

German (continuers)

2016 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## 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

The overall standard of folios was consistent with that of previous years. Generally, four or five folio tasks were submitted. Most teachers also attached highlighted performance standards, which assisted the moderators in identifying evidence against the standards when reviewing the student work.

Three different types of assessments (interaction, text production, and text analysis) needed to be undertaken at least once each for the folio. Each type is discussed separately below.

**Interaction**

Overall, the standard of the oral interactions has improved.

**The more successful interactions**

* encompassed a range of topics
* featured student responses that were spontaneous and dealt with topic shifts and unpredicted elements confidently
* allowed students to provide a range of information in response to open-ended questions
* featured questions that allowed students to elaborate on, reflect on, argue a point about, and substantiate their opinions in response to the interlocutor.

**The less successful interactions**

* were limited to discussions solely on aspects pertaining to ‘The Individual’ theme, i.e. the student’s personal world.
* featured formulaic, often single-sentence, answers
* were marred by pauses and difficulty elaborating on simple questions
* relied on the interlocutor to take the lead.

**General information for the interaction**

Although thorough preparation and practice is vital, overly rehearsed oral interactions can potentially limit student achievement against some of the performance standards. While students may be provided with a range of set questions for their preparation, these should not be practised exclusively and verbatim. It is recommended to schedule frequent and regular conversation practices, which gradually increase in complexity and challenge, and thereby build the students’ confidence and linguistic proficiency over time.

**Text Production**

**The more successful responses**

* demonstrated depth and breadth of ideas, detailed content, expression, and justification of opinions, as well as originality and creativity
* evidenced that students had a clear understanding of the context, purpose and audience, text type, and kind of writing required for the particular text-production task
* used a range of structures, vocabulary, and connective devices in their writing, such as relative clauses, passive voice, subjunctive, and, where appropriate, idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and similes
* reflected student engagement and enjoyment, being based around topics of student interest or current issues, or provided ample scope for creative interpretation.

**The less successful responses**

* treated the topic superficially
* were often too brief to achieve sufficient depth and breadth
* featured simplistic, repetitive structures or expression, and basic errors
* consisted of several brief diary entries (often in response to a longer text, such as a film, story, or novel) that were either not at all or only loosely thematically connected.

**Text Analysis**

**The more successful responses**

* demonstrated a thorough understanding of text types and metalanguage, which allowed students to interpret meaning and draw conclusions about the purpose, style, and language of a text or texts effectively
* featured comprehensive and succinct analysis of content and textual features
* substantiated conclusions with detailed, pertinent examples
* were in response to a range of texts (three or four) on topics of contemporary relevance that provided scope for questions addressing all relevant components of specific features IR1, IR2, and IR3.

**The less successful responses**

* were general rather than specific
* consisted of either brief, superficial answers or verbose, repetitive, superficial answers with only limited information or relevance to the question
* provided limited, if any, examples to substantiate an opinion or conclusion
* evidenced only limited understanding of text types, features of language, and subtext.

**General information for the text analysis**

Besides straightforward comprehension questions, it is essential to include questions that require reflection on and interpretation of content and textual features. A matrix may assist in ensuring that questions cover all aspects of the interpretation and reflection specific features.

Questions that ask students to comment on or reflect on personal experiences associated with the topic of the stimulus text are not ‘text analysis’ questions, hence they are to be avoided. The translation of a text also does not constitute a text analysis.

Teachers are encouraged to explicitly correlate student achievement with the performance standards, not numerical grades.

**General information for Assessment Type 1: Folio**

The critical importance of good-quality assessment task sheets in facilitating and optimising student achievement must be emphasised. Students performed more successfully when they were able to reference their work against an assessment task sheet that explicitly stated the purpose, context, audience, text type, and kind of writing that was required. Assessment task sheets should be submitted with the moderation samples. They should also clearly state the required word-limits and assessment conditions, which need to match those identified in the learning assessment plan (LAP) or the addendum.

It is essential that word-limits are conducive to maximising student achievement. If students complete more than one text production, these must differ in context, purpose, and audience.

