

2017 VCE German written examination report

General comments

It is important that students, as they approach the German written examination, ensure they are familiar with the format of the written examination, its three sections and the number of marks allocated to each section. If students familiarise themselves with the examination format, they may be more comfortable with it and with what is expected of them.

Students should include dictionary practice in their examination preparation. A good dictionary and intense practice on how to use it effectively, especially under pressure, is essential. In Text 1, for example, the compound noun *Pilotenmütze* (pilot's cap) was translated as 'pillows' by some students. Had they cross-checked in the dictionary, they would have discovered that the word 'pillow' in German is *Kissen* and nothing like *Piloten*-. Looking up the second part of this compound noun, *Mütze*, would also have revealed that it means 'cap' and it would have been clear that the idea of a 'pillow cap' would be nonsensical. The text also mentioned (twice) a *Schwein*, which was described, among other indicators, as having a cute *Schnauze* (snout). Another word, *Therapietiere*, also indicated that an animal was being described. Time taken to do a dictionary check would have confirmed this. Such checking would have eliminated many incorrect interpretations of what was being described.

The importance of adequate practice in listening and responding cannot be emphasised enough. Responses to Section 1 revealed significant weaknesses in this area. Thorough step-by-step instruction and practice during the year would ensure greater readiness for the end-of-year examination. Practice in jotting down only keywords during the first listening, especially when the meanings are not clear, could be very helpful. Students could then clarify general contexts and meanings of texts before the second and final listening.

Most students attempted all questions. However, it is still essential to reinforce the importance of not leaving questions unanswered. Some students made notes in the note-taking space and this indicated that students had understood aspects of the text but left the answer section blank, thereby eliminating any chance of marks.

Efficient time management is also an important skill and overall this was managed quite well. Completing practice exams, first as a class and then as individuals, will ensure that students continue to improve what are essential skills in this area.

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 in understanding or accepting that the text was about a pig at an airport. This was in spite of the fact that the word *Schwein* was mentioned several times and the word *Therapietiere* was also mentioned, thereby giving the context credibility.

Question 1a.

The purpose of the trip was a family holiday to America.

Question 1b.

Lilou:

- was pink (with brown and black spots)
- had a cute snout/nose
- was wearing a purple tutu/green vest/dark blue pilot's cap (any two out of the three)
- was a pig/mascot.

Question 1ci.

Lilou's main role at the airport was to help relax passengers/make people feel comfortable (as a therapy animal)/to help with stress.

Question 1cii.

Lilou's main role was achieved by:

- looking cute
- allowing passengers to stroke or pat it
- posing for photographs
- making people laugh/having fun.

Text 2

Question 2a.

This advertisement is targeting:

- someone with little money/whose holiday destinations are too expensive
- someone who is adventurous/likes the outdoors/wants to travel (to other countries and or cities, but **not** states)/see new things/have new experiences
- university students/needing a break from university.

Question 2b.

The obligations to be fulfilled as condition of this arrangement are:

- keeping the house clean
- looking after the garden
- feeding (and walking) the animals/pets or take care of the animals
- taking the bin out/putting the bin into the street.

Part B – Answer in German

Text 3

Students generally responded well to Question 3a. but the consequence that *ganze Wälder werden vernichtet* (whole forests were destroyed) was often missed.

In Question 3b., it would have been helpful for students if they had itemised all solutions in the note-taking column and indicated how they differed from each other during the first listening, and then had checked again during the second listening. That would have formed a very sound basis for their written response.

Question 3a.

Five consequences were:

- a massive problem of increasing rubbish/three billion tonnes of rubbish per year (*Milliarden*, but *Millionen* was also accepted)
- whole forests are being destroyed
- much energy and water is used
- most cups cannot be recycled
- disposable cups end up in waterways and oceans.

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

Obwohl der Coffee-to-Go eine tolle Sache is, führt es zu vielen umweltfeindlichen Problemen. In Deutschland werden Milliarden von Papbecher in den Müll geworfen. Außerdem werden Wälder vernichtet und sehr viel Energie und Wasser wird verbraucht. Die Coffee-to-Go Becher sind auch nicht recyclebar wegen ihrer Plastiksicht und landen deswegen in den Flüssen und Meeren.

Question 3b.

Professor Henning was generally optimistic for the future because already in some states:

- redeemable deposits can be left on cups/there is a deposit system
- coffee is cheaper if you bring your own cup
- cups are environmentally friendly/biodegradable/made from compostable material
- cups can be made of bamboo and reused
- a tax can be placed on take away coffee (however, Professor Henning fears people will pay the tax and keep doing as before).

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

In Freiburg wurde ein Pfand System eingestellt, in dem man Pfand auf den Becher zurück bekommt wenn man ihn wieder zurück gibt. Der Becher wird in den Laden gewaschen und wieder benutzt. Außerdem bekommt man Rabatt wenn man einen eigenen Becher mitbringt. Die umweltfreundlichen und organic Becher werden benutzt weil sie kompostiert werden können. Allerdings wurden in Berlin Bambus Becher erfunden, die man wieder benutzen kann. Es wurden sogar auch Regeln eingestellt, dass man Steuern zahlen muss und zwar 20 cent pro Papbecher. Dies ist nicht so gut, weil Leute zahlen die 20 cent trotzdem noch.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Part A – Answer in English

It was important for students to note that Text 4 was worth 20 marks and although answers did not need to be in full English sentences, the answers had to clearly demonstrate an understanding of the text. Questions needed to be read carefully and students were required to understand that the

number of marks allocated to and the answer space provided for each question was an indication of the information required.

Text 4

Question 4a.

