2021 VCE German written external assessment report

General comments

This was the second year of implementation of the VCE German Study Design 2020–2024 at Units 3 and 4 level and students and teachers would now be familiar with the specifications for written examinations; however, that information is still available on the VCAA website for all those who require further information.

Thorough revision of all key points of grammar such as tenses, cases, verb forms, word order and adjectival endings is essential. Expansion of vocabulary thematically and the memorisation of useful and key phrases is of major importance at this level. Dictionary definitions used without first checking the usage of the word in context can often obscure the meaning of the writing. If it is necessary to seek out the meaning of a word, it is important that the dictionary used is sufficiently detailed to provide useful contexts to ensure meanings are clear to the reader.

Using reading time to select a topic for Section 3 – Writing in German, then carefully reading questions for Section 1, Parts A and B to gain an understanding of the subject matter of the listening and responding texts is also a very valuable use of time as is the pre-reading of the texts for Section 2, Parts A and B.

A number of students adopted the practice of highlighting instructions and the key parts of a task. Reading and noting instructions very carefully during reading time is of particular importance. This approach may prevent issues such as responses written in the wrong language, questions only partially answered or responses that have drifted from the task.

Students should carefully note the number of marks allocated to a question and the space allowed for the response because this is a key indicator of the detail and length required for that response. For example, the extended writing responses for Question 4 in Part B − Reading and Responding in German, and for Section 3 − Writing in German, carried 15 marks and 20 marks respectively. This, as well as the requirement of 150 words for Question 4 and 200−300 words for Section 3 − Writing in German, should be a clear indicator that detailed responses were required here.

Leaving questions blank should be avoided at all costs. Students are reminded that it is always preferable to attempt an answer rather than leave a blank space.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section 1

Part A – Listening and responding in English

This section assessed the students’ capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspects of texts. The importance of ongoing practice throughout the year of listening and responding to spoken texts cannot be emphasised enough.

Question 1a.

3 October 2020 was such an important date because:

* it was the 30th anniversary / 30 years / 30th jubilee
* it marked the German unification / a united Germany.

Question 1b.

The motto for this event was ‘we with one another’ and Potsdam was the host city.

Question 1c.

The sequence of historical events leading to this celebration was:

* Germany was divided into East and West / a wall was built dividing Germany after World War II
* Berlin Wall fell in 1989, which signalled the end of the Cold War
* The process of reunification was officially sealed in 1990.

A significant number of students misunderstood the word for process (prozess) thinking this word to mean ‘protest’. This led to incorrect interpretations that protests were part of the historical events. This was not the case.

Question 1d.

Two pieces of evidence from the text demonstrating that the event was celebrated all over the world were:

* German embassies around the world had planned major celebrations.
* Melbourne’s main station was lit up in the colours of the German flag.

Part B – Listening and responding in German

In this part of the examination students were assessed on their understanding of the listening text and their ability to accurately convey appropriate information from the text in German. The information presented in the response needed to be relevant to the question. Students were not awarded separate marks for content and language. Responses that included the relevant information and were expressed clearly in German were awarded full marks.

Question 2a.

The actual work of a mountain ‘cleaner’ differed from the caller’s perception in that the caller thought he had to literally clean the mountain. Whereas the actual job of a mountain cleaner was:

* to control or check the mountains as a mountaineer
* to remove loose rocks to ensure safety and keep the city (of Salzburg) safe.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Der Anrufer dachte, dass man die Berge putzt mit einem Putztuch und Putzmittel (um) die Berge sauber zu machen. Aber, eigentlich muss ein Bergputzer die lockeren Steine auf dem Berg entfernen um die Sicherheit von Salzburg gefährzuleisten.

(The caller thought that one had to clean the mountains with a cleaning cloth and cleaning agents but actually, a mountain cleaner had to remove loose rocks from the mountain to guarantee the safety of Salzburg.)

Question 2b.

Three prerequisites necessary to work as a mountain ‘cleaner’ were:

* to be brave
* not be afraid of heights
* to be able to abseil.

The caller believed he had these qualities because:

* he was not afraid of spiders/insects
* he climbed on ladders cleaning windows
* he had completed an abseiling course.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Man muss schwindelfrei sein, absailen können und mutig sein um als Bergputzer zu arbeiten. Der Anrufer dachte er sei schwindelfrei, weil er Leitern klettern kann, er glaubt, er sei mutig, weil er vor Spinnen und andere Insekten kein Angst hat und er glaubt, dass er Absailen kann, weil er eine Kurs gemacht hat.

