2024 VCE German oral external assessment report

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.

Section 1: Conversation

What students did well

In 2024, students:

* engaged in a general conversation about their personal world and their interactions with the language and culture as learners
* provided a range of relevant information, ideas and opinions with an appropriate level of depth
* elaborated on, clarified and defended their ideas and opinions
* responded confidently and were able to advance the conversation, including through the use of appropriate repair strategies as needed
* used appropriate vocabulary
* used appropriate grammar and sentence structures
* used appropriate expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo.

Areas for improvement

In preparation for the examination, students should:

* prepare adequately for the conversation in terms of the relevance, depth and range of information, ideas and opinions. Some responses were very short and lacked depth or elaboration; for example, on the question of spare time, some students responded with only *Ich mache Sport und spiele Videospiele* (I play sport and play video games). Responses about culture should go beyond merely mentioning German food, sights in Berlin or the Oktoberfest
* practise answering a range of questions to be able to advance the conversation. Students should practise a variety of questions and be prepared for different levels of questions
* build confidence through practising interactions in German. Mock orals and exposure to different speakers of German is highly recommended
* practise using more complex sentence structures and syntax. High-scoring responses employed a range of grammatical structures, including relative and other subclauses, passive voice and the subjunctive. Students need to practise different verb tenses and have the ability to readily move from past tense to future tense and conditional tense
* revise grammar. Verb errors were once again the most intrusive errors this year. Verb tenses, verb positions and verb conjugation need to be practised rigorously in the lead-up to the examination. For example, questions requiring a past-tense response were at times answered using the present tense, such as *Ich sehe viele Schlösser und lerne neue Leute kennen* (I see a lot of castles and meet new people), and responses requiring the subjunctive used the indicative instead, such as *Ich vereinfache das Asylverfahren* (I simplify the asylum procedure). Verb position errors were mostly the result of a disregard for the conjugated verb sitting second in a main clause and last in a subclause, as in the following: *Gestern war ich im Park / weil ich gestern im Park war* (Yesterday I was in the park / because I was in the park yesterday). The verb ‘*sein*’ was often used incorrectly with the accusative case. Also important is subject–verb agreement; common examples of incorrect use were *die Leute kann* (people can), *man sollen* (one should)and *die Familie machen* (the family does). Possessive articles were also frequently used incorrectly, often in very basic phrases, such as *mit mein Bruder* (with my brother) and *mein Schwester* (my sister). Other frequent errors included *in Klasse 12* (in Year 12), which should have been *in der zwölften Klasse* (in Year 12*)*; *Das ist Spaß* (This is fun), which should have been *Das macht Spaß* (That is fun); *Ich spiele Sport* (I play sport), which should have been *Ich mache/treibe Sport* (I do sport); and the mix-up of meanings of question words (*wer* does not mean ‘where’)
* build vocabulary specific to their personal world and their interactions with the language and culture as learners. If a specific area is mentioned (such as a hobby or family tradition), students need to be prepared to elaborate. Their vocabulary needs to be wide enough in scope to allow them to do this. Some students’ vocabulary of verbs and adjectives this year was quite limited, which led to an overuse of some words
* practise pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. While perfect German pronunciation is not expected, some sounds need close attention and practise (vowels, especially e and ei/ie; umlaut; ch; r; and downward inflection at the end of a sentence). Some students spoke very quickly, relying on pre-learnt material, and did not listen to the questions asked. The pace should be natural and include pauses, giving assessors a chance to interrupt and ask questions
* when asked about their topic for the discussion at the start of the examination, students need to merely state a title rather than providing too much detail at this point.

Section 2: Discussion

What students did well

In 2024, students:

* clearly introduced the focus of their subtopic, alerting assessors to the image they had brought to support their discussion. Many students introduced their subtopic clearly, using succinct and informative titles and mentioning the main focuses of their research
* demonstrated in-depth knowledge of their subtopic
* used the image skilfully to support the discussion on the subtopic. Many students used suitable images that they integrated well into the discussion
* engaged in a discussion using relevant information, ideas and opinions. Students provided many examples to support their ideas and opinions
* clarified, elaborated on and defended their opinions and ideas
* communicated effectively with assessors throughout the discussion, including by using repair strategies
* used appropriate vocabulary
* used appropriate grammar and sentence structures
* used appropriate expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo.

