

# 2016 VCE German written examination report

## General comments

Student performance in the 2016 VCE German written examination indicated a high level of student understanding of the subject matter presented, and students demonstrated their ability to convey that understanding in their written responses. The number of students not attempting a question was low – making an attempt, despite feeling unsure about the answer, is always preferable to leaving an answer blank. Students seemed to have grasped the importance of reading and highlighting the question very carefully so as to be clear as to exactly what was required in the response.

Students were generally able to manage their time well. Some responses in Section 3 were outstanding; however, there were a few unfinished responses in this section. In order to prevent this from occurring, it is crucial that students carefully plan and allocate their time before they begin. It is important that students have a thorough knowledge of grammatical structures as well as a broad, thematically based vocabulary and a memorised bank of expressions.

## Specific information

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

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.

## Section 1 – Listening and responding

### Part A – Answer in English

#### Text 1

Some students had difficulty with the notion of *Silvester* and *Berliner*. Even if the student was not familiar with either word, the dictionary would have revealed their meanings. When used wisely, the dictionary is an invaluable resource in such cases.

#### Question 1a.

New Year's Eve/31 December

Incorrect answers were 'New Years', 'New Year's celebrations' and 'New Year's fireworks'.

**Question 1b.**

The legend behind the sweet treats is that a patissier/baker/pastry chef/confectioner of the King (Frederic the Great)/the regiment/Royal Baker made the doughnuts/Berliner in the form/shape of cannonballs in 1756.

**Question 1c.**

Today the sweet treats are presented:

- filled with jam/marmalade
- sprinkled/dusted/covered with icing sugar/powdered sugar
- glazed with sugar/coated/covered with icing.

The sweet treats are not 'served/presented with' jam or marmalade. They are not just 'glazed', 'sprinkled' or 'dusted'.

**Question 1d.**

The customer should be cautious because some may be filled with mustard (as a joke).

**Text 2**

Although this text was largely understood, some students gave very general answers.

**Question 2a.**

The change taking place from January 2017 is that the old town/city centre will be a car-free zone.

**Question 2b.**

The purposes of the change are:

- to reduce (air) pollution/exhaust or car emissions
- to reduce noise.

'Reduce carbon emissions/greenhouse gas/gas emission' was incorrect.

**Question 2c.**

To achieve its goals the council plans:

- to build new bike paths
- to widen existing bike paths
- new businesses/(repair) shops for bikes
- more bike-hiring stations or opportunities to borrow/hire bikes
- easy to use/payment by credit card/easy payment option/swiping credit card.

## **Part B – Answer in German**

**Text 3**

This question was answered well, although in Question 3b. many students did not link Kathrin's and Sebastian's happiness with their working lives as was required.

**Question 3a.**

Kathrin's and Sebastian's current lives were to be compared to the plans they had in their final school year. Responses needed to include eight examples from the following nine examples (four examples each for Kathrin and Sebastian):

Kathrin's plans and dreams at school:

- originally wanted to go to Africa
- wanted to study law (but it was too much like school).

Kathrin's current life, 10 years later:

- studied journalism
- is single
- is working as a foreign correspondent.

Sebastian's plans and dreams at school:

- a dreamer/wanted to change the world
- didn't want to become a bank clerk/banker/teller (like his father).

Sebastian's current life, 10 years later:

- studied social work/works as a social worker
- is married (with a daughter).

