

German (continuers)

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

STAGE 2 GERMAN CONTINUERS

2013 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' reports give an overview of how students performed in their 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

A diverse range of materials was again submitted for moderation this year. Overall, folios were meticulously organised, and evidenced the careful thought and preparation that had gone into the course planning, assessment task design, and compilation of the moderation materials.

The majority of teachers submitted between 4–5 tasks for the folio. Most was student work that was marked and annotated, as is the expectation in that the moderation process seeks to confirm the teacher's original assessment decision. Only a very small number of schools submitted student work without marks and/or comments. A number of teachers attached a copy of the performance standards to each student's work, highlighting the level at which they had achieved. An increasing number of teachers also submitted a cover sheet for each individual student, listing each summative assessment task and grade awarded. This was most helpful for the moderators, but is also useful for teachers to be able to gain an overview at one glance when assessing students for this part of their course work.

Interaction

An increasing number of teachers obviously took on board the advice disseminated in past chief assessors' reports and clarifying forums; consequently, the quality of this task was further improved compared with previous years. Nevertheless, some misconceptions regarding the nature of the interaction task persist. Although the interaction can follow a brief student presentation, this model often presents problems because the presentations tend to run too long and do not allow adequate question time. This leaves insufficient scope for students to demonstrate their ability to engage in 'spontaneous' interaction, to adjust or elaborate their ideas and opinions in response to reactions; to deal with topic shifts and unpredicted elements; and to interact across a wide range of topics. Overly rehearsed interactions also potentially limit a student's ability to achieve at the higher grades. The interaction needs to be as authentic as possible and should allow students to make optimal use of the 5–7 minutes available to demonstrate their capabilities against all relevant performance standards. It is the teachers' responsibility to ask questions that go beyond eliciting responses that only relate to 'The Individual' theme (the student's personal world). Rather than occurring in a group scenario, the interaction should take place between

an individual student and their teacher. The most successful Interactions gave students scope to demonstrate their linguistic competence in response to open-ended (and some higher-order) questions, and engage with the interlocutor on a range of topics with spontaneity, enthusiasm, and interest.

Text Analysis

Although it was obvious that teachers increasingly search textbooks and online materials for suitable text analysis texts and tasks, past examination texts remain a popular and 'safe' choice. However, some of the listening tasks from past examination papers do not lend themselves to assessing the IR2 (interpretation of meaning) and IR3 (analysis of language) specific features, although these can be supplemented with other text analysis tasks. When designing their own text analysis tasks, teachers should include questions which require reflection on, and interpretation of, content and textual features. Most of the materials produced by teachers were of a high calibre, combined spoken and written texts, and featured questions that addressed the relevant IR assessment design criterion

Text Production

Text production tasks were generally well-designed and enabled students to maximise their achievement against the performance standards by allowing them to demonstrate depth of ideas, breadth, detailed content, expression and justification of opinions as well as originality and creativity. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that teachers should scrutinise word limits carefully to ensure they are conducive to maximising student achievement. If students complete more than one text production task, these should differ in context, purpose, and audience.

Teachers are strongly encouraged to supply students with context sheets that identify explicitly the context, purpose and audience, text type, and kind of writing required for any text production. If submitting actual recordings of speeches produced in the context of this task, including transcripts is essential, as the subject outline specifies this as a written task.

The high standard of the folios submitted and a number of addendums to existing assessment plans suggest that the majority of teachers continuously re-evaluate and strive to improve on their task design to enable their students to achieve at the highest possible level. Feedback on school assessment and support materials on the SACE Board website undoubtedly play an important part in facilitating improved practices.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

As in past years, there were many interesting research topics and excellent assessment tasks. The level of achievement against the performance standards was generally very high. Students who researched a topic about which they were passionate frequently excelled in one or more of the in-depth study tasks. Some historical topics, particularly relating to the Second World War, remained popular choices. However, some students opted for a more contemporary (and controversial) twist on these topics; for example, by comparing the persecution of homosexuals in a modern-day totalitarian regime to the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany. Another novel variation on the Germans in South Australia theme was a study that investigated the Lutheran missionaries Christian Teichelmann and Clamor

Schürmann, who ministered to the Kaurna in their own language in the mid-19th century.