Areas for improvement

In preparation for the examination, students could:

* choose an appropriate subtopic to suit their personality, ability and interests. The choice of subtopic is crucial to students’ success in this section. Some students spoke about a subtopic in which they did not appear to have much interest, which does not allow for a lively discussion. Possible subtopics of interest to students include music, history, politics, sport, the environment or technology. Some subtopics such as ‘*Wanderlust*’ (Wanderlust), ‘*Die Weiße Rose’* (The White Rose) and ‘*Fall der Berliner Mauer’* (Fall of the Berlin Wall) have been used by schools for many years and often students do not have an interest in these subtopics. It is important that schools allow students to choose their own subtopic based on their interests to facilitate a more lively discussion. Subtopics need to facilitate a discussion that incorporates the student’s opinions rather than a mere presentation of facts, and the discussion should allow students to demonstrate their in-depth research. Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that subtopics have a connection to the German-speaking world
* make sure that their subtopic has appropriate scope. Some students’ subtopics were either too wide (for example, ‘BMW’) or too narrow (such as ‘*Kinderbetreuung in der DDR’* (Childcare in the GDR), ‘*Stuttgarter Ballett’* (Stuttgart Ballet) and ‘*Die Kommerzialisierung des Bollenhutes’* (The Commercialisation of the Bollenhut) in scope. Some subtopics were global topics (like ‘*Soziale Medien / Mediensucht’* (Social Media/Media Addiction) and ‘*Massentourismus’* (Mass Tourism)) rather than referring specifically to a German-speaking country or culture. Subtopics that describe a building (such as ‘*Elbphilharmonie,* the Philharmonic Hall in Hamburg’) can be quite restrictive for a discussion, while those that describe an event ‘*Oktoberfest’* (Oktoberfest) or ‘*Die Wiener Ballsaison’* (The Vienna Ball Season) can lack depth. Students are advised to clearly define their subtopic and provide a small number of focus points, as in the response *Mein Thema heißt ‘Neue deutsche Technologien’ und ich habe mich auf folgende zwei Schwerpunkte konzentriert* … (My subtopic is called ‘New German Technologies’ and I focused on the following two main areas …)
* prepare a wide range and depth of information, ideas and opinions with an original perspective on the subtopic. Some responses were superficial and did not provide meaningful answers to questions that attempted to probe more deeply. For example, when a student mentions that migrants make Germany more colourful, they should be ready to discuss in detail how that occurs. Claims made by students need to be justified and analysed in the context of the subtopic. Extensive preparation is essential; some students had not prepared enough material to sustain the discussion meaningfully for 8 minutes
* avoid listing facts without expressing a point of view and avoid presenting general knowledge as research. Some discussions lacked content that went beyond mere facts and did not demonstrate the student’s opinions and ideas
* use the image to support the discussion on the subtopic and practise describing the relevance of the image to the subtopic. While it was evident that students had put some thought into their choice of image, some images did not provide enough material to advance or even support the student’s argument. Students are advised to select their images carefully, as they should act as a springboard for delving deeper into the discussion
* avoid relying on pre-learnt responses that do not address an assessor’s question. All responses should address the questions posed by the assessors, rather than attempting to conduct the discussion on the student’s own terms. Students are reminded that pre-learnt monologues are insufficient in this examination and will be interrupted by the assessors. It is not appropriate for students to present pre-learnt material in a way that makes it difficult for assessors to interrupt
* revise grammar. As in Section 1 (see above), the main grammatical issues concerned verb conjugation and position, as well as possessives. Some subtopics require specific structures (for example, the use of the past passive is essential for a topic like ‘*Der Fall der Berliner Mauer’* (The Fall of the Berlin Wall)
* build vocabulary specific to the selected subtopic. In some cases, the level of vocabulary did not allow the student to reach the depth of discussion required for this section
* practise pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo
* familiarise themselves thoroughly with the study design. Some students referred to three sources they had studied in preparation for this section. Since the release of the current study design in 2020, students do not need to refer to the three sources they studied in preparation for their chosen subtopic. Reading previous external assessment reports can support knowledge of the format and focus of the examination.