



**2003**

**LOTE: German GA 3: Examination**

## **Oral component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

Preparation is the key to success in the oral examination. Students who had prepared well, performed competently; those who were inadequately prepared had considerable difficulty. There was a wide range of capability and skills with some students able to maintain a fascinating discussion and others hardly able to converse at all.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

#### **Section 1 – General conversation**

##### **Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately**

Most students seemed to be suitably prepared to talk about their families, schools and free time. However, some simply gave a list of their family members, their names, ages and appearance. More interesting details are how the student relates to different members of the family, aspects of family life, what the family enjoys doing together and expression of some ideas and opinions, such as the advantages and disadvantages of being the eldest or youngest in the family. Students should try to think of some original and unusual responses prior to the examination.

Students should not mention the name of their school or teacher, but talk about their school in general terms. As they are required to give opinions, they should think about the advantages and disadvantages of school uniform and what they like and dislike about their school. They should also be encouraged to reflect on their schooling and look back on past events, as their school life comes to an end.

Some students connected well with the assessors, volunteered information and were able to move the action forward very effectively. Many had good repair strategies, but some tended to throw in English words such as 'like' and seemed totally unaware that they were doing so. It is important that students learn to rephrase and think of how to say something in different words, so that they do not get stuck on one word and end up by asking the assessor *Wie heißt ... auf Englisch?*

##### **Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas**

It is vital that students listen to, and have enough knowledge to understand, the questions. Some simply reel off passages that they have learnt which may bear no relation to the question. When interrupted they are often distressed, lose confidence and have difficulty continuing. It is counter-productive to learn long answers and try to recite them, hoping that they answer what is asked and can speak without interruption. If students did not listen carefully to the question they sometimes concentrated on one word and spoke about this, unfortunately not responding appropriately at all.

When talking about their school, some gave answers like *Es ist groß* (sic), *Es ist OK* (sic), *Die Lehrer sind gut*, but these are inadequate at Year 12 level, where depth and breadth of answers are required. The school is feminine and should be referred to as *sie*. Many students were quite strong on facts but had considerable difficulty giving their own ideas and opinions. Sometimes they expressed an opinion, but were unable to back it up with reasons or evidence. Opinions given were often too shallow and not thoroughly considered. Students will benefit if teachers work on this area with their classes.

##### **Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar**

The usual grammatical errors occurred. Genders of simple words are often not known, with errors like *meine Vater*. As students know that the discussion will be about their personal world, they need to learn the genders of key words in this area. There were several students who could not manage to use the correct forms of *haben* and *sein*. Other errors were in word order, particularly after subordinating conjunctions or inversions, subject and verb agreement, use of the wrong tense, adverbs, the use of *zu* with modal verbs, cases, the forms of the perfect tense particularly with *sein*, adjective endings, separable verbs and possessive pronouns.

##### **Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar**

It is important that students learn the names of their subjects in German as well as the work of their parents and details of their own part-time jobs. Some students had difficulty with *false friends* like *sympathisch* and *sensible*, but this did not interfere with the assessors' ability to understand. Some students found it hard to link sentences together. Practice in this area would help. Teachers could also assist students by helping them prepare a list of unusual adjectives, so that they could avoid *gut*, *OK*, or *schön*. Helpful phrases could also be learnt, so that students would not say *Es ist Spaß*, *Sie ist sehr Spaß*, *Er ist älter von mich*, *Ich möchte nach Uni gehen* and *Ich habe Netzbball spielen*.

Some words were often confused: *Studenten* was used instead of *Schüler* for school students; *studieren* was used instead of *lernen*; *Partei* was used for a birthday party and *lieben* was confused with *leben*. One assessor was rather surprised when asked to speak *langweiliger*; *bitte* instead of *langsamer*; *bitte*.

### **Clarity of expression**

Some students spoke beautiful German with accurate pronunciation and intonation. Others were not so clear or were almost impossible to understand. It is no use muttering quietly in the hope that the assessors do not hear mistakes; the conversation needs to be recorded clearly on the cassette. Some words were pronounced as in English, e.g. *Universität* and the subject *Englisch*. Other common mistakes were in pronouncing *ch* and in muddling *ie* with *ei* as in *geteilt* or *Mitglied*.