Whilst student interest and motivation is a key factor in selecting topics, teacher advice is equally critical in guiding students to make sound and achievable choices. In 2013, the majority of topics were formulated to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate learning against all relevant performance standards and deal successfully with all three components of the in-depth study.

As a rule, topics with an 'angle' tend to be more suitable because they allow students enough scope to inform, analyse, persuade, and reflect. Topics such as '*A trip around Berlin*', '*Essen und Trinken*', or '*German Christmas markets*' can make it difficult for students to engage in targeted, substantive research, produce tasks that have variety — particularly in relation to purpose and context — and, subsequently, to reflect on insights gained. Furthermore, it must be emphasised that topics need to have an explicit connection to Germany as per the topics/subtopics identified within the prescribed themes of 'The German-speaking Communities', and 'The Changing World'. Teachers are strongly encouraged to refer to the revised list of suitable in-depth study topics, which can be found in the support materials section of the SACE Board website.

It is imperative that teachers assist students as early as possible in clearly defining the differences in purpose, context, and audience of each section of their study in order to avoid doubling up. It is strongly recommended that teachers use a context sheet that clearly identifies each task and its purpose, context and audience, text type, and kinds of writing. Teachers must also explicitly teach the textual features and linguistic structures that align with each text type.

Oral Presentation in German

The presentations were generally well practised and effectively delivered. In that audience engagement is more difficult to achieve when the content of a presentation is purely informational, most students opted for a persuasive speech and successfully presented their content in a lively, enthusiastic, and often impassioned manner. Most also tended to use a range of rhetorical devices effectively to engage their audience and create interest and the desired impact.

Written Response in German

Many students demonstrated a commendable level of competency in dealing with this task. They were able to present their information effectively and show their ability to write for different purposes using appropriate linguistic, rhetorical, and textual devices. It was evident that the more successful students had dedicated a considerable amount of thought and time to preparing this task. Most teachers had also clearly given excellent guidance and carefully considered the scope of the task to ensure students would be able to achieve sufficient depth and breadth.

Reflective Response in English

Overall, the reflections submitted were of a higher standard than in previous years. Nevertheless, it is important that teachers discuss with students explicitly the purpose and scope of the reflection in English and give students sufficient guidance to tackle this task successfully. Again, it cannot be emphasised enough how important it is that students are helped to select a topic that enables some reflection on cultures, values,

beliefs, practices, and ideas represented in texts and in relation to the students' own values, beliefs, practices, and ideas. Annotated examples can be found on the SACE Board website and should be used by teachers and students to ensure that the requirements of this task are fully understood.

Assessment Type 3: Examination

In total, 100 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 (for example, persuasive) and text types (such as formal letters to the editor, articles, speeches) over the course of their study.

Oral Examination

Section 1: Conversation

Most students were adequately prepared and able to speak well and engage with interest about topics such as family, hobbies, school life, and future plans. The relevance, depth of information, opinions, and comments depended largely on the student's level of proficiency in German. 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. It was good to see that this year there was large group of students who achieved full marks for this section of the oral examination.

Less successful students answered very superficially. Students are advised to consider carefully what they want to tell examiners about themselves and their families. It may be helpful to highlight something interesting and specific about themselves rather than just list the names of family members or friends. Students should be prepared for general opening questions such as '*Erzähl uns doch etwas über dich*'.

The standard of students' ability to maintain conversation varied a great deal. 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.

Most students responded to questions with relevant information; however, answers were often superficial. The importance of preparing students so that they have the ability to elaborate on an answer where possible must be emphasised. At the very latest, teachers should start this process at the beginning of the year: using the list of sample questions for regular class practice and encouraging students to revisit and build on practised structures in their own time. When students offer information they need to give detail, back up their statements, and explain their opinions.