- Grandparents could only afford a roast/meat once a week.
- Meat consumption has significantly grown/has more than doubled from 1950 to today/from 1/2 kilo to a kilo.
- Germans now eat more meat than the EU average.
- 47% of German males eat meat daily.

Question 4b.

- Health-related argument:
 - Too much meat consumption is unhealthy.
 - Meat can have growth hormones or other substances in it that were used to treat animals.
- Economic argument:
 - Production of animal feed is inefficient use of land/land could be used for human food, e.g. vegetables.
 - Corn/soy to feed cattle is expensive.
- Ethical argument (any two of):
 - People object to the treatment of some animals.
 - Some people think they should not rely on animals as a source of food.
 - Humans don't need meat.

Question 4c.

- Meat contains many nutrients such as minerals, vitamins and proteins/many nutrients.
- It is (more) affordable.
- It tastes great.
- It makes you feel full/satisfied.
- Eating meat/sausages/meat products is part of the German culture.
- Meat is easy to cook.

Question 4d.

- Vegetarians need to make sure that their diet is balanced/varied/healthy/beware of vegetarian food that has sugar/additives.
- People should cook a variety of dishes with fresh ingredients/organic products.
- People shouldn't eat too much fast food or too many ready-made meals.
- Eating the main meal at lunchtime/eating less/smaller portions in the evening.
- It is up to you whether you eat meat or not (to be healthy).

A response of 'Eat less red meat.' was not accepted.

Section 2 – Reading and Responding

Part B – Answer in German

Any five of:

- Participation could be made non-compulsory for students and teachers (but voluntary).
- The results should not be read out in front of the whole school community.
- Students should be encouraged with positive comments and not just told to 'try harder'.

- Students should be grouped by ability/height/strength and not by age.
- Not all disciplines should be run on one day rather spread over several days.
- Easier events should be included/shot put should be lighter for girls.
- Get rid of the certificate of participation.

Some students who did not score highly found it difficult to turn the negative comments into the above positive suggestions and tended to simply transcribe the text, which was not the purpose of the task and therefore was not conveying information accurately and appropriately.

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

Die Bundesjugendspiele sollte eine Veranstaltung sein die Spaß macht und nicht eine die die Lust auf Sport verdirbt. Sie könnten definitiv verändert werden, sodass sie Spaß machen. Erstens könnten sie nicht obligatorisch sein sodass die Kinder, die sich nicht wohl fühlen, einfach zuschauen können. Außerdem sollten alle Kinder nicht alle vier Disciplinen machen müssen. Altersgruppen sollten es auch nicht mehr geben, einfach weil viele Kinder zu groß und viel schneller sind. Sportlehrerinnen sollten mehr ermutigen, so dass die Kinder sich besser fühlen. Letztens sollten die Sportlehrer die Punkte von und vor allen Schülern nicht vorlesen, weil das sonst peinlich ist.

Section 3 – Writing in German

There were many high-scoring responses in this section. The writing of many students demonstrated a real understanding of task requirements, text types and writing styles, and many responses were thoughtful and thought-provoking pieces. However, there were many students who, due to poor time management, appeared to fall short of time and were forced to cut short their writing piece. It is of critical importance that students plan the time that is to be spent on each section of the examination to ensure that each section is completed and, ideally, they should include time for a final check.

Question 6

Students were required to pretend they were a senior student from Germany and to write the script of a speech addressing fellow students back home in Germany about experiences they had had of everyday life with their host family during a recent six-month exchange in Australia. This was a popular choice and provided many students with the opportunity to reflect on detailed aspects of an exchange they may have had and inform their audience of these experiences. However, some students did not read this question carefully and wrote about experiences in Germany instead of Australia. This error highlights again the importance of reading the question carefully and of underlining keywords to ensure that the question has been understood.

Question 7

Writing a persuasive piece about the reasons for learning a foreign language in Australia proved to be another popular choice and some of the highest-scoring responses were given to this question. The characteristics of a report or editorial were required, along with the position taken. The responses – all in the affirmative – were highly persuasive, overwhelmingly sincere, intelligent and very thoughtful, and they confirmed that the writers' experiences to date of learning a foreign language had been overwhelmingly positive.

Question 8

Students were required to imagine that it was the year 1890 and that they had recently migrated to country Victoria. The task was to write a letter home, a personal piece about their first year in the country, including the hardships they encountered. The highest-scoring responses were personal, reflective as well as informative letters. Given the historical framework, these letters could have

been written using formal or informal speech at the same time, including characteristics of letter writing. Although historical knowledge was not required, it should have been conceivable that life would have been vastly different more than 120 years ago. Students who focused on life at school or described part-time jobs in fast-food outlets, general life in the city or romances had either not read the question carefully or had not given much thought to how different and difficult life may have been in the country at that time. This again emphasises the importance of carefully reading before choosing an appropriate topic.

Question 9

This less popular topic provided students with the opportunity to review a restaurant and evaluate their experience there. Some students went to considerable effort to provide a highly original and detailed review, including awarding a star rating or describing a disaster. The highest-scoring responses were those providing effective and detailed descriptions and vivid imagery of all three aspects of their review, offering the reader the opportunity of living their experience with them. Use of humour was also highly effective. Less high-scoring pieces were those that focused almost entirely on only one of the three aspects, namely the food.

Question 10

Students were required to write an imaginative piece describing how their friend had suddenly become famous. This story was to appear on the website of that now famous friend. This task proved to be a niche theme appealing largely to students who wrote about friends becoming famous entertainers, such as singers, actors or dancers. Higher-scoring responses not only showed characteristics of a story but also used descriptive language for effect.