

Stage 2 German (continuers)

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

STAGE 2 GERMAN (CONTINUERS)

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessor's Reports give an overview of how students performed in the school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Folio

The vast majority of schools submitted students' folios that were carefully prepared, clearly organised and complete with the correct number of tasks. The number of tasks ranged from 3-5 as outlined in the subject outline and most tasks provided students with the opportunities to demonstrate their learning against the performance standards.

Some schools chose to submit student folios that contained a cover sheet, summarising the grades awarded for individual. Folios submitted in cardboard wallets or display folders provided a good and quick overview of the folio.

Many school submitted folios where task sheets were attached to the task. As moderation always seeks to confirm the grades awarded by the teacher, teachers are encouraged to show clearly how they assess student work and not to remove grades and comments.

The scope of tasks in the folio needs to allow students to demonstrate learning against each assessment design criteria. Most folios did this very well and it was clear that teachers had planned the range of tasks very consciously to ensure their students had more than one chance to demonstrate their learning against the performance standards. If a folio has more than one text production task, they should be different from one another, with regards to topic, text type, purpose and audience to allow students to express a variety of ideas (breadth) and opinions.

Interaction

Whilst many appropriate interactions were submitted, some consisted of a quite lengthy oral presentation with short interactions after the conclusion of the presentation. Teachers and students are advised to keep within the time limit as anything longer than this cannot be considered when assessed or moderated. If students give an oral or multimodal presentation, follow up questions need to be unrehearsed and therefore unknown, otherwise students are unable to demonstrate their ability to engage in 'spontaneous' interaction, to adjust or elaborate their ideas and opinions in response to reactions, and their ability to deal with topic shifts and unpredicted elements. In order to achieve at the highest level of the performance

standards, students must also demonstrate their ability to interact across a wide range of topics, and these should go beyond answering familiar and predictable questions relating to the student's world and experience. Teachers need to ensure that students have the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions, elaborate on these and provide further details and examples.

Text Analysis

This assessment was much improved from 2011. Many teachers wrote very good tasks using a range of texts which addressed all of the performance standards pertaining to interpretation, and even on occasion, reflection, and provided their students with the chance to demonstrate their ability to understand texts at the highest level. Some very well designed tasks referenced individual specific features (e.g. IR1.1, IR2.2) to particular questions.

There is no time limit requirement for text analysis tasks. The emphasis should be on providing a rich task allowing students to demonstrate their learning against the performance standards at the highest levels. A number of listening tasks from past papers do not lend themselves to assess IR2 and IR3. However, these combined with other tasks would be suitable as text analysis tasks. Some very well designed tasks combined both spoken and written texts. Teachers may like to submit transcripts of spoken texts along with student work to support the moderation process.

Text Production

In text production tasks Expression and Ideas are assessed, it is therefore necessary for the task to be designed in such a way as to allow students to demonstrate depth of ideas and breadth, detailed content, expression and justification of opinions, originality and creativity. Many tasks in folios that were presented for moderation enabled students to demonstrate this but there were also tasks where text type, context, purpose, audience and message were not easily identified. Best practice tasks had task sheets which clearly indicated context, purpose and audience of the task, as well as the text type and, at times, kind of writing required, e.g. descriptive, persuasive, informative etc.

Some tasks involved a retelling of a story or plot and it was difficult to find evidence of depth of ideas, opinions and well-reasoned arguments, which meant that the students were unable to achieve depth of ideas at the highest level.

The folios presented in 2012 were generally of a higher standard than those in 2011, as teachers had clearly considered feedback on school assessment from 2011 and designed their tasks in light of the requirements. Most folios were clearly presented, tasks were well designed and the allocation of marks was clear from teachers' comments and the use of performance standards. Teachers are reminded to clearly identify each piece of work that is submitted.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

Students researched many interesting topics for their In-depth Study and there were many excellent assessment tasks submitted. It is clear that many students engaged in research on topics that are not only of interesting to them but provide the opportunities to demonstrate learning against all the performance standards required.

It is recommended that teachers assist students in their choice of topics to make sure they are suitable to address the Interpretation and Reflection assessment design criteria.

It is very important that each task has a task sheet, indicating the topic, text type, context, purpose, audience and kind of writing, as well as the assessment conditions, otherwise it is very difficult to ascertain what a text is about. In the In-depth Study each of the three tasks must differ in context, purpose and audience and teachers and students must be mindful not to duplicate information presented. This was a lesser problem than in 2011 and only occurred rarely.

An Oral Presentation in German

Recordings of the oral presentations were much better than in 2011. Students need to be reminded that an oral presentation (multimodal or other) should engage the audience and create the desired impact and interest. This is rarely achieved when the text of the oral presentation is read off notes and is purely informational. Many presentations were interesting, lively, enthusiastic and text types as well as textual devices were chosen that engaged the audience very effectively, e.g. addressing the audience directly through the use of rhetorical questions, imperative, subjunctive to make suggestions or pose questions, or impassioned pleas to the audience.