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Kathrin ist nicht nach Afrika gegangen wie sie es wollte. Sie hat auch nicht Jura studiert sondern Journalismus. Sie arbeitet jetzt als Auslandskorrespondentin. Sie mag, dass man als Journalistin überall arbeiten kann und genießt die Freiheit die sie, als alleinstehende Frau hat. Sebastian wollte die Welt verändern und war ein Träumer, wobei sein Vater wollte dass er in einer Bank arbeitet. Stattdessen, hat er Sozialarbeit studiert, und arbeitet jetzt in Hamburg. Fürs Träumen hat er nicht viel Zeit weil er verheiratet ist und eine kleine Tochter hat.*

### **Question 3b.**

Kathrin and Sebastian are both satisfied with their current working lives because:

- Kathrin is happy because she works all around the world/has the freedom to travel (around the world) for work
- Sebastian is happy because he can help/support other people through his job.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Beide sind mit ihrem jetzigen Arbeitsleben zufrieden. Kathrin erklärt, dass als alleinstehende sie die Freiheit und die Möglichkeit zu reisen und im Ausland zu leben möge, was durch ihre Arbeit geliefert werde. Sebastian sagt auch, dass er immer wollte, sich sozial zu engagieren, was durch seine Arbeit gemacht wird.*

## **Section 2 – Reading and responding**

Students understood and were able to convey specific aspects of the text. In Text 4, however, a number of students overlooked the very important requirement that choristers needed to sing well or have a well-trained voice.

### **Part A – Answer in English**

#### **Text 4**

#### **Question 4a.**

The skills that needed to be demonstrated for entry into the choir were:

- to sing well/have a well-trained voice
- to read and write music/notes
- to recognise tones/pitch/sounds
- to play an instrument.

'To sit an exam' was not accepted.

#### **Question 4b.**

Life as a 'Thomaner' could be challenging because:

- there was pressure to perform at school and in the choir/Students needed grades of at least a 2 in order to stay in the choir
- each day was 12 hours long/they had to get up at 6 am
- in the afternoon they had homework and choir practice/rehearsal
- boys lived away from home/in a boarding house/school
- there was only a 15-minute/short break for lunch
- during play/playing football, they couldn't yell/shout/scream (as they had to look after their voices) or they rarely/seldom had time for play
- living conditions were spartan/basic/bare
- the uniform/dress code was strictly upheld/boys were checked for tidiness.

'Students needed grades of at least a B in order to stay in the choir' was not accepted, nor was 'Students needed to stand for 6 hours' correct – they needed to 'get up' at 6 am. Also, students had 'choir practice' or 'rehearsal', not 'tests'.

Rather than saying that living conditions were spartan, students could have listed the furniture.

#### **Question 4c.**

The personal skills that the author developed through this experience, apart from singing and music skills, included:

- how to respond to pressure/resilience/perseverance
- reliability/dependability
- self-discipline
- teamwork
- helping one another/others
- use music to relieve/overcome/for the relief of stress and sadness.

#### **Question 4d.**

- JS Bach was once choirmaster.
- The choir is over 800 years old.

#### **Question 4e.**

The author believes the choir will survive/outlive (the 'fun society').

## **Part B – Answer in German**

### **Text 5**

#### **Question 5**

Any five of:

- her apartment was a meeting point for photographers
- she created her own style, with models being photographed in places other than her studio
- her photographs document a time past/the daily life in the GDR/DDR/East Germany
- she was a lecturer and/or founder/founding member of the Ostkreuz agency
- her photos tell stories about people from around the world/other cultures
- exhibitions of her work are still showing in public and private galleries.

This question required students to demonstrate Sibylle Bergemann's important contribution to the field of photography. Students were expected to carefully read the text, select five significant examples and then write an extended response in their own words. There was, however, a significant number who had difficulty with this part of the task and simply transcribed whole sentences or paragraphs. This did not demonstrate the capacity to understand or to convey information appropriately.

The following is an example of a very high-scoring response.