Even though students in general communicated quite well, overall the attention to detail and grammatical correctness could be improved. In particular, the use of impersonal pronouns needs to be practised and the use of the perfect tense should be revised. At Stage 2 level it is expected that students will be familiar with basic

German grammar and able to converse in correct German; for example, the conjugation of *'haben'* should be internalised.

However, it was pleasing to see that the more able students showed remarkable ease with vocabulary, structure, and sequence and grammar.

Section 2: Discussion

In that students had the opportunity to prepare and work with the required vocabulary and content, they should handle the discussion confidently and competently. Many 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 only able to handle the discussion at a superficial level, and without enough relevant vocabulary to express their ideas effectively.

It must be emphasised again that topic choice is vital and the teacher must offer guidance and direction when the student selects the topic, texts, and assessment tasks. Teachers should encourage a broader approach to research and topics as well as depth of study and understanding. It is essential that topics relate to the prescribed themes.

Some topics can be too broad which results in only superficial treatment; for example, *Food and drink in Germany*, *Festivals in Germany and Australia*, *the Second World War* are too limiting in terms of interpretation and reflection.

Some students chose very interesting and original topics and were able to present ideas and opinions very competently. These included the *History of the German cinema*, *Work of German Christian missionaries in SA with regard to the revival of the Kaurna language*, *The growth of Neo-Nazism in Germany*, *Angela Merkel*, *Julia Gillard: Women in power*.

It was very pleasing to see many students well prepared for the discussion and able to talk about their topic passionately and at length. 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 could not show real interest and lacked the ability to comment independently or with opinion and reflection. Ideas presented were more often than not superficial and factual, lacking critical analysis and reflection.

Overall, most students were reasonably well prepared. However, some students appeared over prepared, with set answers and not always able to cope with more probing questions. Other students showed evidence of only hurried preparation.

Written Examination

Section 1: Listening and Responding

Text 1

Question 1

- (a) Most students were able to correctly identify relevant information from the text. A number of students misunderstood *'modisch'* as meaning modern. Frequently,

students mentioned having to upgrade phones as a disadvantage of mobile phones, which was not actually mentioned in the text.

- (b) Comparatively few students realised that the environmental feature was the solar cells on the back of the phone. As in the previous answer, many students presented prior knowledge about mobile phones or talked about how phones used less energy, points which were not made in the text.

Text 2

Question 2

- (a) Many students did not understand that this text advertised winter hiking in the regions of Bavaria and the Black Forest and based their answers on the idea that the text advertised either a specific holiday resort, youth hostel, or hotel. Very few students were able to identify the purpose of the text correctly and identify two examples of a possible audience.

Most students were able to provide at least one example for a possible audience and recognised the text as an advertisement. Almost all students were able to identify at least some relevant information although they didn't understand the entire context; for example, although they thought it was advertising a holiday stay at a specific hotel, they realised it was also talking about the benefits of hiking in winter.

- (b) Very few students were able to correctly identify more than two techniques and support them with examples from the text. Common answers involved recalling information and translation of certain words and phrases and making a general statement that their quoted words made the place being advertised more attractive. Most students understood about using emotive words and positive adjectives to catch the listener's attention and realised that the cheap price would help persuade listeners, but very few students recognised rhetorical questions and even fewer the use of alliteration. Another common answer was that the text appealed directly to the listener, but very few students were able to articulate that this technique involved using imperatives.

This question presented the most challenges to students in the Listening and Responding section of the exam.

Text 3

Question 3

- (a) Text 3 was the text that almost all students understood the best. Students were mostly successful at giving their impression of Claudia Richter and supporting it with evidence from the text. Most students understood what the text was about, but simply focused on just one aspect of her personality.
- (b) Most students were able to say whether they thought Claudia Richter had achieved her objective and give supporting evidence. Only very few students didn't provide enough evidence or did too much recalling of the text instead of answering the question.