## **Section 2 – Discussion of the detailed study**

### **Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively**

The choice of topic is critical. It should be a topic that interests and involves the students, that relates to their level of maturity and experience that is not too difficult in its vocabulary or in its concepts and enables them to express their own ideas and opinions. There must be sufficient resources to take at least 15 hours of class time, which should provide the students with sufficient information, ideas and opinions for an interesting discussion.

The resources need to be related. Simply finding out about six famous Germans would not be adequate, as there is nothing linking them. Other topics were rather too broad, such as *Kindheit in der Hitlerzeit* with a comparison between German and Jewish children. The topic of racism proved difficult for some students, as did *Max und Moritz* and *Struwwelpeter*. However, more able students handled these topics well. If the resources were good, the discussion was usually well done too.

The students have one minute in which to give an introduction, which should consist of stating that they have done a Detailed Study, what their topic and texts are, whether they have specialised in any particular aspect and if they have brought any support material, such as a photo. The introductory sentence explaining that the students have studied language and culture through texts needs to be well rehearsed. Students should also be sure to give details of their texts and not just say they have seen a film, heard an interview or read an article. The titles, authors (if available) and other specific information are required.

If students bring a support object, it should not contain writing in German, apart from a heading, although it is better if it contains no writing at all. The student is then able to explain the photo or diagram. It is no use bringing an object, if the student is not prepared to explain and discuss it.

In selecting a topic, teachers should choose one which allows students to do different aspects, and permit individuals to choose something that particularly interests them. A number of topics were done extremely well by some students, but proved too difficult for others. Some interesting topics were *Ausländerfeindlichkeit*, various aspects of *Umwelt*, *Deutsche in Australien*, *Weihnachten*, *Kindheit in Deutschland*, *Love Parade*, *Jugendkultur*, *Der Kalte Krieg*, *Berlin in der Nachkriegszeit*, *Die Rollen der Frauen in Deutschland*, *Religion vs. Materialismus* (for mature and capable students), *Beatmusik in der DDR*, *Das Alter und das Altern der Bevölkerung*, *Kernenergie* and *Die Rolle der Stasi*. One interesting topic was *Film, Dichtung und Kunst in den 30er Jahren* with a variety of resources (*Der blaue Engel*, *ein Gedicht von Erich Kästner*, a picture von Paul Klee and other historical material like the burning of books and of the *Reichstag*).

A topic like *Die Familie im 20. Jahrhundert* should be narrowed down, as it is too broad to be adequately covered in the available class time. There are just too many questions that a student could be asked. Just studying one film may not give the students enough to discuss, yet studying several without linking them can also be confusing. If a film is used it is useful for the students to see it more than once, so that they are really familiar with the content and have a critical understanding of it.

Students sometimes give five or six resources, but cannot say which ones they have concentrated on. They should select the three that interest them most and concentrate on these, making sure they are able to say something about each. If they use a photo as one text, they need to be able to talk about it in detail and know even more information about their other sources so they can talk at considerable length and in depth.

### **Capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic**

Not only are students expected to discuss the topic, but in doing this they need to refer to the texts they have studied and explain where they obtained their information. They should try and link the resources to each other and explain how they relate to the topic. They should be able to point out the similarities and elucidate the differences. Some students seemed to be prepared for a discussion of the content of their resources, but were unable to interpret, elaborate or give opinions about them.

Simply learning paragraphs about the topic off by heart is not adequate. If the topic was the divided Germany, students needed to be clear about which was East and which West. It would help students if they practised talking about a wide variety of unexpected aspects of their topic. It is vital that they know what they are talking about. Some students had such a superficial knowledge that they contradicted themselves. Sometimes it is wise to narrow down the topic to ensure greater depth.

Students should not feel concerned if they do not know the answer to a question. They should simply say so and guide the assessors to what they could talk about. It would help if teachers could train students to lead the conversation in this way, so that they can raise points to discuss and elaborate on them. Students can be surprised if the assessors know the resources and ask quite specific questions about them.