A Written Response to the Topic in German

Many of the written responses in German were excellent. A variety of text types were used for the written response which allowed students not just to present their information but also their knowledge and skills in writing for different purposes and using a variety of linguistic, rhetorical and textual devices.

A Reflective Response in English

Some topics lend themselves better to reflection than others but this assessment task was much improved from 2011. The best reflections were done when a student selected a topic that facilitated a reflection on cultures, values, beliefs, practices and ideas represented in texts and in relation to the students' own values, beliefs, practices and ideas. Some of the reflections on the students' own learning were somewhat superficial, addressing mostly the fact that the student had known little about the topic before the In-depth Study, others were stunning in comparing prior perceptions and 'knowledge' to that resulting from in-depth study of the topic.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Examination

95 students completed the examination. As in previous years, the majority of students were well prepared and generally performed well using conversational, everyday German in the oral sections of the examination. However, students found it generally quite challenging to express their ideas and opinions clearly and logically in grammatically correct German. Students are advised to practise the more complex kinds of writing (e.g. persuasive) and text types (e.g. formal letters to the editor, articles, speeches).

Oral Examination

Section 1 Conversation

Most students were well prepared and able to speak well and engage with interest about topics such as family, interests, school life and future plans. The relevance, depth of treatment of information, opinions, and comments depended largely on the student's level of proficiency. The more successful and better prepared students were able to respond in depth and give opinions, thoughtful and detailed answers and take the initiative in the conversation. Less successful students answered very superficially. More probing questions revealed quickly whether students had simply rote learned or were able to move beyond the well-known lists of questions and answers.

Students showed a wide variety in their capacity to maintain conversation. Many students relied on simple answers and had to be encouraged to respond in more detail and depth. True interaction was only achieved with students who had excellent communication skills and a high level of proficiency in the language.

Teachers and students are encouraged to practise examination-style conversation and are encouraged to refer to the support material on the SACE Board website in this regard. However, there is a danger for students to 'over prepare' their answers. Learning answers by heart to possible questions can at times restrict natural flow of conversation.

Even though students in general communicated quite well, overall attention to detail and grammatical correctness could be improved. It was pleasing to see though how the more able students showed remarkable ease with vocabulary, structure and sequence and grammar. Many students were able to self-correct.

An examination is a formal situation and students should be able to differentiate between formal and informal address and use the formal address confidently and correctly.

As in previous years this was the best handled section of the examination.

Section 2 Discussion

As students had the opportunity to prepare and work with the required vocabulary and content, many handled the discussion confidently and competently. A great number of students were able to discuss the main points of their In-depth Study at length and with good command of the relevant vocabulary. However, some students had not researched their topic in depth and were able to handle the discussion only on a superficial level, and without enough relevant vocabulary to express their ideas effectively.

The choice of topic is vital and the teacher must offer guidance and direction when selecting the topic, the texts, and the assessment tasks. Teachers should encourage a broader approach to research and topics as well as depth of study and understanding. However, the danger is that some topics can be too broad which results in only superficial treatment of the subject, e.g. 'tourist attractions in Germany'. Some students chose very interesting and original topics and were able to present ideas and opinions very competently. (e.g. '*Frauen in der ehemaligen DDR*', '*Hitler's Testament*', '*Siemens*', etc.). It was very pleasing to see how many students

were well prepared and could talk about their topic passionately, at length and in depth. However, it was quite obvious when students had not chosen the topic themselves or discovered that they were not really interested in it. While the students may have been well prepared, they lacked interest and/or ability to comment independently or with opinion and reflection, which somewhat limited their potential to achieve in the A range.

Written Examination

Section 1 Listening and Responding

Question 1

- (a) A well answered question, with a high proportion of students picking up on the fact that Maria has become vegetarian.
- (b) Many students were able to identify that it was a film that motivated Maria's change, although the better answers indicated that it was a documentary about animal rights. The best answers included the point that animals should not be treated as products.
- (c) It was interesting to see that quite a number of students focussed on cruelty towards animals in this question (prior knowledge), where better answers gave the information that Maria was surprised by the fact that animals consume so much food, ten times as many people could be fed if humans ate vegetables and no meat.
- (d) Many students picked up on Maria's mother being sceptical initially, however, still supportive of her daughter. Better answers also included the point that Maria's mother left meat out of Maria's food and she also started cooking vegetarian dishes.

Question 2

This proved to be a slightly difficult question overall.

