

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

It was pleasing to see that most students attempted each section of the 2011 written examination. It was, however, of concern that many students had not carefully planned the time allocated to the examination. The front cover of the question and answer booklet suggested times to be assigned to each section. This was a very valuable guide for students for Sections 2 and 3 of the examination. It was particularly disappointing to read rushed and very brief responses to the Section 3 writing task.

It would be a valuable exercise for teachers and students to practise examination procedure and technique, and in particular to familiarise themselves with the examination format and each section's expectations and time allocations.

It is worth mentioning again the importance of attempting every section and every answer.

While it was pleasing to note that in Section 1 students' listening comprehension skills had improved, it was clear that the standard of German writing skills requires significant improvement. Section 1 – Part B, Section 2 – Part B and Section 3 revealed many fundamental weaknesses. Many students did not understand how to use past tenses, in particular the perfect tense. The formation of past participles and whether they were accompanied with *haben* or *sein* together with the correct form of these verbs proved to be a significant problem.

Fundamental errors such as adjectival and adverbial declensions (*es ist ein gut und interessant Film*), the incorrect use of prepositions (*er ist auf Australien*), prepositional agreements (*an ein schön Tag*) and the incorrect use of vocabulary (*ich will sie verheiraten*) were all too common. Students could easily check the gender of nouns they were unsure of in the dictionary, yet many appeared to simply guess the gender.

Students were quite even in their selection of all five topics in Section 3. Students particularly enjoyed passing on their wisdom about how to have a happy and successful final year at school, and the imaginative piece also proved popular.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding Part A: Answer in English

Text 1

Question 1a.

They are her parents/Sabine is their daughter (not just one parent).

Question 1b.

Sabine wants to go to a party.

Question 1c.

Inge is concerned because of (three of):

- Sabine only knows the friend via Facebook
- Inge/Sabine doesn't know the (male) friend's surname/last name
- Inge doesn't know the (male) friend's phone number
- Inge wants to know whether the party will be supervised by parents
- Inge wants to speak with the friend's parents.

Question 1d.

Sabine's opinions of Inge's concerns are:

- parties where parents supervise/attend are boring/not fun
- her mother is old fashioned/not modern
- her father is more modern and might allow her to go.

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Text 2

Question 2a.

The date of the announcement was (Wednesday) 23 November.

Students needed to be precise with the date.

Question 2b.

The weather conditions that affected road, train and air travel were:

- heavy snow/snowfalls (not just snow)
- (black) ice.

Question 2c.

The consequences of these weather conditions were:

- there were many accidents
- trains were delayed/cancelled/disrupted
- flights were delayed/cancelled/disrupted
- passengers had to wait a long time/experienced long delays at airports.

Question 2d.

The specific advice given was:

- people should stay at home/should avoid travelling
- passengers booked on flights should contact their airline/seek information regarding their flight (by phone or Internet) before going to the airport.

Students needed to read the questions carefully to be clear about what was required for each answer.

Part B: Answer in German

Text 3

This section assessed students not only on their comprehension of the spoken text but also on their ability to answer the questions in complete and accurate sentences in German.

Question 3a.

Car racing is Florian's favourite sport because:

- it is exciting
- cars are his passion
- Germans have won the world championship several times
- he is impressed with (*begeistert von*)proud of Schumacher and/or Vettel.

Some students confused the words exciting (*spannend*) with relaxing (*entspannend*) here. Other students took it as fact that all Germans were proud of Schumacher and/or Vettel. It is important to remind students that the questions should be answered using only the information they have been given in the text.

Question 3b.

Nikki thought car racing was:

- boring
- too loud
- too fast/one can hardly see the cars.

Students understood and answered this question very well.

Question 3c. Florian stated:

- football was not a women's sport
- women were only interested in fancy clothes and make-up
- women talked and talked and therefore got on men's nerves
- women were boring because they didn't talk enough about sport.

Nikki on the other hand claimed:

- that Florian was unaware that nowadays women and girls all over the world played football
- that men only talked about football, which was boring, whereas women were interested in many things such as books, films, music and sport
- Florian was a macho man.

This question required students not only to identify but also to compare the attitudes towards men and women as expressed by Florian and Nikki.

The most successful responses were those where students compared the opinions of Florian and Nikki and linked the information using their own words. In addition, the more complex structures such as main and subordinate clauses using *dass*, comparatives such as *einerseits/andererseits*, gender, verb endings, conjunctions, tense and adjectival endings were mostly used accurately.

Section 2 – Reading and Responding

Part A: Answer in English

Text 4

Many students did not answer this section well. This again highlights the importance of reading the text and the question very carefully.

Question 4a.

Christmas

Question 4b.

Indrani was challenged by:

- homesickness
- short days
- the cold
- different food.

Later on, she got used to and liked the food.

Question 4c.

Nürnberger Lebkuchen was:

- a German Christmas speciality
- a speciality of Nürnberg
- made for many centuries/hundreds of years
- a secret recipe
- sent to countries all over the world
- made using Indian spices.

