2022 VCE German written external assessment report

General comments

This year, most students were able to identify, understand and adequately respond to general information in the listening and reading texts as well as demonstrate an understanding of the requirements of writing tasks, such as text types, different writing styles, structuring and sequencing.

High-scoring responses demonstrated very good aural and reading comprehension skills by providing clear, accurate and relevant responses in English and, when responding in German, were well-structured, showing depth, an accurate use of a wide range of grammatical features and vocabulary relevant to the task.

Listening comprehension tasks proved challenging for some students. While students generally understood the gist of the reading texts, their responses in English often lacked sufficient detail, suggesting difficulties with the initial note-taking. Areas of concern when responding in German included key aspects of grammar, such as subject–verb agreements, reflexives, sentence structures, tenses, cases and the correct use of pronouns.

Students are advised that it is important to attempt all questions and to allow sufficient time to complete all assigned tasks. It appeared that some students lacked sufficient time to complete Section 3 and would benefit from improved time-management skills.

In order to avoid any ambiguities, it is important that students make every effort to produce clear and legible handwritten content.

Specific information

Note: 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.

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

Section 1

In this section, high-scoring responses displayed very good comprehension of the language contained in the two texts. They also demonstrated very good note-taking skills.

It is most important that students make good use of the space provided for note-taking but should also be reminded that answers written in the note-taking space will not be awarded marks.

Part A – Listening and responding in English

This section assessed the students’ capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspects of texts.

Students who scored highly were careful to understand the requirements of each task and provided responses that met each criterion.

Question 1a.

The correct forms of address are:

* du for children and friends
* Sie for anyone else.

Students did not obtain full marks in this question if they did not clearly state du and Sie as required.

Question 1b.

* Sie shows respect.
* Sie shows politeness/courtesy.
* When using Sie you are keeping your distance.
* Sie is often stiff.
* Sie is old-fashioned / antiquated / something for old people to use.

Question 1c.

Currently influencing the two forms of address are:

* English language
* globalisation
* social media
* smartphones.

Part B – Listening and responding in German

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.

While generally performing very well in all three questions, a few students missed the first point in Question 2a. by not including zu oft / zu viel or had difficulties with vocabulary, such as Kleider ausleihen in Question 2b. Question 2c. required students to support their answer with examples from the text and not from prior knowledge.

Question 2a.

The reporter means:

* Wir kaufen zu oft/viel Kleidung. (We buy clothes/clothing too often/much.)
* Die Kleidung ist von schlechter Qualität / geht schnell kaputt. (The clothes are often of poor quality / become quickly worn out.)
* Die Kleidung landet schnell im Müll. / Es wird viel Müll kreiert. / Es verursacht Umweltprobleme. (The clothes quickly land in the rubbish. / A lot of rubbish is created. / It causes environmental problems.)

Question 2b.

Three suggestions are:

* Man sollte Kleidung von Freunden ausleihen / Kleidung mit Freunden tauschen. (One should borrow clothes from friends / exchange clothes with friends.)
* Man sollte Kleidung in Secondhandläden einkaufen. (One should buy clothes in secondhand shops.)
* Man sollte Kleidung aus umweltfreundlichen/nachhaltigen Materialien/organischer Baumwolle kaufen. (One should buy clothes made from environmentally friendly / sustainable materials / organic cotton.)

Question 2c.

The benefits of taking the advice would be:

* Man würde Geld sparen, denn man kann die Kleidung länger tragen/die Kleidung hält länger und man kauft weniger. (One would save money, because one can wear clothes longer / can last longer and one buys less.)
* Man würde der Umwelt helfen, denn die Kleidung ist nachhaltig/biologisch abbaubar/es entsteht weniger Müll. (One would help the environment, because the clothes/clothing are sustainable/biodegradable / less rubbish is created.)

Section 2

Part A – Reading, listening and responding in English

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

Some students repeated the same answers for Questions 3b. and 3c. Students should be aware that different questions will require different answers; the same answer will not be required in multiple questions and it is important to read the question carefully.

Question 3a.

