students to discuss several aspects of the topic and give ideas and opinions. Sometimes each selected resource contained similar information, while some objects brought in to support the discussion did not extend the topic. When choosing support materials, students should ensure that the objects will allow them to develop the Discussion.

Effective topics for discussion

Topics need to reflect the students' interests and language abilities. When choosing a topic, students' prior knowledge should be considered, as well as the complexity of concepts and links to students' interests and life experiences. Some students presented topics which were too broad or too narrow. Other students presented topics that were very negative and pessimistic in scope and focus.

Many students struggled to express opinions, especially about films or documentaries. They were able to retell the story but could not explain or give their opinions about an issue. Students should be able to express and justify their opinions with evidence from the texts.

High-scoring performances were on topics such as:

- *Drogen und Jugendliche*
- *Gastarbeiter in Deutschland, erste und zweite Generation/Ausländer in Deutschland*, including an analysis of the background and experiences of various migrants groups in Germany
- German life and experiences in the 20 years of unified Germany
- *Widerstand im zweiten Weltkrieg*
- *Die Luftbrücke und Blockade von Berlin*
- *Wandergesellen*

2010 Assessment Report

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY



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- *Schulreform – G8.*