



Oral component

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Most students tried hard, were well prepared and performed to a high standard in this section of the examination. They listened carefully, were articulate and answered the questions confidently. They expressed opinions, which were supported by details and reasons, and advanced the conversation. Many students had an excellent range of vocabulary and a wide variety of sentence structures. It was a pleasure to converse with them.

The majority of students were well prepared. However, some tried to rely on rote-learned material and struggled when they forgot it or when the assessors asked a question different to the ones they were expecting. Other students gave answers that were too brief and lacked breadth and depth. Weaker students often resorted to Anglicisms.

Communication

Most students seemed aware of and had prepared possible responses to the main topics about which the assessors were likely to ask, for example, school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations. They expressed ideas and opinions, showed initiative and could branch off into side issues easily. Most students could advance the conversation with original input and sometimes used humour. It is important that students elaborate as fully as they can on each question or theme and do not give basic responses. Some very capable students gave simple responses when it was clear they were capable of far greater depth and more sophisticated language.

Some students tried to engage the assessors by asking them questions. Students should be discouraged from doing this as time is needed for them to show their skill in communicating their own ideas and opinions. It is also not appropriate to address the assessors in the *du* form.

Well-prepared students used highly effective repair strategies to correct their mistakes, asked for questions to be repeated or rephrased, asked the assessors to speak more slowly and for time to think about unexpected questions or words they did not understand. Students should anticipate the possibility of challenging questions as they are an opportunity to demonstrate their skill and grasp of the language. Capable students should not be concerned if they cannot answer a difficult question as assessors are simply giving them the opportunity to demonstrate the extent of their linguistic ability. As the topics are generally familiar, students should be careful to learn the correct pronunciation of key words and be able to respond with appropriate intonation, stress and tempo without long pauses before answering.

Content

Many students gave interesting responses about their families and schools. They could express opinions about the type of school they attended and elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages of school uniforms. They presented unusual facts and ideas about their leisure activities and their future. It is advisable that students be able to discuss their plans for after VCE and explore the reasons, advantages and disadvantages of these choices. It is vital that students who have part-time jobs are able to say what they do, and express opinions about various aspects of their work.

Expressing the idea of having fun and enjoying something often proved difficult for students. Many had problems distinguishing between 'having fun' ('*Spaß haben*') and 'being fun' ('*Spaß machen*') and some tended to use English words and phrases. Students should be prepared to clarify, elaborate and defend their opinions and ideas as assessors will sometimes deliberately express a contrasting opinion simply to encourage students to justify why they like or dislike something, for example, going to the football or taking a year off to travel. It would be helpful if students practised how to explain their opinions or preferences to someone who disagrees.

Language

Capable students used a wide range of vocabulary, structures and expressions in an accurate and appropriate way. Some showed an ability to use relative clauses correctly. Mistakes were frequently made with verbs, particularly subject and verb agreement, expressing the future (*wollen* was used instead of *werden*), the use of *sein* and *haben* in the perfect, the formation of the past participle, confusion in the use of tenses such as between the past and the future, the formation of the conditional and the position of the verb in subordinate clauses, such as after *weil* and *dass*. Many students confused *bekommen* with *werden*, *seit* and *Zeit* and were not sure which word to use for 'when' – *wann*, *wenn* or *als*. Adjectives



and nouns about nationalities sometimes proved a challenge, for example, *australisch* and *Australier*, *Italienisch* and *Italiener*. For impersonal comments many students used *du* instead of *man*.

Students also need to pay attention to personal pronouns, including *ich*, *mich* and *mir*, the use of *sein* and *ihr* and confusion between *dein* and *Ihr*. Correct genders are expected and putting an *e* on *mein Vater* or *mein Bruder* is a serious mistake. The correct pronoun for 'it' depends on the gender of the word. Many students, when describing their school, used *es* instead of *sie*. Students should be careful about using the correct conjunctions, word order and case endings. Many seemed to have problems with the dative plural. The inappropriate use of the verb *lieben* should also be avoided.

Section 2 – Discussion

Communication

In the one-minute introduction students should state their sub-topic and the focus of their study on which they have concentrated and if they have brought in an object to discuss. They need to give the specific name of their texts and not simply say that they have seen a film or read an article. The introduction should not be too broad or too long. Details of the texts should not be given at this stage of the examination as these are better raised in the discussion. It is no longer necessary for students to say that they have concentrated on the language and culture of German-speaking countries using texts, as no VET option is currently being offered in this study. Many students prepared their introduction carefully and learnt it by heart, presenting it very effectively.