### **Accuracy of grammar and vocabulary/Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar**

As in the general conversation, students should know the vocabulary required to discuss their detailed study topic and have worked at the grammar required to ensure an interesting discussion takes place. If they are discussing something that happened in the past, they need to use the appropriate past tense.

### **Clarity of expression**

After spending 15 hours of class time working on the topic, students should have mastered the correct pronunciation of names and words essential to their discussion. Some spoke fluently, others had not put enough time into their study.

## **Written component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

Students coped quite well with the format of the examination and there were fewer students having difficulty managing their time or using the incorrect language for a section.

Students, however, still need to be careful about which sections are to be answered in English or German (some resorted to highlighting the instruction or wrote at the top of each page to remind them).

Students should be concise and accurate in their responses and careful of how many responses are required, e.g. they should not write five items if only two are required (in the hope that eventually one is correct), as only the first two will be assessed, regardless of whether the correct answer is written later in the list (note VCAA policy is to take only the answer/s written first, not read through until the correct answer is given).

Questions need to be answered directly, as roundabout answers or vague responses are unlikely to score full marks. It is important to look carefully at each question, its requirements, and the amount of space for the answer, to decide whether a full sentence response is needed or only point form.

Where examples are requested in the Part A (English) sections, these should be written in English, not a direct quote from the German passage.

Students do not need to repeat the wording of the question when answering; this wastes valuable time and space. Students need to reread what they have written in both English and German, as often their answers simply do not make sense in English, e.g. 'Regine is one of the only women in Germany' or 'Conducting is a hairy man's job to do'. It is essential that students allow time at the end of the examination to read through all their answers to avoid unnecessary errors.

### **Section 1 – Listening and responding**

It is important that teachers are familiar with the description of the written examination in the German Study Design. Students will be required to analyse information from the spoken texts, and the questions may require students to identify information relating not only to the context, purpose and audience of the text, but also to aspects of the language of the text, for example tone, register and knowledge of language structures. Many students incorrectly assume that they simply have to understand spoken German and extract specific information, not interpret or consider aspects of the language of the text.

Students should be encouraged to use the reading time as efficiently as possible to scan the questions and think about the expectations of each answer. Likewise, the pauses between the reading passages are valuable to consider what information needs to be identified.

Some students made assumptions about required responses without reading the question carefully, e.g. Question 12 which required an answer about all university students not just foreign students as some students seemed to assume.

## Part A – Answers in English

### Possible answers

#### Text 1

##### Question 1

North Sea coast.

##### Question 2

Car drivers; in the Alps, mountains, in the snow, on icy streets.

##### Question 3

Two of:

Short sentences, missing verbs or other sentence elements, many names of places and temperatures, very few words linking sentences and themes, style (informative or factual), use of superlatives and comparatives, many descriptive words, use of present tense to describe the future, warnings included.

#### Text 2

##### Question 4

Drugs (in the mini-safe in the armoured car).

##### Question 5

The police and the other gangsters/criminals.

##### Question 6

Positive: fast action, cool stunts, breathtaking, great soundtrack, and heroes on roller blades

Negative: no analysis of character/psychology of criminals, leave your brain behind (i.e. don't need to think much), no answer as to why they are criminals.

#### Text 3

##### Question 7

- serious, hardworking, unfriendly
- friendly, keen to meet with friends
- strangers kiss and hug, dressed up as clown etc., crazy time in Köln
- (her host-family) sang funny songs
- headlines about racism, extremists, violence
- people she knows were different, demonstrate against racism/hostility to foreigners etc, politicians denounce extremism
- sauerkraut, sausages, drink a lot of beer
- curry, sausage and chips, international foods, e.g. Turkish, many Italian restaurants, love to drink beer, talk about which beer is the best.

## Part B – Answers in German

More successful students were able to select the necessary responses and formulate answers in accurate German.

Students must read questions carefully and think about the required answer – should it be in point form or a full sentence? What are the grammatical requirements of point form answers in German? Is the student's response simply (appropriately) rewording the question or actually selecting the correct information. Credit is given for a grammatically accurate response, even if not all the facts are quite correct. However, random guesses that do not relate to the listening texts are not appropriate.

#### Text 4

##### Question 8

December.