(One must not get dizzy, be able to abseil, and be brave to be a mountain ‘cleaner’. The caller thought he did not get dizzy because he was able to climb ladders, believed he was brave because he was unafraid of spiders and other insects, and he believed he could abseil because he had done a course.)

Question 2c.

A mountain cleaner requires:

* protective clothing / a helmet / climbing boots
* special equipment (e.g. a hammer or crowbar).

According to the caller, a mountain cleaner requires:

* gumboots/gloves
* a cleaning cloth / cleaning agents / a bucket.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Die Arbeitskleidung und Arbeitsmittel eines Bergputzers bestehen aus einem Helm, Schutzkleidung, einem Hammer, einem Brechstenner und Putzschuhe. Im Vergleich dazu dachte der Anrufer, dass die Arbeitskleidung und Arbeitsmittel aus Putzwerkzeugen, Putzmittel, Handschuhe und Stiefel bestehen.

(The work clothes and materials for one’s work consist of a helmet, protective clothing, a hammer, a crowbar and cleaner shoes. By comparison, the caller thought that the work clothes and work materials required were cleaning tools, cleaning agents, gloves and boots.)

Section 2

Part A – Reading, listening and responding in English

In Section 2, Part A, students were required to carefully use both the reading and listening texts to produce the required response.

Question 3a.

A professorship for bike traffic management was being established at a university in Germany because the car was still the dominating means of transport / traffic planning focused on car traffic.

Question 3b.

People still used their cars regardless of the harmful effects on the environment because:

* they saw the car as a status symbol
* convenience/comfort
* habit.

Question 3c.

Employers could encourage more employees to ride a bike by:

* providing change rooms
* providing showers.

Question 3d.

The successful model regarding bike travel that Germany could use was the Netherlands because:

* their traffic planning focused completely on bikes/cyclists
* they have bike paths separate from roads / car traffic
* the bike paths lead directly to the city centre, whereas cars had to make detours.

Question 3e.

City planners could:

* offer free bike helmets for cyclists
* introduce speed limits for cars
* allow bikes on buses for free
* provide more parking spaces for bikes.

Question 3f.

Three goals Ella Peters wished to achieve during her professorship were:

* reducing traffic / no more traffic jams
* clean air / reducing pollution
* healthier people.

Question 3g.

Apart from a cargo bike, the other four bikes that Ella Peters had and their uses were:

* a super modern / expensive bike for riding long distances
* a simple/basic bike for riding to work each day
* a mountain bike for tours in the hills/mountains
* a foldable bike for easy transport (on buses / public transport).

Part B – Reading and responding in German

Students were required to demonstrate an understanding of the stimulus texts and to address the requirements of the task by conveying the relevant information from the texts that was appropriate for the audience and the prescribed writing style and text type.

The reading text included a visual stimulus. Responses that scored highly successfully incorporated information from the visual stimulus.

Student responses were assessed holistically according to the assessment criteria and the expected qualities published on the VCAA website. Students were not awarded separate marks for content and language accuracy; however, language accuracy was an important expected quality that was considered in the assessment.

It was possible to achieve a high score for this question without exceeding the specified word limit, which is shorter than the limit specified for Section 3.

Question 4

Based on the visuals and the information gained from the discussion with scent expert Robert Hoffmann, students were to write an informative article about this new retail strategy. The article was to be titled ‘Scent marketing: a new concept’ and would be published in a favourite youth magazine. There were approximately four key areas to refer to in the response as well as a reference to either of the two images (i.e. the statistics and the scent box as pictured):

* the aspect of scent as a marketing tool
* using scent to improve ambience
* scents having direct influence on emotions and behaviour
* the impact of different cultures and their association with different scents
* scents as retail strategy of the future

The highest scoring responses were able to clearly refer to at least four key areas as well as successfully integrating the visual stimulus in their responses. Responses that did not score well relied heavily on the language in the stimulus text and/or tended to copy straight from the text, demonstrating a limited or very limited understanding of the text and an inability to organise information and ideas in any logical order.

The highest scoring responses identified the key points of the text and were able to convey this logically and clearly using their own words where possible and meeting the requirements of the task including specified audience, purpose, style of writing and text type.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Deutsche Jugendmagazin

Duftmarketing: ein neues Konzept. Von Christiane Müller

Heutzutage benutzen Firmen verschiedene Marketingstrategien um die Kunden dazu zu manipulieren, mehr einzukaufen.