- (a) Many students felt the purpose was to encourage people to donate money for a range of projects or inform people about environmental projects. Better answers picked up on the point that the purpose was to encourage airline passengers to pay a voluntary fee to compensate for CO₂ in flight emissions when they travel. The word '*freiwillige*' seemed to pose a problem for many students.
- (b) Well-answered with a majority of students providing solid answers; solar energy in India, wind energy in Costa Rica and energy saving projects in Africa.
- (c) Many students provided the information that these projects help the local people with employment and infrastructure, but better answers stated that these projects also reduce greenhouse gas emissions which in turn is slowing climate change and protecting the environment.

Question 3

This question was overall the best answered question of the listening and responding section.

- (a) The majority of students clearly identified the nature of the speaker's relationship with her mobile as loving/romantic/emotional/very personal.

- (b) Many students did not include textual examples to support their answers as was expressly asked or vice versa, some students just provided examples but did not mention any linguistic features (e.g. use of direct speech, poetic style, personification).
- (c) Most students clearly identified the negative aspects of this relationship. Her mobile can be costly and does need recharging.

Question 4

Students found this quite a challenging question.

- (a) Many students were able to state that cars represented money/ wealth, but better answers also included the points that cars represented success, gave freedom and independence.
- (b) Students found this question a little challenging, focussing only on the car issue as a status symbol. Better answers identified mobiles, laptops, mp3 players, game consoles and even clothing to express one's individuality as modern day status symbols.
- (c) Some students identified that cars are still desired today, but again better answers included the reason that they provided mobility and independence. Theresa's answer in comparison to the two others was more comprehensive, and many students pointed out the fact that she mentioned cars, technology and clothing. Very few students were able to comment on the fact that the other two people commented only from personal experience whereas Theresa considered the issue (what young people today think is important) more broadly.

Section 2 Reading and Responding Part A

Question 5

- (a) The majority of students understood the content and answered this question quite well. They were able to describe how personal relationships have changed through the advent of social networking sites. However, some misunderstanding of the question led to students simply rewriting sections of the text in English rather than showing and explaining the changed nature of relationships. Some students mixed up '*langsam*' with '*lang*' or '*langweilig*' and poor dictionary use meant that some students mistranslated '*Einstellungen*' as jobs. Some students included information based on their own prior knowledge rather than on evidence from the text.

It is important to note that giving evidence from the text does not mean quoting sections from the text in German. Students need to explain the meaning in English and use it as evidence here for the changed nature of relationships. In general, the ability to explain clearly and support with specific/relevant evidence from the text needs practice, and the structure of responses and supporting detail needs careful consideration.

- (b) Some students repeated the same information in two ways, rather than giving two examples of positive and two of negative aspects.

Question 6

This question proved to be quite challenging with only few students receiving full marks. The combination of explaining an expression in the context of the text and

giving examples as supporting evidence proved particularly difficult for many students.

- (a) Very good answers explained that 'grandmother's wisdom' was based on experience, that when you buy cheap products, these products don't last very long and consequently you have to spend money again to replace them (buying twice). Some students gave evidence from the text, e.g. the cheap T-shirts that lost colour and shape but did not always explain how it connected to the wisdom. Some students thought that grandmother's advice included fair trade.

The misunderstanding of question (a) led some students to explaining what the term grandmother's wisdom meant in general and a number of students didn't seem to have read or understood the title of this text (reading it as the imperative) which resulted in total misunderstanding of question (a) and (d).

Some students obviously understood the text very well but needed to be more specific and detailed in giving examples or evidence from the text.

- (b) The answer for this question was quite straightforward: bargains and the desire to buy trendy brands.
- (c) A good answer explained that fair trade producers consider the working conditions under which garments are made and the environmental impact of the production of these garments. They consider fair wages for the workers. The word '*Fabrik*' caused some confusion, students translating it to fabric.
- (d) Here students were asked to interpret this sentence in the context of the whole text and explain that the young person was going to follow the grandmother's advice and buy the better quality and more expensive boots. Very few students explained clearly why the grandmother would have been proud.

Section 3 Reading and Responding Part B

Question 7

Most students coped well with the task. Their ideas were interesting and vocabulary and structures required were generally not beyond their competence. The topic seemed to be interesting and engaging for most students and most responses were certainly relevant to context, purpose, audience and topic. Interesting were the opinions of many students and the subtlety of ideas as well as the maturity of thought. Only few students argued for tattooing and several students offered alternatives as well as pointing out the drawbacks of getting a tattoo. A number of responses criticised the attitude of the parents and most responses dealt systematically with all four aspects of the question.

Many responses, however, showed little depth and thought and gave some anecdotes to support their opinions (own experience), rather than presenting an argument.

There was a large range of expressions and accuracy was varied. The same old list of frequent grammar error was apparent: word order, subject-verb agreement, preposition and case issues, use of modal verb (*sollen*) etc.