Salt was extracted:

* in the mountains / Austrian Alps by digging underground / salt mining
* near the coast / from seawater and evaporation of sea salt / via the rays of the sun / sunlight / evaporation.

Question 3b.

Evidence that salt contributed to early commerce includes:

* routes taken to transport salt became salt roads and then roads for trade/commerce
* salt was given the same value as gold; in the Middle Ages salt was weighed against gold in dealings/transactions
* taxes/customs payments were to be paid on salt
* Roman soldiers were paid in salt.

Students needed to carefully consider the role of salt in early commerce, meaning trade, monetary value, taxes and payments. Answers relating to food preservation and medical use were not relevant for this question.

Question 3c.

Apartfrom contributing to early commerce, evidence explaining the importance of salt throughout history includes that it:

* was often rare / was considered a gift from the gods
* made countries/regions who possessed salt very rich/wealthy/powerful
* led to conflict/wars being fought
* was critical for the life of animals and humans
* was used to preserve food
* was used for mummification
* had a medical use
* improved/improves the taste of food.

Question 3d.

Salt is used in winter by being sprinkled on icy roads and footpaths to prevent people and cars from slipping and to melt the snow and ice.

Question 3e.

The conclusions of both the reading and listening texts was that even though salt is cheap today, it is still very important /valuable / like gold

Part B – Reading and responding in German

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

The reading text included a visual stimulus. Students who scored highly were able to successfully incorporate information from the visual stimulus in their response.

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/character limit, which is shorter than the limit specified for Section 3.

Question 4

After reading the story of Margarete Steiff and her family firm as well as considering her image, students were asked to imagine they were Margarete Steiff by writing a diary entry reflecting on her life. They were asked to include factors such as positivity, determination, independence, creativity, teamwork and also a little luck.

Students who scored highly demonstrated a thorough understanding of the text and manipulated the language in their response by adhering to the kind of writing (personal) and the text type features (journal entry) and by mentioning information from the image (sitting in a wheelchair / had a dog / toy bear). These students also displayed also a very good grasp of grammar and produced a well-structured response.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response demonstrating a very good understanding of the stimulus text while also addressing the key requirements of the task.

Tagebucheintrag Süddeutschland, den 1. Oktober 1928

Heute wurde ich gefragt – wie habe ich Steiff zum Erfolg gebracht? Da sagte ich nur ein Wort – Positivität! Mein Leben mit Behinderung war und ist nicht leicht, aber ohne Positivität hätte ich keine Freude am Leben! Freude am Leben ist die Essenz von Steiff! Positivität leitet zur Entschlossenheit, und Entschlossenheit leitet zum Erfolg! Ohne Entschlossenheit hätte ich nicht die Schule besucht, oder meine Liebe für Handarbeit gefunden.

Als junge Schneiderin brauchte ich viel Kreativität und Fleiß. Es gab zurzeit hundertausende Schneiderinnen – um Erfolg zu erreichen musste man etwas anders tun. So entstanden die Elefanten Nadelkissen, aus meiner Vorstellung!

Aber um erlich zu sein, war Teamarbeit wahrscheinlich eines der wichtigsten Faktoren in Steiffs erfolg. Ohne meinen lieben Fritz hätte ich nie ein Wohn und Geschäftshaus in dem ich selbstständig leben konnte mit Rollstuhlrampe. Ohne Teamarbeit hätte niemand mich als Kind ins Klassenzimmer getragen!

Aber Glück? Ohne Glück hätte ich es nicht geschafft. Wenn Richard nicht diesen Bären gemacht hätte, oder wenn der Sekretär von Teddy Roosevelt es nicht im Schaufenster sah – dan wären da heute keine Teddybären! Unglaublich! Hätte Roosevelts tochter sich mehr für Puppen interessiert, dann würde ich heute nicht hier mit einem Teddybär am Schoß sitzen!