Assessment conditions must be conducive to students being able to maximise their achievement; consequently it is vital that:

* timeframes and word-limits are appropriate
* task design allows for differentiation
* assessment task sheets are specific and detailed.

It is important to:

* critically review and update tasks and context sheets on a yearly basis to ensure that they reflect the most effective practice
* ensure that, in any documentation provided to students, the assessment design criteria match the assessment type.

All student work must be assessed against the performance standards, rather than aggregating a numerical grade.

Moderators noted the following points in relation to the folio:

* it was helpful when teachers provided an individual cover sheet for each student, which listed each assessment task and the grade awarded
* the submission of marked student work assisted the moderation process by providing identifiers of evidence justifying the teacher’s assessment decision
* it was helpful when teachers provided copies/transcripts of all texts used for text analysis tasks.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

The in-depth study comprises three assessment tasks: an oral presentation in German, a written response in German, and a reflective response in English.

There were many interesting and engaging topics and very successful assessment tasks. The level of achievement was generally very high.

**The more successful responses**

* consisted of topics that students clearly felt passionate about
* had contemporary relevance and/or a degree of controversy, which allowed students to dig deeper and inform, analyse, persuade and reflect, convey concepts, and explain different perspectives
* featured a clear differentiation in terms of purpose, context, and audience between the oral presentation and the written response
* featured an oral presentation that was delivered in a lively, fluent manner and conveyed enthusiasm and interest in the topic.
* featured an oral presentation that was highly effective in engaging the audience by varying the content, expression and tone
* featured a written response that was effectively prepared and carefully edited to ensure that the final product achieved depth and breadth
* ensured that both the oral presentation and the written response demonstrated a high level of formal accuracy and incorporated an extensive range of linguistic structures and expressions
* ensured that the reflection addressed all aspects of the IR3 specific feature
* made some reference, or drew comparisons, or forged links to pertinent contemporary matters or issues
* featured a set of tasks that were all completed in a succinct and effective manner, making best possible use of the available word-limits or time-limits.

**The less successful responses**

* were often largely identical in terms of purpose (and often context and audience), and merely informational, e.g. when a German artist was chosen as a topic, gave a speech focusing on biographical details and chronicled his/her work in the written task.
* did not use textual features associated with different text types effectively
* were responses to topics that did not allow for genuine reflection on any aspect of IR3
* contained very limited, if any, reflection on cultures, values, beliefs, practices, and ideas
* focused primarily on the research process, not the impact of the research on self and others.

**General information**

While student interest and motivation is a key aspect in selecting a topic for the in‑depth study, teacher advice is critical in guiding students to make sound and achievable choices that allow them to optimise their achievement against the performance standards. Teachers are encouraged to consult the support materials on the SACE website and attend clarifying forums to ensure the most effective practice.

Topics of contemporary relevance were popular and successfully approached from a number of angles. They ranged from Germany’s migration history, including the German response to and complexities associated with the current refugee crisis, to environmental issues, including Germany’s transition from nuclear and fossil fuels to renewable energies, to historical topics, especially those associated with the Second World War and German reunification. Some students managed to combine several of their interests into suitable topics, for example, ‘Jazz and cabaret in Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s’. However, some topics, such as food topics which explored the history, regional differences, and recipes of traditional German dietary staples, inevitably limited the scope for students to analyse and reflect critically on values, beliefs, ideas, their own learning, and how insights gained through their research may have changed their perspective and may inform future attitudes and actions.

Topics need to have an explicit connection to a German-speaking community. It is imperative that teachers assist their students in clearly defining, as early as possible, the differences in purpose, context, and audience of each task of their in-depth study in order to avoid the cross-over of information, ideas, and opinions on the topic.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

The examination consists of two assessments: an oral examination and a written examination. The majority of the 77 students who completed the examination were generally well prepared for both the oral and written examinations.

Oral Examination

The oral examination of 10–15 minutes comprises a general conversation and a discussion of the student’s in-depth study. In the conversation, students converse with the examiners about their personal world.