Auch Düfte werden als effiziente Marketinginstrumente eingesetzt, um die Entscheidungen der Kunden zu beeinflussen. Doch wie funktioniert das eigentlich? Düfte spielen eine entscheidene Rolle während dem Einkaufen. Beispielsweise werden in Deutschland Zitrusdüfte mit Sauberkeit und Hygiene assoziert und rufen positive Sensationen hervor. Dies führt dazu, dass die Kunden länger in dem Geschäft verweilen, Impulskäufe macht und eine erhöhte Kaufbereitschaft zeigt. Auch im Fitnessstudio werden Duftboxen benutzt, um unangenehme Schweißgerüche zu neutralisieren. Somit wird die Luft gereinigt und bietet eine frische Atmosphere für das Training an. Die Kunden halten das Studio als empfehlenswert und trainieren häufiger. Jedoch sollte man auch bedenken, dass man aufgrund der kulturellen Unterschiede in verschiedenen Länder die Düfte anders assozieren. Laut Duftexperte Robert Hoffmann wird in Spanien das Chlor mit Sauberkeit verbindet, während es bei den Deutschen Erinnerungen in den Schwimmbäder hervorrufen. Auf diese Weise werden Menschen beim Einkaufen unbewusst von äußeren Reizen beeinflusst und treffen dadurch andere Entscheidungen. Somit können die Firmen ihren Gewinn maximieren und das Verhalten ihrer Kunden manipulieren.

(Nowadays companies use various marketing strategies to manipulate customers to buy more. Scents are also inserted as efficient marketing instruments to influence the decisions of customers. How does that actually work? Scents play a decisive role while shopping. For example, citrus scents are associated with cleanliness and hygiene and result in positive sensations. This leads to the customer staying longer in the store, impulse buying and showing a heightened preparedness to buy. Also, in Fitnessstudios scent boxes are used to neutralise unpleasant odours. Thus, the air is cleaned offering a fresh environment for training. Customers see the studios as worth recommending further and train harder. However, one should also consider that because of cultural differences in different countries scents can have different associations. According to scent expert Robert Hoffmann, Spain associates chlorine with cleanliness, whereas for Germans it reminds them of swimming pools.

In this way, people are unconsciously influenced by external temptations and because of that make different decisions. That is how firms are able to maximise their profit and manipulate the behaviour of their clients.)

Section 3 – Writing in German

The assessment criteria focused on the capacity to demonstrate relevance, breadth and depth of content and the capacity to demonstrate accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar.

Question 5

Students were asked to write a personal, reflective piece in the form of a journal entry, identifying an individual they admired and were grateful for and after whom they would name their child. An example was the refugee children being named after Angela Merkel as a mark of their parents’ gratitude for her support at the time.

Twenty-two per cent of students chose this question. The highest scoring responses discussed the reasons for their gratitude and admiration in detail. Responses that did not score well discussed only admiration and/or ignored the text type or audience required. Some responses tended to drift from the task, focusing little on the issue of admiration and gratitude.

Question 6

Students were required to write an imaginative short story aimed at primary school students. The scenario was to be played out in a primary school, where the writer’s classmate, being absent for the day, was replaced by a robot. The student’s imagination was left to create how the day unfolded.

Only 9% of students chose this topic. The highest scoring responses developed a title and author and an interesting storyline, with a moral or at least a conclusion and were suitable for a primary school audience. Responses that did not score well were often brief, difficult to follow due to very frequent misuse of script, undeveloped, and with an abrupt ending not suitable for the audience of primary school students.

Question 7

Students were asked to write about their experiences after accepting the challenge of living without their smartphone for one week. They were required to evaluate their positive and negative experiences in the form of a script for a speech which they would then present at a youth forum.

This was the most popular topic, with 47% of students responding. There were many high-scoring responses. The highest scoring responses evaluated the week after, clearly and objectively presenting the positive and negative sides. Almost all students acknowledged that although they missed their smartphones, they nonetheless also made many positive gains, such as improved sleep, more time for schoolwork, quality time spent with family and more reflection time and time for exercise (e.g. walking). Responses that did not score well tended to be brief with little evaluation rather than a focus on how difficult it was to be without their smartphone. Inaccurate script often hampered meaning.

Question 8

This topic required students to write a formal letter to the school principal, persuading him/her to give them permission to miss school in order to travel to Europe for six months with their parents.

Twenty-two per cent of students selected this topic. Responses that scored highly were very persuasive and pointed out how they were strong, reliable and conscientious students; could be trusted to work hard on their studies while away; would practise their language skills; would mature and grow as a person; would work online as well as attend regular online meetings etc. There were many strong responses, but responses that did not score well were brief, demanding rather than persuasive in their approach and/or included very frequent misuse of text, which obstructed meaning.