2021 German Continuers Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2021 assessment cycle, gives 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, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

This component is worth 50% of the school assessed grade. Students complete between 3- 5 responses, comprising an Interaction, Text Analysis and Text Production tasks.

Students demonstrate their ability to communicate their ideas effectively when speaking and writing in German. They demonstrate depth and breadth in their responses by elaborating, expressing opinions, arguing a position, and substantiating their argumentation. They analyse text for content and textual features, interpret and draw conclusions about ideas and perspectives expressed in texts and regarding a text’s purpose, context, and audience.

Interaction

Questions should be succinct and open-ended to allow students to maximize their contributions. Over-rehearsed responses, where questions have clearly been practised exclusively and verbatim, may potentially not allow students to achieve at the highest level against some of the Performance Standards, so it is essential to build in scope for spontaneity.

The more successful responses commonly:

* flowed naturally
* encompassed a range of topics
* demonstrated student responses that were quick, fluent and dealt with topic shifts and unpredicted elements confidently
* showed that students were engaged: responses were spontaneous, passionate, humorous
* featured questions that allowed students to ‘go deeper’ and elaborate, reflect, argue a point and substantiate their opinions
* demonstrated high levels of authenticity by using idiomatic language, modal particles, and interjections.

The less successful responses commonly:

* limited discussions solely on aspects pertaining to ‘The Individual’ theme (i.e. the student’s personal world OR: were based on a single topic chosen from one of the other themes)
* lacked challenging, probing questions, which limited the scope for students to demonstrate their ability to reflect, substantiate and argue a point
* featured formulaic, often single-sentence, answers
* relied on pre-prepared (often overly rehearsed) responses rather than spontaneous discussion
* exhibited frequent pauses and difficulty elaborating on or even responding appropriately to simple questions
* relied on the interlocutor to take the lead
* demonstrated a limited range of vocabulary
* were marred by basic grammatical errors particularly with tenses and verb endings
* displayed frequent syntactical inaccuracies.

Text Production

Context and task design are essential in facilitating and optimizing student achievement as they allow students to reference their work against the explicit purpose, context, audience, text type and kind of writing that is required. It is equally critical that word limits are conducive to maximizing student achievement. If students complete more than one text production, these must differ in context, purpose and audience.

The more successful responses commonly:

* were comprehensively planned, as evidenced in the depth and breadth of ideas and detailed content
* demonstrated a clear understanding of the context, purpose and audience, text type, and kind of writing required for the task
* were cohesive and logically structured
* used a range of sophisticated structures, vocabulary, and connective devices in their writing, such as relative clauses, passive voice, subjunctives, and, where appropriate, idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and similes
* reflected student engagement, by using a topic of student interest or a current issue, or a task which provided scope for imaginative, creative interpretation
* were presented with tasks that stipulated a range of ideas, arguments, and/or opinions that required exploration and in-depth knowledge.

The less successful responses commonly:

* treated the topic superficially
* were often too brief to achieve sufficient depth and breadth
* lacked cohesion
* 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 and limited the scope for achieving a level of breadth and depth.

Text Analysis

Beyond questions focussing on content, it is essential to include questions, which require reflection on and interpretation of content and textual features and ask students to draw conclusions on purpose, context and audience, to ensure they cover all relevant aspects of the Interpretation and Reflection Performance Standards. Questions that ask students to comment or reflect upon personal experiences associated with (aspects of) the topic of the stimulus text are not ‘Text Analysis’ questions. Translations are also not part of Text Analysis. Responses must be in English. Student achievement should be correlated with the Performance Standards.

The more successful responses commonly:

* 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
* responded 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
* reflected and interpreted a range of content and textual features.

The less successful responses commonly:

* were general rather than specific
* consisted of either brief, superficial answers or verbose, repetitive, superficial answers with only limited information or limited relevance to the question
* had limited substantiation or examples from the text in their response
* demonstrated limited understanding of text types, features of language, and subtext.

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.

The more successful responses commonly:

* had an explicit connection to Germany or another German-speaking country and its culture
* were adequately researched and contextualized, including (as relevant) their historical, political, contemporary etc. context
* consisted of topics that students clearly felt passionate about (e.g. the Bauhaus movement and its impact, German Resistance movements, Germany’s approach to dealing with climate change, Merkel and her impact on German migration policy)
* had contemporary relevance and/or a degree of controversy, which allowed students inform, analyse, persuade, 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 engagement with the topic
* featured an oral presentation that was highly effective in engaging the audience by varying the content, expression and tone and pronunciation was clear and easy to understand
* 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 IR3
* made some reference, or drew comparisons to pertinent contemporary matters or issues
* made effective use of the word-limits and time-limits.