**Section 1: Conversation**

**The more successful responses**

* demonstrated an ability to speak well and engage with interest about such topics as family, hobbies, school life, plans, and exchange experiences
* provided depth of treatment of information, opinions, and ideas, and supported their responses with detailed explanations
* were able to take the initiative in the conversation
* demonstrated preparedness to discuss a wide range of topics, thus handling unpredictable and spontaneous topic shifts well.

**The less successful responses**

* lacked detail and depth when responding to the questions by the examiners, often needing to be prompted or encouraged to add more detail in support of their response
* relied on basic linguistic structures
* often paused for long periods of time to search for linguistic resources and/or to comprehend the question being asked.

**Section 2: Discussion**

It was noted that students in general were not as well prepared for this section of the examination as in previous years. A number of students did not use the in-depth study outline form effectively or at all. Teachers should encourage students to complete the in-depth study outline form to assist the flow of discussion between the students and the examiners.

There were some interesting topics chosen: refugees in Germany was a popular choice, and many historical topics were well presented. The more traditional topics about the Third Reich worked well when a particular angle was taken, e.g. the impact of Hitler on childhood. Topics about a person or place are usually not suitable to show great depth and reflection unless there is some controversy or there is an ‘edge’ to the topic, e.g. Leni Riefenstahl, who was closely connected to Hitler, but who claimed all her life not to have been a Nazi supporter.

**The more successful responses**

* had a clear focus on the German-speaking communities
* compared and/or contrasted their own values, beliefs, opinions, and perspectives with those presented on the topic/issue of the in-depth study
* discussed their topic in detail, gave opinions, and, where appropriate, compared their findings within an Australian context
* used topic-specific vocabulary.

**The less successful responses**

* focused on topics or issues that did not genuinely lend themselves to critical reflection of own and others’ values, beliefs, opinions, and perspectives
* lacked depth and breadth
* did not demonstrate the capacity to support or explain opinions
* relied on a limited range of vocabulary and language structures to convey meaning.

**General information for the oral examination**

Vocabulary and expressions regarding *Meinungsäuβerung* should be acquired and practised throughout Stage 1 and Stage 2 in preparation for the oral examination. Students are best prepared when they have had frequent opportunities to practise giving reasons, making comparisons, and offering opinions, as well as elaborating and expanding on initial statements.

Attention to detail and grammatical correctness is encouraged. By the end of Stage 2, it is expected that students are familiar with and able to do the following:

* conjugate *haben* and *sein*
* use impersonal pronouns
* use perfect tense correctly
* apply the correct tenses and verb forms
* use the correct word order
* apply the correct cases.

Students and teachers are reminded that the conventions of the oral examination demand the use of *polite form* when addressing the examiners.

Depth of treatment of ideas, information, and opinions is a key area for improvement. Discussion needs to be practised frequently and teachers need to ask ‘why?’ more often to facilitate opportunities for students to explain and show that they have reflected on and drawn their own conclusions about something. The language used to express opinion and make comparisons is also something that should be practised.

Written Examination

As general advice for students and teachers, it needs to be stressed here that in responses where evidence from the text is asked for, students should quote directly from the text and provide translations. A quotation in German alone is not enough to demonstrate understanding.

**Section 1: Listening and Responding**

There were four texts in German. For all texts, the questions and answers were in English.

*Question 1*

(a) The more successful responses identified the purpose of the text as advertising the new exhibition in the Currywurst museum.

 The less successful responses confused the numbers 67 and 76 and identified the purpose as a birthday celebration of the Currywurst.

(b) The more successful responses identified the reasons why the Currywurst was celebrated as a cultural icon.

 The less successful responses did not clearly understand the term ‘cultural icon’ and did not identify enough reasons.

*Question 2*

(a) The more successful responses explained that Peter was frustrated because his mother kept nagging him. They understood that he wanted to be left in peace so that he could finish his homework and justified their response with evidence from the text.

 The less successful answers identified only that Peter was annoyed, but did not explain in any detail why he was annoyed.