*Sybillle Bergemann war eine der berühmtesten Modedefotografinnen der Welt. Viele berühmte Fotografen haben sich in ihrer Wohnung getroffen aber nicht nur Fotografen aus Deutschland, sondern auch aus dem Ausland. Sie hat schwarzweißfotos gemacht, die wichtige Aspekte der deutschen Geschichte zeigten, wie zum Beispiel die Hoffnungslosigkeit des Lebens in der DDR. Außerdem ist sie nach der Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands Gründungsmitglied der Fotografie-Agentur „Ostkreuz“ geworden und war Lektorin für Fotografie und Gestaltung. Es steht fest, dass sie viel im Bereich der Fotografie beigetragen hat, da man nach ihrem Tod ihre Bilder in vielen Galerien sehen kann. In diesen Bildern geht es um die Realität des Alltagslebens und diese Bilder geben vielen Leuten die Möglichkeit über die Vergangenheit nachzudenken.*

### Section 3 – Writing in German

Students produced many original, thoughtful and reflective pieces and the standard of writing was impressive overall. The highest-scoring responses were from students who carefully read the question, planned their response, and clearly knew and utilised the correct and appropriate writing conventions according to the text type prescribed. High-scoring students had clearly memorised a bank of useful phrases and used them to link paragraphs, which gave strength to their argument, thoughts or reflections. Many memorised phrases have multi-faceted applications and will add value when used correctly. A few such examples of such memorised phrases are

*es gibt nicht den geringsten Zweifel, / nicht desto trotz, / in der Regel, / je mehr ... desto, / alles unter einen Hut bringen, / es lässt sich nicht leugnen.*

This section also highlighted weaknesses of many students, and it is important to emphasise the need for thorough revision of all grammar. Key errors such as *er Lieblingsspiel ist* and *für dieses Welt*, *Computer kann nicht geeignet für Kinder sind* and *ist Spaß* were common; they reflect the need for further revision, particularly of the building blocks of German grammar such as the verbs *haben* and *sein*, rules on word order, past tenses in particular, the cases and pronouns.

#### Question 6

Students were required to evaluate the statement in the form of a script for a speech. Higher-scoring responses were those that adhered to the requirement of evaluating in script form and put forward compelling arguments either supporting or disagreeing with the statement or, after having looked at both sides, chose to sit in the middle.

#### Question 7

This question gave students the opportunity to write an imaginative piece for a literature competition using one of the pictured children as its main character. Students who wrote high-scoring responses had clearly looked at the photograph carefully, selected their character and then drawn some connection to this character in their writing. There was an opportunity to use that character either as a child in the present or to reflect on the character's life, which could have included their childhood. It was not an opportunity to write on any topic, making no connection whatsoever to the photograph or its relevance.

### **Question 8**

In an informal letter, students were expected to persuade a friend to help them out at the last minute by appearing as a child's entertainer at a birthday party. Details as to why, when, where and how, together with pay and conditions, were also required in order to convince the reader of the letter. Many responses were very convincing, using very desperate and emotive language and giving great detail about the task that needed to be performed, the costume and payment.

### **Question 9**

This question required students to complete an informative piece of writing. Students were expected to set out their response as an article for the local paper, informing readers about an upcoming three-day music festival. As in Question 8, students were easily able to highlight the key tasks to ensure that all the areas were covered; for example, what, when and where, as well who would be performing on the day and details related to overall cost, accommodation, food and drink. Students needed to assume the identity of the fictional youth ambassador and write the article in this way. The article also required a title. This question was generally well answered and contained the relevant detail required.

### **Question 10**

Many students chose Question 10, which required students to write a reflective piece by a Year 12 student after they had opened the time capsule they had prepared in Year 7. The reflection was to centre around how much they had changed since Year 7, using examples to demonstrate these changes.

Students welcomed the opportunity to reflect on their younger selves. Their writing demonstrated sincerity as they shared how much they had matured and grown and how their views may or may not have changed in those five or six years. There were many poignant pieces that demonstrated the significant personal growth that had taken place.

Again, the importance of reading each question carefully is to be emphasised. This question clearly stated that the student had opened the capsule and had 'examined its contents'; there was, therefore, the expectation of a mention of its contents. A significant number of students, however, simply bypassed this and looked only at how they had changed. It was important to contextualise the journal entry and the highest-scoring responses were those where the students had mentioned an article drawn from the capsule and its significance then and now. Photographs, music, diary entries, posters and school reports were all examples of what had been removed from the capsule and examined.