The less successful responses commonly:

* were often largely identical in terms of purpose (and often context and audience), and merely informational
* relied on a narrow range of research, at times superficial or simple, for one or both tasks
* featured presentations that appeared underprepared: containing many errors (grammar/syntax/pronunciation) and/or were poorly paced
* featured overly simplistic and/or repetitive vocabulary and structures
* contained 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:

It is important to adhere to the time and word limits specified in the Subject Outline.

Furthermore, it is essential that LAPS, context sheets, reading texts and transcripts of listening texts are included with moderation material

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

The examination consists of two assessments: an oral examination and a written examination.

The majority of students who completed the examination were generally well prepared for the oral and written examinations.

Oral Examination

The oral examination consists of two parts: general conversation and discussion of the student’s in-depth study topic. In the conversation the students converse with the examiners about their personal world.

This year orals were again in online format, and students clearly benefitted by being in familiar school settings and having the personal and technical support of invigilators. Occasional technical issues (buffering) were well-handled. For both the conversation and discussion sections almost 20% of marks awarded were full marks.

Section 1: Conversation

Most students were well-prepared for this section. Some were articulate and eloquent.

In more successful conversations, students

* had clear areas of personal interest to discuss in detail, and could go beyond rehearsed answers to familiar questions
* demonstrated the ability to interact well on topics such as family, self, hobbies, school life and exchange visits (or disruption thereof and future travel plans), and had thought about topics special to them
* were able to contribute authentically and independently to the interaction. Many students clearly enjoyed the conversation, independent of differing levels of fluency
* provided depth of treatment of information and ideas and supported their responses with detailed explanations, and could articulate why a topic was important to them and young people more generally
* were able to discuss topics in creative, natural and engaging ways. They were able to vary structures and use cohesive devices confidently to create flow
* engaged with follow-up questions, gave opinions and justified them. Expressed agreement/disagreement, to what extent and why
* were able to request clarification and respond to repeated or rephrased questions, without significant disruption to the flow of the conversation.

In less successful conversations, students

* ideas were shallow and basic or repetitive – often limited by language skills
* gave brief responses such as brief descriptive statements, or closed yes/no answers
* offered few opinions
* used a very limited range of vocabulary and basic linguistic structures, resorting to English and English sentence structures
* required frequent prompting by examiners to contribute to and maintain the conversation
* showed difficulty understanding relevant high-frequency vocabulary and questions, including when these were reformulated and simplified
* used strategies and phrases to win time or redirect the conversation to areas of strength in order to maintain conversation.

Section 2: Discussion

This year’s pre-submission of the in-depth study outline worked efficiently. Schools are, however, reminded that IDS Study Outline forms are to be completed in English; main points should not include topic-specific vocabulary in German.

Although performances varied widely, many students were well-prepared and some were able to speak at length on their chosen topics, which were all relevant and very diverse. Examiners commend students’ preparation in light of Covid’s impacts on in-country exchange experience.

Alongside a range of general and specific historical topics around World War II (rise of national socialism, impacts on schools and education, rights and resistance leaders and groups), there were many interesting topics around art, music, social and economic issues, migration, sustainability, women’s rights and roles under the Weimar Republic, the DDR and the BRD and the contribution of Angela Merkel. Many effectively combined topics, e.g. music and art and resistance/social protest; digitalisation and school system.

Many students presented detailed and insightful accounts of their research with clear connection to German culture and comparisons with Australia. These students had clearly thought about their topic in terms of Interpretation and Reflection with regard to both their own learning and intercultural understanding. As part of this students should also be able to discuss aspects of their English reflection task in German (i.e. translating and expanding on the key points in German).

Examiners noted, however, that some topics were either too broad (e.g. covering a sweep of historical developments or abstract themes) or too narrow or complex (very technical topics) for the linguistic competence of the student.

Teachers are encouraged to assist students in choosing and unpacking a topic that is commensurate with their linguistic abilities. Students are expected to be able to discuss their research in relative detail and cover at least three sub-topics in depth. Specific examples are of benefit here (e.g. specific pieces of art/film/design/ music/language-dialect/historical figures or life stories/events/specific examples of social issues etc). For some topics photos can be a good support (without language captions) (e.g. photos of Bauhaus architecture and furniture were used to good effect).