(b) The more successful responses explained that Lena’s phone call was the reason for the change in attitude, and evidence was given for how Peter’s language and tone changed through the text. Supporting evidence provided included:

* initially *ja, ja*, showing impatience; *Mensch nerv mich nicht’* (‘don’t annoy me’), being rude
* then *Liebste Mama, wäre es …* (‘Darling Mum, would you please …’), all of a sudden being exceedingly polite, manipulating his mother to do what he wants; he uses *bitte* a few times.

 The less successful responses did not explain or provide supporting evidence for the change in language and tone. A large number of students interpreted Peter’s tone as sarcastic when he calls his mother *Schatz*, rather than him being manipulative.

*Question 3*

(a) The more successful responses clearly stated the purpose and context of the radio program. The word *Nachhaltigkeit* was often misinterpreted and was an essential part of the answer.

(b) The more successful responses explained the change in attitude towards wood as a construction material in detail, outlining that:

* wood is environmentally friendly, renewable, recyclable, and very energy efficient
* houses constructed from wood emit 10% less greenhouse gases compared with houses made from concrete and steel
* wood is a healthy alternative for people with allergies; it has many positive features and creates a pleasant living environment.

 The less successful responses interpreted the question as asking about the host’s change in attitude, not the public’s. Many said that wood was not an ideal material, yet went on to list the positives. Some included facts that were not mentioned in the text.

*Question 4*

On the whole, this question was well understood. Many students provided ample detailed evidence for why Frau Müller was or was not going to get the job, including:

 For:

* has relevant skills and some experience
* has excellent communication skills
* speaks English and French, and is learning Japanese
* has travelled extensively in Europe
* is calm when faced with difficult customers.

 Against:

* is not flexible — can only work regular office hours, with the occasional Saturday until lunchtime
* can not start next month, as she will be on holidays
* has never worked in a travel agency before.

**Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A**

For both texts, questions and answers were in English.

*Question 5*

This question produced the highest number of successful responses for all sections of the examination. The responses provide for this question were very detailed.

(a) Almost all responses successfully identified the reason why Khalil was invited to dinner.

(b) The more successful responses explained that the author certainly sympathises with Khalil, admires his courage and moral stance, and is impressed that he speaks almost fluent German after such a short time. He is an inspiring role model who is involved in many organisations helping other refugees adjust to their new life in Germany. The visit is inspiring and hopefully the beginning of a new friendship.

(c) The more successful responses gave at least three reasons why the author says that the initiative is a great chance to practise a welcoming culture.

 The less successful responses lacked any detailed evidence from the text. There also seemed to be a misunderstanding by some of the word ‘prompt’ used in the question.

*Question 6*

This text was slightly more challenging for many students because of some of the complex vocabulary, e.g. *Steuerflucht*, *Steuervermeidung*, *Mindestlöhne*.

(a) The issue discussed in the text is the increasing gap between the rich and the poor.

 The less successful responses identified poverty and saw it only as a German problem, not an international one as the title of the text indicated. Some responses saw the issue as a purely economic one arising from the recent refugee crisis in Europe.

(b) There were many successful responses for this question that identified three main ideas:

* international collaboration to combat poverty, including the introduction of minimum wages
* tax systems needing to be revolutionised
* better social services for all.

(c) This was a challenging question, as students were asked to identify the strategies, in terms of language and style, that the author uses to achieve his/her aim.

 The more successful responses recognised persuasive techniques and provided examples of these. They identified that the text achieves its purpose as a ‘call to action’, an appeal to the reader, and inspiration for the reader to tackle the complex issue discussed.

 The less successful responses failed to identify and support with evidence the strategies used by the author of the text to achieve its purpose.

**General advice**

Teachers are encouraged to explicitly teach analysis of language in texts, such as:

* strategies:
* use of statistics
* hyperbole, expressing the magnitude of the issue
* rhetorical questioning
* direct appeal to the reader
* repetition of ideas to ‘drum the message home’
* language and style:
* persuasive language
* use of modal verbs, e.g. ‘must’
* inclusive language (personal pronoun ‘we’).

**Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B**

This question required a response in German.

*Question 7*

Students identified with this topic and were able to respond in very relevant ways. The majority of students chose to write as a student currently completing secondary studies. Some students wrote from the perspective of a young adult who had recently completed schooling while others chose to write from the perspective of a parent with students who had done or were doing their final years of schooling. Some students made comparisons between Australia and Germany. Some wrote as a student in Germany, others as a student in Australia. All perspectives provided a basis for success.

**The more successful responses**

* were well planned and included a variety of breadth and depth in response to the text
* were consistent in their approach, with logical progression of ideas
* provided depth and breadth with appropriate detail and elaboration, often through narration of personal experience
* used a range of complex and sophisticated language structures and vocabulary
* observed all the conventions and details of the text type, including a confident opening, logical progression of ideas, and detailed advice to conclude
* were able to express opinions using the correct expressions, e.g *Meiner Meinung nach …* (‘in my opinion …’)or *Ich bin der Meinung, dass …* (‘I am of the opinion that …’)
* addressed most or all of the following:

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| **Reasons for Stress** |
| Demands of high school  | Most agreed that there was too much pressure to do assignments and homework, and prepare for exams. Some students were very philosophical about it only being a few months of one’s life and it was worth making it the focus if a young person had a goal for further study.  |
| Parental expectations | Variety of responses about parents who are supportive or demanding.Often students mentioned that the pressure was self-inflicted because they did not want to disappoint their parents. |
| Peer pressure | Very few students saw this as a negative issue. |
| Sport and hobbies | The majority of responses expressed that sport and hobbies did not add to the stress and were essential for a healthy balance. |
| Social networking | Some students advocated for no social networking — some by choice, some by parental recommendation.Many students felt that there was unnecessary stress as a result of social networking because it generally focused on issues not related to study.Most responses commented that young people are too reliant upon mobile phones and social media. |

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| --- |
| **Possible ways to support a better school–life balance** |
| Eating healthilyExercising regularlyMaintaining good sleeping habitsCombining exercise with studyParticipating in sport, music, and/or hobbies, but making choices about what is conducive to a balance with studyNurturing a supportive group of friendsTalking regularly and honestly with parents about the stressSpending quality time with family and friends, if not quantityUnderstanding that the social sacrifices are only for one yearProviding mutual encouragement among peersGiving more subject choice to students, i.e. no compulsory subjectsRecommending to parents to be more relaxed and understanding of the stressNeeding to undertake activities that involved fun |

**The less successful responses**

* did not use the formal *Sie* or a mixture of *Sie* and *Du* throughout the text
* made errors even when using vocabulary and expressions from the text; in particular, the word *Artikel* was often misspelt and even more frequently given the wrong definite article or used with incorrect case, e.g. *… habe ich dein Artikel*, *ich habe ihre Artikal*, *ich habe deine Artikel*, *mit dieses Artikel*
* demonstrated difficulty in clearly and accurately expressing ideas, information, and opinions
* experienced difficulty with the following grammatical elements:
* word order, through direct translation from English, e.g. *wann ich war eine kleine Kinder*
* use of pronouns, in particular the use of the impersonal pronoun *man*
* capitalisation for nouns, as well as correct gender of nouns
* subject–verb agreement
* correct use of tenses
* adjective endings and use of case ending in general, e.g. dative after certain prepositions
* separable verbs
* demonstrated confusion of the expressions for *Meinungäußerung*; students should know several ways of expressing ‘I agree with you’, ‘I agree with you on some/most points’, *Ich stimme Ihnen zu*, *Ich stimme mit Ihnen überein*, *Ich teile Ihre Meinung*, *Ich stimme Ihnen zum Teil/in einigen Punkten zu.*

**Section 3: Writing in German**

Three questions were available for the students to choose from. Question 9 was the most popular question, answered by half of the students. A third of the students selected Question 8, and the remainder opted for Question 10.

Achievement levels across all questions were relatively even. Most students were able to produce a solid response.