##### Question 9

The trainer is not person, but messages sent out on a mobile phone, sent via SMS, SMS is cheaper than a personal trainer, you can use it at home.

##### Question 10

Inexpensive/affordable, can be done at a time that suits you, is fun, makes you healthy and fit during winter, new message every day, surprises you, you can do it at home, puts you in a good mood.

##### Question 11

Telephone or text the company, give your mobile number and the date to start the service, have a mobile phone.

## **Text 5**

### **Question 12**

The subject has limited places.

### **Question 13**

Have to have good German, have to make special application, finding housing, not knowing how to do things, loneliness, shortage of places in some subjects, Summer/Winter reversed to Australia.

### **Question 14**

Student housing keeps some places for foreigners, Auslandsamt/foreign office for overseas students, office/house where students can meet, seminars for foreign students at beginning of course.

## **Section 2: Reading and responding**

In the reading comprehension, students need to read the passage carefully, seeking to gain a full understanding of the passage before spending time seeking the meaning of many individual words. Students need to check for small words which can change the meaning significantly and not jump to a quick conclusion for fear of the time limit.

For example:

- *Der Weihnachtsmarkt ist einer der ältesten und schönsten Weihnachtsmärkte.* This states that the market is one of the oldest and most beautiful, not that it is the oldest and most beautiful market
- beware of *false friends* in translation, e.g. in Text 7 *sensibel* does not mean sensible
- beware of direct translations, e.g. *die kleine Marktbesucher* are not the little market visitors, but children, likewise the *Riesenrad* is not the giant bike. Accurate translation is needed, and students should be instructed in the skill of using a dictionary sparingly, and to double check meanings when writing.

## **Part A – Responses in English**

### **Text 6**

#### **Question 15**

Three of:

- Sight: 1000s tiny lights, sparkling ornaments/decorations, performances
- Smell: gingerbread, sausages/Bratwurst, Christmas/fir trees, Glühwein (mulled wine)
- Hearing: Christmas music/sounds, choirs and music groups
- Taste: sausages, ham, sweets, e.g. roast apples, almonds, crepes, Glühwein, gingerbread
- Touch: modelling of candles.

#### **Question 16**

Occurring for over 100 years, gothic-style town hall, houses from the Middle Ages, one of the oldest and most beautiful markets, traditional food served there, St Nicholas will visit.

#### **Question 17**

Children two of Ferris wheel, merry-go-round, St Nicholas comes on Dec 6 and brings surprises, children's candle workshop, look at toys.

#### **Question 18**

Two of:

Christmas concerts of local choirs, see lantern parade on first night, wander and meet friends, visit of St Nicholas, absorb the atmosphere of the market, look at artistic stalls.

### **Text 7**

#### **Question 19**

Two of:

Mostly men's hands give the beat in orchestra pits, very few women have been given a position as conductor, women told they won't get a position even if they do graduate, only one woman in conductor's class, women experienced discrimination.

#### **Question 20**

Two of:

Women need to look after the children, women are responsible for the socialisation of people, for the values of society, and men aren't any good at looking after the children.

#### **Question 21**

Three of:

Ability to empathise, talent for organisation, sensitive manner with people, able to communicate, possesses qualities needed for conductor, response to the prejudices and attitudes of colleagues.

## Part B – Response in German

### Text 8

Students had to respond to Angelika's letter by answering all of her questions, responding to and advising her on the issues she mentioned. Teachers need to help students develop the ability to recognise each of the issues as well as the obvious questions.

Students were required to demonstrate an understanding of the general and specific aspects of the text. It was necessary to read the original closely to identify all the issues that needed to be addressed. The questions to be answered were: Are you also unsure about what to expect from the exchange? How do you survive whole day school? When do you do your homework? Is there time for hobbies? Where do you live? How do you get to school? Do you have brothers and sisters? How do you celebrate New Year in summer?

Students were required to write a well-sequenced informal letter, including correct use of date, greeting and ending for letter, and using correct format and style. They had to use complete sentences and paragraphs. There needed to be correct use of subordinate clauses, gender and adjective endings where appropriate, and students should aim to use a wide range of grammatical structures. The letter needed to be within the word limit, which was not always the case.