Question 4d.

The recipe was different this year because:

- gingerbread was more expensive
- more Indian spices were used generally (not in the gingerbread)
- people (including Indians) ate more/better food nowadays
- the information was conveyed in the newspaper (not at the newspaper stand).

It was incorrect to say that more curry powder was used in the gingerbread.

Question 4e.

In Germany:

- Indian spices were used in German gingerbread
- curry powder was used mainly outside of India
- curry powder was a spice mixture.

In India:

- Indian spices were used for meat dishes
- Indians varied the spices they used for different dishes
- Indians mixed the spices themselves.

Question 4f.

Onions and garlic

Part B: Answer in German

Text 5

Students were assessed on their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts, and on their capacity to convey the required information accurately and appropriately. They were required to process and link the information in both texts and provide a personal response to each of the five dangers/warnings mentioned.

While most students were able to identify five dangers/warnings, many found it difficult to link the two texts and provide a clear and relevant personal response that demonstrated their understanding of the texts.

Some possible responses included:

- there were no crocodiles in Melbourne, only at the zoo
- there are only crocodiles in rivers in the north, not in Melbourne
- I'll be very careful and watch out for sharks; I won't go surfing because I'm frightened of sharks
- I'll avoid the danger of bushfires by not walking on hot days; I'll be living in the city not the bush
- I won't be eating crocodile or kangaroo even though my host mother says it tastes good
- I eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables/I am eating well
- the sausages and cake mum gave me were taken away at the airport
- Alex advised me not to lie in the sun for hours/I used lots of sunscreen/I'm frightened of getting skin cancer.

The marks allocated were divided equally between students' comprehension of the passages and the students' ability to convey the information accurately and appropriately in German. Although many students managed to demonstrate an understanding of the text, many had difficulty linking the warnings with ways to address them by means of a personal connection or viewpoint. Excellent responses showed originality and used complex sentences. For example, passages containing subordinate clauses, the perfect tense, modals, adjectival endings, verb endings, gender and vocabulary, and using a very high level of accuracy scored well.

Section 3 – Writing in German

Students were given a choice of five topics, five kinds of writing and five text types. The choices comprised a speech (persuasive), a review (evaluative) a diary entry (personal), a newspaper article/letter to the editor (informative) and a story (imaginative).

At the Unit 3 and 4 level, it is expected that students will be well acquainted with the conventions of the different text types as well as the styles of persuasive, evaluative, personal, informative and imaginative writing. Some students, however, still seemed largely unfamiliar with styles of writing and the different text types. It is vital that, prior to the final written examination in Unit 4, students have had sufficient experience writing on a broad variety of topics, practising all writing styles and utilising each of the text types. It is expected that students will have acquired a broad vocabulary and should be well beyond word-for-word translations from the dictionary. A thorough revision of grammatical structure such as gender, cases, prepositions tenses, adjectival endings and word order is essential. Students are expected to be able to recognise and understand subordinate clauses. Weaknesses in all three criteria in Section 3 were apparent.

Question 6

This was a popular topic. Students enjoyed reflecting on their Year 12 experience and imparting the wisdom they had gained. Very strong responses presented a balanced, considered and well-structured approach. Conventions of speech writing were generally well understood and sound. Generally, students gave convincing advice to the audience, although some students did interpret 'happy and successful experience' as being related largely to their social lives and saw that their role as speech giver was to persuade the new Year 12s by giving tips on how they could party and still survive the year.

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Question 7

Most students who attempted this topic structured it for a film review as was required and included the title, some brief content, a mention of directing/acting as well as taking a position and making a value judgment on the film such as 'four stars' and recommendations. Weaker students appeared to resort to using a film from their German oral examination and simply retold the story; this was not an evaluation but a description.

Question 8

Students understood the conventions of diary writing and most of them remembered to write over three days. However, some students did not read the question carefully and wrote about work experience. Many students failed to see the broader opportunity in the topic. They did not draw connections between the long course of study and its application in the first three days of their first related job. There was opportunity to link the two and create a sense of person/personality as well as use of feelings, emotions and impressions. Some students realised this opportunity but other pieces were quite shallow and provided a simple narrative list of what went on each day and did not develop beyond matters of morning tea, lunch and being late for work.

Question 9

Students did not answer this topic as well as other topics, largely because most students did not read the question carefully enough. There were two key parts: inform the readers of the environmental activities being carried out in their Australian school and in their community; and suggest/offer what else they believed needed to be done. This information needed to be conveyed clearly, comprehensively and plausibly.

Question 10

This bedtime story was aimed at a five year old. It would be expected that structurally it may begin with *Es war einmal* and would have a clear ending. This was an opportunity for creativity and many saw the picture of the mouse holding a flower as an invitation to create a romantic story. The cartoon allowed the imagination to flow freely and students could interpret it in any way they desired. Excellent stories contained original imaginary events relating to the drawing and colourful descriptive passages with a generous use of adjectives, which created the desired atmosphere and emotion.