Text 3 generated the most comprehensive answers and was generally the best understood text.

Text 4

Question 4

- (a) Most students realised that this text was a radio announcement/advertisement to promote an event, but the details provided by students varied considerably. Students were mostly able to demonstrate that they understood the purpose of the text and give at least one suggestion of who might be interested in the exhibition. Common answers suggested how people who had nothing planned for the weekend, people with an interest in VW cars, or the Italian '*Gastarbeiter*' would be interested in attending this event.
- (b) Students generally were able to answer the question and provided some relevant evidence from the text. Most students were able to recognise the cultural impact that the guest Italian workers had on Wolfsburg. Unfortunately a number of students chose to focus exclusively on this point, recalling information from the text, but forgetting to link it back to the question. Students mostly understood the concept of '*Gastarbeiter*', but there were a few students who simply described them as Italians who came to Germany to work.

Section 2: Reading and Responding

Part A

Text 5

Question 5

- (a) This question was by far the best handled task of the written exam. The text about the *Turbo-Abi* offered familiar vocabulary and ideas and most students could explain what issues the blog was discussing. Students recognised that Martina was getting more and more stressed and that her attitude towards the *Turbo-Abi* changed drastically. However, many students still struggled with analysis of language in texts. In this case, students commented on Martina's use of colloquial language but did not specifically mention the many rhetorical questions, exclamations, and exclamation marks as well as the use of short sentences.
- (b) Many students could identify the change in attitude in Martina and described it as getting progressively more stressed, but only some students recognised the three stages: that initially she is rather positive about the *Turbo-Abi*, but then reality sets in as she is pressured by the workload and expectations of people around her. The last stage is one of disillusionment, because she worked so hard but it still appears not to be enough.
- Very few students looked at the whole text and commented on the decreasing number of words per entry or on the time when those entries were made.
- (c) Most students could explain the meaning of the quote, that Martina was a guinea pig and that the *Turbo-Abi* was an experiment. There were some interesting translations for the term '*Versuchskaninchen*' like 'trying-rabbits', but generally the concept was understood.

Text 6

Question 6

- (a) This question presented some challenges to students and it was certainly more difficult in terms of vocabulary than Question 5. Many students did not look carefully at the title and first sentence to understand who Generation Y were and confused them with Generation X. However, the more successful answers explained clearly that Generation Y do not place great value on money and prestige in contrast with their parents, Generation X, who pursued great careers, increasing the wealth that they had inherited.

A number of students read the questions as asking for their opinion of Generation Y, instead of characterising them in the context of the text. Prior knowledge of Generation Y's traits — for example lazy, spoilt, and greedy — did not help students to answer the question. Rather, it prevented them from reading and interpreting the text correctly.

- (b) Many students clearly understood the quote but had problems using the text to support their statements. Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the text describe what this quote means for Generation Y but many students ignored paragraph 3. Generation Y wants a meaningful life: a good work–life balance, they want to work autonomously, flexibly, and have good relationships with colleagues. They are interested in personal development and because they have experienced that everything is possible but can change in an instant, they want to have everything at once.
- (c) The answer to this question depended on the understanding of the expression '*negative Geburtsraten*', which unfortunately many students did not understand. Due to declining birth rates in the past 20 years in Germany, there is not a lot of competition for Generation Y and so it is likely that they will be able to have it all.

Section 2: Reading and Responding

Part B

Most students coped well with this task; in fact, this was the best-handled section of the writing in German tasks. Whether travel outside of Australia was worthwhile generated many interesting responses and many students had very definite opinions about this topic. The better responses clearly identified the context, text type, and audience and the vocabulary and structures required were generally within students' competence. Excellent persuasive speeches included: addressing the opponent, speaking directly to the audience, using rhetorical questions, using the imperative appropriately and convincingly, and the occasional use of humour. Many solid arguments were presented for travelling, offering suggestions of what the rest of the world had to offer and giving advice, with students using their own travel experiences as an example. Less successful texts just regurgitated what was presented in the text with no elaboration or comment, nor did these texts express a clear opinion or address the key points.