(Journal entry Southern Germany, 28th October 1928

Today, I was asked – how did I lead Steiff to success? I said one word only – positivity! My life with disability was and is not easy, but without positivity I would not enjoy life. Enjoying life is the essence of Steiff! Positivity leads to determination, and determination leads to success! Without determination, I would not have attended school or found my passion for needlework. (handicraft)

As a young seamstress, I needed to have creativity and had to work hard. At that time, there were hundreds of thousands of seamstresses; in order to have success, one had to do something different. That’s how the elephant cushion pins were created, from my idea!

But to be totally honest, teamwork was certainly one of the most important factors in Steiff’s success. Without my dear Fritz, I would never have a home and a commercial building in which I could live independently with a wheelchair ramp. Without teamwork, nobody would have carried me as a child into the classroom!

But luck? Without luck, I would not have made it. Had Richard not made this (toy) bear, or if Teddy Roosevelt’s secretary had not seen it in a shop window, then there would be no teddy bears today. Unbelievable! Had Roosevelt’s daughter been more interested in dolls, I would not sit here today with a teddy bear on my lap!)

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

Students chose one of four topics, each requiring a different text type and a different kind of writing. Questions 5 and 8 were the most popular choices, followed by Question 6. Only a few students chose Question 7.

Generally, students demonstrated a good understanding of the requirements of the task and made correct use of the required kinds of writing and text types for Questions 5, 6 and 8.

While most students were able to include (demonstrate) relevant content in their response, difficulties with language accuracy were a key issue impacting the level of achievement. Basic grammar mistakes were common, such as the incorrect ending of modal verbs, not using the dative case with helfen, confusing dein and ihr, and not using an infinitive verb with a modal verb. Other recurring mistakes included sentence structure, spelling, as well as the wrong gender for common words (eine Haus, eine Hemd etc.)

Students who scored highly displayed accurate language features, interesting content, correct structures and well-punctuated sentences.

Question 5

Students were asked to write an evaluative article in which they presented the positives and negatives of lifestyles in the city and in the countryside.

Responses that scored highly may have included the following points:

* City life positives
* bustling, easier to meet people due to proximity, everything is close by, great public transport
* abundance of cultural/sporting events, great variety of shops
* more choice of education
* more independence
* more opportunities to do a range of activities
* City life negatives
* smog, air pollution, cars, noise level
* impersonal, anonymity
* small piece of land, small house/apartment, no garden
* Country life positives
* great sense of community
* lots of space to do outdoor activities and keep pets, hobbies (fishing, horse riding, sailing, etc.)
* less traffic, better air quality
* Country life negatives
* lack of public transport and services, isolation, due to distance less independence
* limited range of shops
* less opportunity to continue with further studies / job opportunities.

Question 6

Students were asked to assume the role of school captain and write a persuasive script for a speech to convince their schoolmates to take part in the school’s music program.

Responses that scored highly may have included that music:

* is universal / not connected to any language
* touches our soul and heart
* helps with relaxing and also concentration/learning
* triggers memories and helps us to remember
* makes us energetic
* improves our cognitive skills according to research
* allows us to make new friendships in class / music program
* encourages teamwork.

Question 7

Students were asked to write an imaginative short story set in the year 2045 in which they describe a special trip into space and their experiences on this trip.

Question 7 was chosen by few students and required them to write a story about space travel in the future. Although students used some correct features of the text type by including a title and author, most students had difficulties in developing an interesting and logical scenario that showed creativity and a strong sense of context. In addition, the lack of the necessary language skills to write an imaginative story often resulted in a description of a trip into space instead of developing it into a short story.

Question 8

Students were asked to write an email responding to their friend Frankie, who was quite nervous about starting their first job. Their friend was seeking advice about what to do and what not to do on their first day at work. Some key details such as dress, forms of address and punctuality were to be included in the response.

Responses that scored highly may have included the following points:

* be punctual
* wear the correct type of clothes
* be friendly and smile
* try to remember the names of your colleagues
* show that you are interested and ask a few questions
* try not to be nervous
* stick to the allocated breaks (e.g. lunch)
* don’t be late
* don’t look at your smartphone / watch / social media constantly
* don’t use du with your colleagues unless they offer it
* don’t correct your boss or colleagues (even though you think you know better).