Many students did not read the questions and issues closely enough, and assumed that they simply needed to write on the general topic, not the specific, eg. describe the times they go to school (often at length, wasting vital words) rather than how to survive the long day, or to state that they get little or a lot of homework, rather than when do you do the homework.

In the letter, students should not start sentences with *Ja ...* There needs to be a clear difference between spoken and written German.

Errors such as *ich bin gut* in a letter at this level, or common errors such as: *Ich habe am Fuß/bei Auto/bei Bus zur Schule gefahren* are unforgivable at this level.

### Section 3 Writing in German

Students had to cover all the aspects required with a full and thoughtful explanation. Attention needed to be paid to the appropriate text type, including the format and style required. An appropriate level of sophistication for the end of Unit 4 was expected, which includes effective use of paragraphs, including linking of ideas and concepts and natural flow between paragraphs. Students needed to use full sentences, a wide range of grammatical structures and some effective use of German idiom, where appropriate. Accuracy of grammar was assessed, particularly in relation to subordinate clauses and coordinating conjunctions, correct use of tenses, gender and adjective endings, word order and punctuation. Students need to practise recognising what is required in a task, and not simply answer a topic they might like in English, but do not know what is required. It is important to analyse carefully what is required for successful completion of the topic.

Students also need to double check the exact meaning of words they pick from a dictionary; otherwise nonsense answers result, e.g. *Vielen Dank für deine Buchstabe, Wir spielen immer Streichholz Tennis.*

Pre-prepared answers or sentences should be avoided. Long lists or loosely-linked topics do not score well, as well as long lists of items in English, e.g. Melbourne has the Telstra Dome, MCG, Zoo, Luna Park. Students need to be selective in what is written, giving more detail on a few aspects rather than a long list without any real information or supporting ideas.

Students still need to learn the necessary conventions of the different text types, as many otherwise well-written tasks lost vital marks through not including all the relevant conventions (refer to study design).

Whilst it is valuable to think through a range of topics in preparation for the examination, it is not appropriate to include 'chunks' of material that have been rote learned regardless of relevance to the topic. Certainly students are able to use ideas successfully practised in class, but first and foremost is the need to respond to the task as it is written, not as they would like it to be written.

Paragraphs need to be very clear in writing. Simply starting a new line is not always recognisable, and students should consider leaving a line to indicate a paragraph, or having a clear indent.

**Question 23**

The task was to write a magazine article describing what is liked about your hometown, reasons for liking it, what would be missed if you left it, and what should a visitor go and see. The article needed to include a title, an author (fictional name), and magazine layout. The style needed to be appropriate for a school magazine, so the audience needed to be taken into account (not simply rewrite a description of a town that could have been for any group of people). Many students stated they would miss their family and friends, but did not actually talk about the town itself, or stated what they like to do in general, e.g. go shopping, rather than consider what the town has to offer.

**Question 24**

The task was to write a short story about a pet, and a wide range of pets was chosen, including an elephant, a flying dragon, a turtle, scorpion and many dogs and cats. Experiences with the pet needed to be included and possibly the events on and following the birthday. The short story needed a title or topic, an author (fictional name), structure for a short story, with effective use of paragraphs and development of the content. An audience should have been considered, giving a purpose for the short story. Many students did not include the title or author.

**Question 25**

The task was to write a formal letter that included the applicant's current situation, personal interests and prior experience in areas required. The aim was to persuade the principal that he/she was the best applicant, not simply to list facts without any support or explanation. Relevance for German primary students was often missed. Many students prepared an informal letter and did not include the appropriate style or register for a formal letter. Address, date, reference number or equivalent, salutation, greeting, farewell, signing off (fictional name), use of formal 'Sie', and correct layout needed to be included.

**Question 26**

The task was to write a script for a talk to the class that included life since the speaker got a mobile phone, how old he/she was when he/she got the phone, how did he/she get phone. The student needed to comment on the ability to contact people any time and anywhere, describe changes in the nature of communication, and in the nature of language and SMS communication. As this was a talk for the class, the audience needed to be considered and possibly addressed. There needed to be a clear development of ideas and opinions drawing to a conclusion, appropriate structure, and a title or topic.

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