



**2013**

**Languages: German GA 3: Examination**

## **Oral component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

It was clear that students had prepared very well for each component of the 2013 German oral examination. Most students were ready to answer both typical and unusual questions with a good level of fluency and accuracy. It was evident that students had worked hard to learn how to converse about a range of personal and general topics, and how to express opinions or facts to support their explanations.

Once again, many students learned large chunks of information in preparation for both parts of the oral examination, and appeared reluctant to have their monologue interrupted. These students even returned to their monologue despite being asked a different question, and consequently gave inappropriate responses. While it is very important for students to anticipate and prepare for potential questions, students need to remember that the examination involves a conversation and discussion, not a presentation of a monologue.

The fourth criterion assesses the range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar. Students needed to try to develop a range of structures in their choice of language, to demonstrate familiarity with the use of all tenses, and more complex structures such as the passive and *Konjunktiv*, subordinating and relative clauses. Questions not only explored facts and reality but possibilities and conjecture. In the conversation, students were sometimes asked to describe a hypothetical situation such as ‘*Was würden Sie machen, wenn Sie mehr Freizeit hätten?*’ In the Discussion, a student might also have been asked to describe what his or her preferences or choices might have been, had they been placed in a context described in the Discussion; for example, living in Berlin during reunification or in response to environmental challenges and choices.

The fifth criterion in the Conversation and the Discussion, clarity of expression, assessed pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. Some students sought to ensure that every sentence was grammatically correct at the cost of tempo, stress or intonation. While accuracy in grammar and vocabulary is important, the oral examination is an examination of conversation and discussion, and so slow responses made it difficult to maintain a natural level of interaction with good intonation, stress and tempo. At the same time, some students appeared to assume that if they talked quickly, then assessors might not notice errors. Competent students aimed for a normal conversation pace, speaking clearly, so that each of the elements of tempo (speed), intonation and stress, as well as pronunciation, were used effectively.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

#### **Section 1 – Conversation**

Responses on the general themes of *Familie, Schule, Zukunft, Freizeit, Schüleraustausch, Ferien und Arbeit* were extremely competent. Students should be prepared to share their ideas and opinions on different aspects of these topics.

Many students primarily used the present tense, seemingly avoiding the use of the past tense, even when asked to describe past experiences. This was inappropriate when describing such aspects as earlier levels of school, or experiences during a past exchange or holiday.

High-performing students had clearly practised key vocabulary. However, many students used incorrect genders for vocabulary that would have been used frequently over their years of school study. Students also needed to have practised word order after conjunctions such as *dass, weil, obwohl*, etc. Many students confused how to use *heißen* when giving family names. For example, *Ich habe einen Bruder, er heißt Dominik*, not *Ich habe einen Bruder heißt Dominik*. The use of the past tense and simple relative clauses often caused problems for students, suggesting that students needed more practice in typical conversation topics or with the discussion theme. When describing their likes and dislikes, many students confused the correct use of *gern, mag, möchte* and *gefallen*.

#### **Section 2 – Discussion**

The selection of a topic is critical for students. Teachers and students should consider a number of elements when choosing the topic. A good and well-prepared topic allows students to present information, ideas and opinions.



- Information included factual information, such as the background to the topic, key dates and factors about the topic, and details about people involved, etc. Without a reasonable amount of core information, many students found it difficult to speak for more than a couple of minutes on their topic.
- Ideas included different ways of understanding the issues, reasons to explain aspects of the topic, the significance of aspects, concepts that are fundamental to the theme or suggestions for future or current understanding of the topic, etc.
- Opinions often included the student's own thoughts about the topic, but a student should also consider other people's opinions in their analysis of the topic. In a historical topic, students considered how people at the time saw the issues. For current issues, competent students compared older or younger people's opinions, or different interest groups' opinions about the topic.

Some students presented topics that involved a large amount of philosophical or psychological content, analysing such issues as choice, group pressure or the importance of youth issues. Generally, these topics suited some able students well, who analysed complex aspects fluently in German. However, many less fluent students struggled to explain more complex and philosophical issues, and this may have affected their level of achievement. Topics needed to be appropriate for individual students and the class group. Refer to the *VCE German Study Design* for suggested topics and sub-topics.

It is very important that students introduce the discussion topic clearly and at a gentle pace.

Often the discussion involved a range of directions. It sometimes explored what a student had learnt from each resource or a consideration of aspects of the theme of the discussion. Well-prepared students had thought about or compared how different resources approached or handled the topic. Such students also developed their opinions on the issues raised as well as a consideration of how others might see the topic.

Environmental topics were effectively handled this year, as were investigations into the experiences of migrants in Germany or Australia. Topics analysing the life and experiences of particular people or groups, such as *Starke Frauen* or *Sport in der DDR* were done well. While some historical discussion themes were very interesting, students often oversimplified historical issues into descriptions of good/bad or right/wrong. Historical issues usually have many layers of possible analysis that can lead to very successful discussions, but also may cause offence if generalisations about groups and experiences are expressed.

At times, students presented inappropriate resources. As far as possible, students should use up-to-date information, articles, statistics and facts.

Some students required more practice on how to refer to resources. This year, many students used quotes effectively to illustrate aspects of their discussion. However, others struggled to refer to different resources or to compare aspects within their resources. Students should have been able to compare what they learned in each resource (individual points, differences and common areas across each of their resources) and to explain specific details.

At the conclusion of the discussion students will often be asked if they have anything further to add to the discussion (for example, *Möchten Sie noch etwas zu dem Thema sagen?*). This is an opportunity for students to summarise their understanding of the topic, or to briefly present an aspect that they had studied but had not yet presented.