2022 VCE German oral external assessment report

General comments

Students were assessed on their knowledge and skills in using spoken language. The examination had two sections: a conversation of approximately seven minutes and a discussion of approximately eight minutes.

In both sections, students were assessed on

* content and communication (relevance, depth and range of information, ideas and opinions; the capacity to elaborate and reflect on information, ideas and opinions and the capacity to interact with assessors using effective communication)
* language (appropriateness of vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures and clarity of expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo).

Students were generally well prepared for their oral examination, offering a wide range of information about themselves and their discussion topic. It was apparent, however, that some students had difficulty demonstrating the correct use of grammatical structures, both simple and complex. Extra focus on and revision of all aspects of language in preparation for the oral is most important.

A significant number of students relied heavily on information which appeared to have been rote learned. This is ill advised since the oral assessment is a discussion rather than a monologue. Students relying heavily on the presentation of rote learned information during the oral assessment may be interrupted, which is important for students to be aware of when preparing. Relevance, depth and range of information is also always preferable over mere quantity.

Finally, all students, including those with a German background, need to thoroughly prepare for each section of this assessment, including their chosen discussion topic.

Specific information

Section 1 – Conversation

This section was a general conversation about the student’s personal world as well as their interactions as learners with the German language and culture. Students could support their personal reflections by referring to any of the relevant subtopics studied in class from the prescribed theme ‘The individual’ and the prescribed theme ‘The German-speaking communities’.

Students who engaged in higher-scoring conversations:

* demonstrated an excellent level of understanding by responding readily and communicating confidently, carrying the conversation forward with spontaneity
* provided an excellent range of information, ideas and opinions clearly and logically with highly relevant responses
* clarified, elaborated on and defended information, ideas and opinions very effectively
* used sophisticated vocabulary and structures naturally, accurately and appropriately
* used excellent pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo.

Most students engaged in expressive and informative conversations with the assessors, and humour was often injected in a meaningful way. Many students succeeded in speaking about varied aspects of their personal life thus offering the assessors an interesting perspective of them as individuals (as much as the limited time of seven minutes allowed).

Content and communication

Most students were able to provide ample and wide-ranging information about themselves around the general topics of family, school, leisure and future plans, as well as engagement with the world of German.

Students who scored highly were aware of the need to not only provide basic information (such as *‘Ich spiele gern Basketball’*) but to elaborate by offering depth and opinions and by employing more complex German in the process, for example: ‘*Seit vielen Jahren bin ich ein wirklich enthusiastischer Basketballspieler und trainiere an drei Abenden pro Woche sowohl in einem Verein als auch mit meiner Schulmannschaft. Ich bin fasziniert von diesem Sport aus mehreren Gründen…’*.

Furthermore, the highest-scoring students led the conversation and often offered a segue into further topics where they were able to appropriately answer further questions from the assessors. It is wise for students to be aware that they may be asked to elaborate on information they have mentioned. It would be unwise for them to introduce facts which they are then unable to discuss further.

Language

Many students offered a wide array of German vocabulary and grammatical structures, applied them appropriately and used them to make their language varied and complex. Some students also included German metaphors and idioms appropriately, thus adding additional flavour to their language. Students should take care, however, not to overuse these idioms or use them in the wrong context, as this can impede the flow of the conversation.

Grammatical accuracy was frequently an issue. Some errors were of a basic nature, and utmost attention must be paid to subject-verb agreement, all verb conjugations, possessive articles and their endings, word order, noun genders and adjectival endings.

Whilst near-perfect pronunciation is not expected, it is recommended that students practise German sounds carefully. Some sounds deserving attention are the pronunciation of all vowels and *Umlaute*, the distinction between *ei* and *ie*, the pronunciation of a *v* as an *f* (/ˈɛf/), the German *r* and that one’s inflection should be falling rather than rising at the end of a sentence.

Section 2 – Discussion

Students discussed their chosen subtopic and their supporting visual material, which was related to either the prescribed theme ‘The German-speaking communities’ or the prescribed theme ‘The world around us’. The focus of the discussion was on exploring aspects of the subtopic, including information, opinions and ideas. Students were expected to respond to questions on their subtopic and supporting visual material.

Students who engaged in higher-scoring discussions:

* provided an excellent range and depth of information, ideas and opinions with an original perspective on the subtopic
* elaborated on complex information and defended ideas and opinions clearly and logically with highly relevant responses
* used the image skilfully to support the discussion on the subtopic
* communicated information, ideas and opinions very confidently and carried the discussion forward with spontaneity.

Students are encouraged to explore a subtopic, inviting questions and discussion, rather than simply presenting a collection of facts. The choice of topic is most important: it should be one which the students can relate to.

Content and communication

Selecting a subtopic carefully should allow students the best opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and thus be awarded marks. Students need to choose a subtopic that allows a fruitful and extended *discussion*, rather than a mere, and often limited, description. In extreme cases, students may run out of things to say quite quickly, thereby making it difficult to carry the discussion forward. Some subtopics falling into this category include: biographies of German-speaking people, a single German/Swiss/Austrian festival or company, a single German ‘Bioreservat’, one German TV program or one example of architecture such as Neuschwanstein Castle.

It is essential that students choose subtopics that have sufficient scope for discussion and are neither too specific nor too general. For example, *‘Abholzung in der Pfalz’* is too narrow, whereas *‘Abholzung in Europa’* is too general; *‘Abholzung als Umweltproblem in Deutschland’* is better balanced as it can facilitate a discussion of one environmental issue in Germany that can then be extended to talking about the role of environmental protection as a social, economic and political issue.

It is also important to remember that discussions are expected to include evaluations and opinions, and the subtopic needs to have scope for such elaborations.

It is important for students to be offered subtopics that interest them, to which they can relate and that reflect current topics in a German-speaking country. Some students had difficulty connecting with subtopics such as *Kiindertransporte, Sophie Scholl, Leben in der DDR, Wandergesellen*. Some of the highest-scoring discussions featured subtopics that the students were passionate about or were personally affected by; for example, a drama student’s topic about German theatre, a musician’s topic about political songs in East Germany, the child of migrants discussing refugees in present-day Germany.

When students gave rote-learned answers, assessors found it difficult to interrupt. During this part of the examination, student responses should invite questions and requests for more details or opinions, which allow the students to further explore the topic and to demonstrate the depth of their understanding. While students may certainly compile a script that contains their arguments, ideas and opinions, this should only form the basis of what they say. High-scoring students used their preparation flexibly: they adjusted their answers to each question and were able to provide spontaneous responses as well.

Some students appeared to be unsure as to how they should select and use the image to support their discussion subtopic. A carefully chosen image will not only have a strong link to the topic and illustrate it, but should be used to enhance the quality of the discussion (for example by leading to a new and higher-level aspect of the topic). The voluntary introduction of the image by the student at an appropriate time during the discussion would be considered an effective and skilful use of the visual material. A simple description of the image, on the other hand, would be considered no more than an average use. Note that limited writing on the image (for example, slogans on demonstration banners or an election poster) is acceptable.

Language

In addition to the comments made in Section 1 it is expected that students’ language be more complex in Section 2, since they have had time to extensively research a specific subtopic and its specific vocabulary and language. For example, grammatical structures such as *Partizipialkonstruktionen*, the passive and the two subjunctives would be appropriate to use here.

More information

Refer to the [VCE German study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/german/Pages/Index.aspx) and [examination criteria and specifications](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/German.aspx) for full details on this study and how it is assessed.