



GENERAL COMMENTS

Reciprocity and spontaneity are the keys to a successful oral examination. In 2012, competent students responded and interacted with assessors well, creating naturally flowing conversations and discussions.

The conversation involved exploration of students' interests, opinions and experiences, while viewpoints and methods of approach were covered in the discussion. In both sections, students should be confident to express opinions, describe their feelings and respond spontaneously. Many students demonstrated original approaches and related topics to their experiences and world view.

One aspect of communication is the ability to self-correct errors, but students seemed unsure about how much they should correct errors. The primary emphasis should always be to maintain the flow of conversation, rather than worrying about each ending or inaccuracy. However, students should correct themselves if they recognise a mistake that can be easily corrected without losing the flow of a response. Self-correction is a part of natural conversation, not an obsessive level of correction that overwhelms the interaction and conversation.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Competent students carried the conversation forward in response to assessors' open-ended questions, and few gave simple, one-sentence answers. Students who performed effectively felt free to elaborate on a topic. For example, *Wie sieht ein typisches Wochenende bei Ihnen aus?* sometimes included not just details of a typical weekend, but also whether the student participated in activities with their family, a description of activities that are not typical but enjoyed, a comparison of activities done during holidays or even contrasting of other family members' interests.

Communication/Content/Language

Students needed to be careful with register during the examination. Since assessors addressed students as *Sie*, students should not have used *du* or *ihr* when speaking to assessors. Sometimes students slipped into very casual conversation, as if chatting with German teenagers, or made overly casual remarks. In this formal context, it was not appropriate to use colloquial adjectives or familiar terms, such as the choice between *Mutter/Mama*, *Großmutter/Oma*, *Vater/Papi*, etc.

Increasingly, English words are being used in German; however, some of the less successful students overused anglicised terms that were not the best choice in the context. Greater care was needed with accurate pronunciation.

Many students continue to make errors with the use of pronouns (for example, incorrect *er/sie* for people, misuse of possessive pronouns *sein/ihr/dein* and misuse of pronouns reflecting nouns' gender, such as *die Schule* → *sie*).

Students should continually revise the accusative and dative, as even proficient students made fundamental case errors.

Students also often confused the difference between *Familie* and *Verwandte*, especially when referring to extended family or (distant) cousins, etc.

Carefully learned phrases were valuable to support a conversation, but students needed to avoid relying on these; different questions sometimes left students floundering for words and their overall standard changed from accurate, complex sentences to awkward error-ridden phrases.

Section 2 – Discussion

Good topic selection is critical. It is important to consider how a class or individual student might deal with concepts in a particular topic. An effective topic for some also caused major challenges for weaker students or students with different cultural or academic backgrounds. Inappropriate or misunderstood topics had serious consequences on students' ability to achieve high marks. Weaker students generally performed better with more concrete or factual topics, but historical topics seemed quite challenging for some, especially if their overall subject focus was more scientific than humanities based.



It is important for students to be exposed to a wide range of typical questions in order to prepare for the oral examination, including different ways of asking the same questions.

Students used a wide range of texts, including DVDs, articles from the internet, textbooks or magazines, podcasts and songs. Students should be encouraged to research widely on their topic, as some students appeared underprepared, having limited themselves to three key resources. Some of these students did not demonstrate understanding of the wider impact of a topic or its implications in an Australian or global context.

It is important to note that, as years pass since 1989, some students found discussion of the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR)/Cold War/Iron Curtain era difficult and some gave exaggerated comments. Teachers and students needed to consider layers of information relating to a topic – obvious facts, subtle points, attitudes, ideas we might assume, inferences and various possible opinions on a topic.

When selecting topics for the Detailed Study, the topic should be age-appropriate and appropriate to the students' level of life experience. For example, a discussion of Bertolt Brecht was a good topic for literary students but extremely difficult for weaker students with low literary awareness.

Some topics showed great potential, but insufficient supporting material left students struggling to interact for the required seven minutes of discussion.

For the introduction to the discussion, the *VCE German Study Design* states that '... the student will indicate to the assessor(s) the sub-topic chosen for detailed study and, in no more than one minute, briefly introduce the main focus of their sub-topic...'. During this minute, it was crucial that students indicated aspects or key questions they wished to discuss, giving assessors guidance about questions they might ask and issues that the student had covered. There was no need for students to indicate they had studied *Sprache und Kultur durch Texte*.

High-scoring students analysed and prepared common themes across resources and links between resources. Low-scoring students often presented each resource as an isolated component. Commonly, assessors asked questions about the overall concept of topics, or issues across resources, which often seemed to surprise students.

Some students did not understand that the oral examination is not a presentation of monologues and rote-learned answers. Rote-learned responses may not meet the communication criteria to the highest possible standard. It was important that students anticipated potential questions, but as assessors' questions didn't always match students' prepared response, students needed to adapt and vary their response appropriately. Furthermore, students who had rote-learned responses found it challenging if they were interrupted, and became confused or responded inappropriately. The Discussion is not a performance of a narrated monologue.

Communication/Content/Language

Students were generally prepared for assessors to present opposing ideas in the discussion to encourage interaction. Students are not expected to cover every aspect of a topic, so it was acceptable to indicate *Wir haben diese Frage in der Klasse nicht behandelt*.

It wasn't necessary for students to constantly repeat *Entschuldigung* at every pause or mistake. Assessors understood that students needed to develop responses.

Well-prepared students thoroughly understood key concepts in their topic. A Detailed Study centring on *Gastarbeiter* would assume that students understood that there are different groups of foreigners in Germany; however, this was not always the case. Likewise, concepts such as *Zufall* and *Schicksal* as a core topic required understanding of the difference between those terms.

Some students needed to learn the key vocabulary relating to their discussion topic more carefully. It was surprising when generally well-prepared students didn't know or recognise words commonly used in a topic. This extended to key words for resources, including correct genders for words like *Film*, *Artikel* or *Buch*; accurate knowledge of gender; regular and irregular verbs; and verbs requiring specific prepositions. Grammatical revision is always valuable with reference to the Detailed Study on such simple aspects as verbs requiring *sein* in the perfect tense and irregular/regular past participles. Many students confused words such as *Vorteile* and *Vorurteile*, making it difficult for assessors to follow their line of thinking or meaning.