The better speeches employed a variety of idiomatic expressions, interesting vocabulary and structures, a range of cohesive devices and presented their ideas in a clear and logical way with the purpose of engaging the audience. The less successful texts struggled to extend beyond the vocabulary given in the text. They used short and simple sentences with only basic cohesive devices. Accuracy overall

was rather varied, but a familiar list of frequent grammar errors was apparent: subject–verb agreement, prepositions and cases, word order in subordinate clauses, use of modal verbs, correct use of imperative (particularly in the plural), and the impersonal pronoun *man/für einen/von einem*. There was no consistency in the use of polite or familiar form when addressing the audience. Expressions like *‘meiner Meinung nach’* and *‘du hast Recht’* should be used correctly by Stage 2 students in that all their writing has been assessed regarding how they are able to express their opinions. Overall, it is rather disappointing to see so many errors in what is the culmination of five years or more of language study.

Section 3: Writing in German

The last section of the written exam is always rather taxing for students but most were able to achieve the prescribed word limit. While relevance was not generally a problem, the ability to provide detail, create interest, and engage the audience were. Due to an apparent lack of vocabulary, many students opted to list one thing after another in order to emphasise a point, rather than elaborating and working towards a climax or main point of the narrative. The more successful texts used a range of vocabulary and expressions with good command of the more sophisticated areas of grammar. Some students seemed to be familiar with relative clauses, infinitive clause, indirect questions, and even passive and subjunctive mood. It was rather pleasing to see that most students used paragraphs and tried to structure their texts clearly.

Question 8

The text type for this question involved producing a story, a narrative, or some creative writing. Answers to this section provided some of the most successful responses as well as the least successful. Some students started strongly but couldn't keep up the momentum and their texts became rather bland. The best texts built up to a climax, and had the structure of a professional short story. Some of the writing was very detailed and included descriptions of emotions and atmosphere, while other texts simply listed events without elaboration. Relevance or probability were often sacrificed in making the writing piece extreme or wild to emphasise disappointment, excitement etc.

This question was the second most popular choice in this section.

Question 9

This text type was a letter that involved informative, descriptive, and emotive writing. This was the most popular choice in this section, possibly because many students were familiar with the text type. However, it was important for students to remember to engage the audience and to give detail, elaborate on and describe ideas, thoughts and emotions. Teachers should also remind students that conflict (including internal conflict), contrast, and an aspect that keeps the reader guessing (suspense) helps to make the response more interesting. The best responses were the ones that gave a coherent account of student's own experiences.

Question 10

This text type was a report, or informative, evaluative writing. Only a small number of students chose this question and the quality of responses with very few exceptions was very high. Students used correct terminology and their grammar was generally

sophisticated and free of major errors. The responses were well structured and adopted the correct tone for the specified audience.

Overall, students demonstrated good skills in observing conventions of text type and the stylistic features of narrative, descriptive, evaluative, and informative writing. Unfortunately, the level of accuracy overall was rather variable. Many students did not use the appropriate tense in responding to Questions 8 or 10 (imperfect). The same sort of errors that were mentioned in the Section 3 Reading and Responding Part B were in evidence in this section. Students and teachers are advised to start the practice of writing in German as early as possible with attention to the requirements of the various text types and kinds of writing.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Teachers are asked to ensure that assessment pieces submitted in an electronic format (interaction and oral presentation) are of the best possible quality. They should also personally check CDs/DVDs before packing them.

Since a significant number of schools each year opt to combine for moderation purposes, it is timely advice to urge teachers to have early and detailed discussions relating to task design and to engage in regular, frank, and rigorous benchmarking activities along the way to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Teachers are encouraged to attend personal development opportunities and, in particular, clarifying forums, which present invaluable opportunities to ask questions, gain new insights, and network with other German teachers.

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