Students should be careful not to give their introduction too quickly as assessors may wish to write down the topic, aspects of particular interest or preference to the student and the named resources to guide them in conducting the discussion. It is valuable for students to give a clear indication of which aspects they have covered and would like to discuss, as many of the topics are very broad and it is difficult for assessors to know the student's particular areas of expertise. It is challenging and frustrating for both students and assessors when the assessors ask questions about aspects the students have not covered as students are sometimes unsure whether they should respond or appear under-prepared by saying they have not covered the area. When in doubt, students should explain that they did not cover this area and give an example of a different aspect they had studied. However, this tactic should not be used to avoid answering any question that could be a little tricky. Students should always remember that this is an opportunity to show their resourcefulness, their level of preparation and general understanding of the topic.

Students should not name topics and resources that the class has studied but which they have not personally covered. Students should be able to discuss any resource they mention. However, if students prepare their topic broadly, they should be able to say something, no matter what direction the discussion takes. It is not the assessor's aim to trick the students or ask unreasonable questions, but they will sometimes ask a more probing or challenging question when a student clearly has a good grasp of the topic.

It is counterproductive if students try to learn whole chunks of information by heart and present it quickly without giving any evidence of their understanding. When they forget part of this information, they often become lost and struggle to continue. Reciting memorised material does not constitute a discussion. Students resorting to rote-learned material can also be thrown when the questions asked do not fit in with what they have learnt. In some cases students continued to recite learnt material without listening or relating their comments to the questions. If students give generalisations and make judgments it is important that they can support them with concrete evidence and examples from the texts. Students should be encouraged to deal with their topic in depth and not treat it superficially, since it is a Detailed Study.

Content

It is essential that a topic be prepared for the Detailed Study which explores aspects of the language and culture of German-speaking communities and is based on a sub-topic related to one or more of the prescribed topics listed in the *VCE German Study Design*. The study design also states that in the oral examination students are expected to make reference to the texts.

The choice of topic and texts is critical. They should contain enough material of sufficient depth for an eight-minute discussion and allow for reflection on the topic. There should be reasonable scope for discussion, ideas, opinions and critical comment. Issues which are too simple or largely 'black and white' in nature should be avoided. The topic should be appropriate for the level of maturity and language of the students. Less proficient students struggle a great deal when the topic is too difficult, complicated or too deep for them; it seems they are trying to express ideas that they have not really grasped. Some topics require knowledge of the historical background so teachers should consider this in the development of the unit.

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The content of the texts should be appropriate for the topic and suitable for linking so that students can cross-reference and show contrasts and similarities between them. This is difficult if students have a broad topic with unrelated aspects or texts. The topic should not cover too wide a field of information and should not be too complicated. It should be realistic so as to enable students to demonstrate their skill and achieve high scores. Some students were disadvantaged by a poor choice of topic, others gave only one word or one sentence responses and some gave adequate but short answers as if they had nothing else to say. If a film is used as one of the texts, students need to be able to analyse the content, show its relation to their topic and give their opinions about it, not simply retell the story in detail.

It is vital that the topic is taught in German. Sometimes it seemed that students knew a great deal about their topic but were not able to find adequate German vocabulary and grammar to convey their thoughts. This is particularly relevant with some of the historical topics where students are familiar with the material in English, but lack the German vocabulary. It is essential to use German texts to support vocabulary acquisition.

Strong students used repair strategies whereby they were able to steer the conversation into the areas they had prepared and were anticipating. They were also able to seek clarification and ask to start a sentence again if they were having problems.

Some effective topics were: *Windenergie*, *Der Mauerbau*, *Kindertransport*, *Die Stasi*, *Ausländer in Deutschland*, *Widerstand und die weiße Rose* and *Die Mauer im Kopf*. Some topics like *Die Qual der Wahl*, *Die Gemeinschaft der Deutschen* and *Fußball und Nationalstolz* gave able students a chance to investigate and reflect, but weaker students had difficulty comprehending and discussing it. A topic like *Hundertwasser* is better handled if students have some knowledge and appreciation of art. Descriptive topics like *Weihnachten* and *Leipzig* did not allow much scope for reflection or the formulation of ideas and opinions.

There is a wealth of material available on the Internet and it is worth exploring this rich resource and considering new topics that are of interest to students.

Language

As students are required to have spent 15 hours of class time on their topic and texts, it is expected that they will have a thorough knowledge of the vocabulary required and will not make mistakes with gender, use English or have difficulty expressing facts, ideas and opinions. It is helpful for students to think of possible questions and then formulate thoughtful answers in advance.

Some schools encourage Year 11 students to attempt Year 12 German, but weaker students may benefit from another year's study of the language. It is also important that native speakers be aware of the examination requirements and prepare adequately for the Detailed Study.

When asked at the end of the examination if there was anything else they would like to say, students offered good summations. Many had thought deeply about their topic and were able to conclude the discussion with mature reflections on what they had learnt. Good preparation is the secret to success in the oral examination and students who had prepared thoroughly performed well.