Students are encouraged to use more comprehensive dictionaries to avoid poor translation, e.g. *Abfall von Geld* (waste), *ich werde dich unterhalten* (support), confusion of *bedauern* and *bereuen*.

There were some recurring issues with spelling and idioms, e.g.:

- *mann* for *man*
- *ich hoffe du wo ich komme von verstehen*
- the translation of think needs to be explained as in the difference between *denken, glauben, finden*
- your mother is right – *ist korrekt, richtig, stimmt, hat rechts, ist stimmt*
- not even /yet 16 – *nicht einmal/noch nicht 16/erst 15*
- the terms youth and young people – *die Jugend, viele Jugendliche*
- *es tut sehr wei* – English phonetic spelling.

Many responses were systematic and well organised, however, few students used paragraphs. The attempt to meet the requirements of 200-250 words often resulted in repetition of ideas and caused problems. The text type seemed to suit most students and there were some excellent responses in which students used a variety of vocabulary, complex sentence structures and conjunctions.

Section 4 Writing in German

Answers in this section of the exam ranged from excellent to less than adequate. Most responses show inadequate knowledge of grammar, structures and vocabulary. In particular, limited vocabulary is preventing students from expressing their ideas fully. Little evidence of planning is noticeable. Attention needs to be paid to proper planning, structuring and sequencing of the responses and to the use of paragraphs.

Question 8 proved the most popular choice in the Writing in German section with almost half of the students opting for this question. Approximately 30% of students opted for Question 9 and the remaining students completed Question 10. The majority of students achieved results in the C range in this section.

Overall students demonstrated good skills in observing conventions of text type and the stylistic features of narrative, persuasive, evaluative and informative writing. Students also used paragraphing appropriately and effectively. Unfortunately, the level of accuracy overall was distinctly variable. Subject-verb agreement, tense formation and consistency, case and adjective endings, word order and the use of capital letters were frequent sources of error. Structures such as '*Bist du gehen zu die Karneval dieses Woche?*' were not uncommon. Students should be encouraged early in their language learning to extend their vocabulary and not restrict themselves to using '*machen*' and '*haben*' in instances where more suitable, commonly used verbs exist.

Teachers should bring the following expressions to their students' attention, as they were frequently used incorrectly. The word 'helpful' is often best translated into German as '*nützlich*' (helpful/useful) or '*hilfsbereit*' (helpful/supportive); discourage '*hilfreich*' as it often does not work. A 'gap year' in German, is not a '*Pausenjahr*', but can be referred to as either a '*Gap Year*' or a '*Brückenjahr*'. It is, of course, acceptable to say: '*Ich mache erstmal ein Jahr Pause*' or similar.

Question 8

Most students were aware that they were required to write a formal letter and generally conventions of text type were observed, although the use of the formal 'Sie' in the various cases (Acc/Dat), presented a problem. The better responses addressed key aspects of the topic in some depth. Detailed information on how long they had known their friend and how they would spend their leisure time together was not relevant here. In order to achieve more highly, students needed to go beyond merely listing a couple of activities or personal attributes without substantiating how these were relevant to the purpose of the letter. Given that student awareness of humanitarian and environmental concerns locally and globally is raised in various curriculum areas, including German, as well as community service programs, students were potentially able to draw on a wide range of ideas and experiences. Students frequently stated '*Sie ist ein schönes Mädchen*' clearly unaware that in German the adjective '*schön*' purely refers to appearance, not inner beauty. It should be noted that '*Mit freundlichen Grüßen*' is now the accepted salutation at the end of formal letters.

Question 9

Most students did not adequately address the key aspect of the question, i.e. to express their vision of the future impact of technology, but reported on the rapid technological advance over the past decade(s) and its current use and impact. Responses were frequently restricted to comments regarding ICT, but did not encompass technological advance in medicine, research, manufacturing etc., and their future social impacts. The use of future tense was very infrequent and students had difficulty, due to lack of vocabulary, in expressing opinions about the influence of technology on humanity.

Question 10

Students were generally able to construct a coherent piece of text. Those achieving at the higher levels demonstrated greater creativity and understanding of the 'narrative arc'. Their responses created suspense and certainly engaged the reader.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

In the light of falling numbers of students studying German at Stage 2 level, many, in fact, most schools combined their classes with German classes in other schools. This presents a number of challenges to teachers, as it is potentially time consuming to liaise with the other teachers with regards to task design and the assessment of students' work, however it cannot be stressed enough how important it is to commit this time and effort to assess all students within an assessment group and vetting task design from all participating schools. Many schools managed this very well and teachers from different schools obviously discussed tasks and assessment to ensure fairness for all students. There is no requirement that students from different schools complete the exact same assessment tasks, however, tasks must be designed according to the same standards and all teachers involved in a combined assessment group must be satisfied with task design. Internal benchmarking across all schools belonging to one assessment group by all teachers is advised.

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