*Question 8*

This question elicited some very passionate, eloquent, pertinent, and highly persuasive student responses. Students described their personal experiences and presented many valid arguments, including that music is all around us every day as a vital part of everybody’s life.

The task required students to write a blog entry to persuade readers of the importance of music in everyone’s life. Students needed to show an awareness of an audience and to discuss the role of music in other people’s lives and not write simply about their own experience or love of music. Many found interesting and ingenious ways of arguing the importance of music for themselves and other people: *Mittagessen ist das Essen für mein Körper aber Musik ist das Essen für unser Geist*.

**The more successful responses**

* commented on music being a universal language that brings people together, e.g. meeting people when playing or listening to music together, feeling happy and connected when singing carols together at community events
* suggested that music was a medium to gain a deeper understanding of the world and one with the potential of bringing about change; music was perceived as a window into other cultures, as well as a medium that can bring cultures together; some also described the music of different eras as a window into history
* argued that music can be purely entertainment, but is also an effective vehicle for social and political commentary
* mentioned that there is a genre for everyone, every occasion, and every celebration
* indicated that music can help one study, relax, and learn better, while upbeat music at the gym enhances physical exercise
* mentioned that music is a powerful form of expressing oneself and creating shared experiences with others.

*Question 9*

**The more successful responses**

* discussed both aspects of the question: the need to recycle and repair. While students tended to favour one or the other aspect in terms of how much they wrote about each, addressing both was an important prerequisite to achieving better results
* reflected on what could be done on an individual, local, and global level, and gave some pertinent examples, such as:
* recycling and repairing clothing and electronic devices
* the concept of *Pfandflaschen*
* the emergence of ‘slow fashion’
* the throwaway society is probably one of the largest contributors to environmental destruction.

**The less successful responses**

* focused on the environment in general terms, perhaps reproducing something they had written during the year
* did not discuss *Reparieren* at all; others interpreted the word metaphorically, often in a single sentence at the end of the essay: that recycling is helping to repair the planet.

*Question 10*

The quality of responses to this question varied. There were a number of excellent responses that featured the given exclamation as an integral and logical anchor, and adhered to the structure of a story, i.e. introduction, main part, and denouement. In some student work, the given exclamation was but a random adjunct with little or no relevance.

**The more successful responses**

* used the imperfect tense fairly consistently and accurately.

**General advice for Section 3: Writing in German**

**The more successful responses**

* were from students who had taken the time to plan their response by drawing a mind map or making a list of key aspects or words and phrases
* produced sophisticated writing that used a range of syntax, connective devices, and metalanguage.

**The less successful responses**

* featured simple sentences with only the most basic connective devices, i.e. *und*, *aber*, and *dass*.

General Comments

It is recommended that syntax be practised systematically and particular attention be given to the position of verbs. The appropriate use of tenses and subject–verb agreement are further areas for teachers to emphasise and for students to focus on in their proofreading.

Students are encouraged to practise and use structures learnt in class to get meaning across, rather than resort to word-for-word translations from English when writing in German.

Teachers should also remind students of the importance of adhering to the features of text type, e.g. stories are written in the imperfect tense and need a title; a speech or a school newspaper article should not address the audience directly with *Liebe* *Mitschüler*; and so on.

Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades should be evident on all student school assessed work.

Teachers are asked to check the quality of assessment pieces submitted on a CD, DVD, or USB drive to ensure that the material can be accessed. Please refer to the information about submission of electronic files available on the SACE website. Oral interactions and oral presentations may be submitted on a single disc or USB drive for each student, or on one disc or USB drive for the class as a whole. Individual students must be identifiable.

Teachers of combined assessment groups are urged to have timely, detailed, and considered discussions relating to assessment so as to ensure consistent interpretation of performance standards. While tasks do not necessarily need to be identical, it is good practice to engage in benchmarking discussions.

Clarifying forums held annually are an invaluable opportunity to ask questions, gain new insights and ideas, and network with other German teachers.

German (continuers)

Chief Assessor