



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students generally performed very well in the 2011 German oral examination. Assessors and students were able to converse on a wide range of topics and themes throughout both sections of the examination.

Students who had clearly practised their oral language skills performed extremely well. They were able to respond to questions with ease and fluency, and to present very interesting responses across a broad range of questions.

Well-prepared students also showed the ability to use a variety of expressions and grammatical constructions. Competent students' language range did not appear contrived in its complexity but was naturally fluent. When conversing with assessors, students should always try to use complex sentences rather than simple ones.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

The Conversation is an opportunity to demonstrate confidence, competence and fluency in German, covering many themes students have learned in their German classes.

At the same time, it is important that students recognise they are having a conversation, not presenting chunks of rote-learned material. To achieve the highest level of oral performance, students needed to indicate that they were thoroughly prepared and that they had the ability to adapt and vary prepared concepts according to the context and the exact nature of the questions asked.

Weaker students often made assumptions about questions, but stronger students listened closely to each question to make sure they answered accurately.

Communication

In this criterion, students needed to maintain and advance the conversation appropriately and effectively. The assessors wanted to interact with students, ask questions and follow up on details, and they encouraged students to express not just facts, but opinions and different ways of seeing a particular issue or theme. Competent students talked easily about a range of themes, and sometimes included anecdotes, personal stories or shared an amusing experience with the assessors.

Students need to avoid presenting extended monologues. Certainly, students should have anticipated questions and their responses to many lines of questions, but weaker students often simply responded to a question with a monologue and seemed quite confronted when assessors attempted to interrupt and ask a more specific question. A series of rote-learned monologues does not make a true conversation.

This criterion also assessed students' pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. This meant that a student should find the natural appropriate speed to speak German, neither racing nor speaking painfully slowly, to ensure 100 per cent accuracy.

Content

The assessors asked leading questions that were often quite general in nature to encourage students to take the lead and present personal information, ideas and opinions.

Language

Competent students were easily able to use a range of verb tenses, add descriptive flavour to the conversation and respond to questions for which they had not prepared. Weaker students often confused tenses, moving between past and present erratically or misusing passive and future tenses.

Common errors included:

- using *Sport spielen* – use *Sport machen* or *treiben*
- confusing *spenden/sparen*
- confusion of numbers; for example, 15/50, 16/60, etc.



- confusing word order and verb endings
- using irregular past participles, use of *haben/sein*
- pronunciation confusion; for example, *Bahnhof/Bauernhof*
- use of *du* instead of 'man' in general statements.

Section 2 – Discussion

The increasing range of topics in the Discussion component of the examination was supported by interesting resources.

The introduction allowed students to present the general theme and specific areas of research they had undertaken. Students should have included an outline (not details) of aspects they had studied. Some students tended to speed through the introduction, but they needed to remember that the assessors need to make notes to assist the discussion, so fast delivery of research aspects was likely to disadvantage them. In particular, titles needed to be pronounced clearly.

Assessors were generally familiar with commonly used resources, but they may have sought clarification of unfamiliar or new resources after the introduction or during the discussion. Increasingly, students used podcasts, websites, leaflets and other new media as well as articles, reports, interviews and films.

In order to discuss a topic for seven to eight minutes, students should have made sure they had sufficient material in the form of information, ideas and opinions, as well as the ability to explore each resource and to link concepts and themes across resources. Students should not have referred to a resource in their introduction if they were not prepared to discuss it during the examination.

Students sometimes tried to answer only questions for which they had prepared, not the questions assessors asked, either by answering incorrectly or without relevance or refusing to answer certain questions. Students should have listened carefully to each question to ensure they understood the question's purpose and scope accurately.

Cartoons, photos or illustrations could be useful in supporting the discussion, but there needed to be a purpose for bringing the picture to the examination and scope for discussion.

Communication

The most successful discussions tended to occur when students obviously enjoyed their topic and had prepared a wide range of aspects to talk about. As a result, they were able to respond readily and confidently and to carry the conversation forward with original input.

Content

A successful discussion almost always followed when a student prepared many aspects for discussion. Assessors enjoyed hearing students' interpretation of topics, and they wanted to know how a student understood the issue being discussed. Therefore, students should be encouraged to express their personal views and to consider their topic in the light of personal and present-day experiences. Information is very important, but it should not have been the sole focus of discussion.

Teachers and students needed to consider the nature of a topic and whether it allows the exploration of ideas and opinions as well as facts. Historical topics, for example, could allow students to consider how we might apply the lessons of history to our world today.

Some students attempted to make big statements about issues in their topic, but were unable to support these ideas with evidence from their resources. It is important to be able to support comments with references to the resources studied.

Language

Students were expected to be well versed in all vocabulary required to discuss their topic.

Common errors included:

- confusion between *Vorteil* and *Vorurteil*
- incorrect gender of pronouns when replacing non-personal nouns (for example, *die Wiederaufbau* should be replaced with *sie*, not *es*)
- use of accusative or dative after common prepositions
- mixing up *Ost-* and *West-Berlin*.

2011 Assessment Report



Materials for the discussion

When teachers and students selected the specific materials to support students' points and ideas in the discussion, it is important to ensure that there was more than one main point or contention presented in each resource, and that the materials give the student some ability to link ideas between the selected resources.

When a student found their topic interesting and related easily to the material, possibly reflecting on their own life through the discussing the content, they were more likely to achieve success in their discussion and performance in speaking German.