Problems with expression (including command of basic grammatical structures as required for all productive tasks) are often more pronounced in the discussion, as specialised vocabulary is less consolidated than that used for personal world topics. Students require ample opportunity to develop conversational techniques and confidence to flexibly discuss their research topics, including opinions, qualification, comparison. Teachers are encouraged to help students practise flexibly responding to questions about their topics: the focus is not on memorising ‘knowledge’ such as facts and dates, but rather being able to outline their research, its significance for their learning and intercultural insights they have gained.

As in past years, examiners noted that students who had a strong personal connection to their topic in general performed better and could express opinion and reflection well.

In more successful discussions, students

* had a clear focus on the German-speaking world and often provided historical context
* knew and prepared their topic well (including topic-specific vocabulary); they had considered various aspects of their topic and formed opinions
* were able to give an overview and explain in detail what they had researched. It is recommended that students be able to respond when asked about their Präsentation/den mündlichen Teil and also den schriftlichen Teil der Intensiv-Studie.
* were able to refer to their research processes (formal and informal): readings including online conversations/interviews/correspondence; gave specific examples from texts/websites and why they were helpful/difficult etc.
* explained their topic choice, why their topic interested them personally or to what extent it was significant for young people in Germany and Australia
* showed initiative by elaborating and expanding on a topic unprompted
* responded flexibly, gave opinions, and where appropriate, compared their findings with an Australian context.

In less successful discussions, students

* gave superficial treatment of ideas and struggled to expand on their title and outline dot points
* offered short unsubstantiated or unelaborated opinions
* relied on a limited range of vocabulary and language structures to convey meaning
* attempted topics that were overly complex or narrow for their level of fluency
* focussed on topics that did not lend themselves to critical reflection of their own and others’ values, beliefs, opinions and perspectives, included little interpretation or reflection.

General information for the oral examination

Depth of treatment of ideas, information, and opinion remains a key area for improvement. Preparation is essential for depth of coverage and students’ ability to speak flexibly. Teachers are encouraged to provide frequent opportunities for students to practise flexible responses re-stating or emphasising information in different ways, using a range of word order, and elaborating. Specifically, expanding on simple statements, giving examples, offering and qualifying opinions, expressing agreement and disagreement, giving reasons and making comparisons.

It is recommended that teachers ask ‘why’ more often to facilitate opportunities for students to explain, reflect, compare and draw conclusions. Students need to be comfortable to do this in both sections of the oral exam, with both general and topic-specific vocabulary.

In many cases expression/accuracy limited students’ ability to convey their ideas. Whilst errors which are incidental rather than systemic and do not impede meaning, do not preclude high achievement, repeated basic errors (see below) inevitably impact student performance and achievement.

Students need to be able to first use their vocabulary with simple German structures correctly and reliably, and then move on to master more complex structures.

Consolidation of the following aspects are required:

* subject-verb agreement
* use of correct word order — varying simple SVO structures
* use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions with appropriate word order
* pronouns are an area requiring attention for many students, including appropriate and consistent use of formal and informal address forms
* correct use of tenses, in particular perfect tense – participles and correct auxiliary for high frequency verbs
* correct use of infinitive clauses, placement of zu.

Written examination

This was the first e-exam for German Continuers, and the first in the new 2-hour format.

Section 1: Listening and Responding

There were two texts in German. For both texts, the questions and answers were in English.

Text 1

This short telephone message on an answering machine was a noise complaint by a neighbour, Frau Schneider. These questions were well-handled by most students.

Question 1

(a) More successful responses identified four reasons for the complaint, including that Tobi’s dog barks all day, he always slams the front door, he plays terribly loud music, and he speaks too loudly. Many students included additional detail alongside naming the noise problem. Less successful responses did not identify a range of noise complaints, or misunderstood the nature of the noise complaints.

(b) Successful responses drew on text detail to identify the reason for that Frau Schneider has kept a record of noise issues: that she intends to take it to the police and complain if the noise does not stop. Some students supplied additional detail, such as that she is at the end of her tether (her nerves are totally on edge) and that the noise has been continuing for months. Less successful responses did not identify the reason for keeping a record of noise issues.

Text 2

This text was an extended radio interview with a host and two studio guests Karla and Konrad.

Question 2

(a) Successful responses identified the purpose of the text as to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on the lives of two different professional musicians.

(b) This question asked students to identify the main challenges the musicians have faced. More successful responses identified more than one challenge and gave relevant detail. Possible answers included that gigs and concerts were cancelled, and that both had to rehearse at home — the only way to play music with other band/orchestra members was online. Successful responses differentiated the challenges; for Konrad, the disruption to the making of his band’s first album, and for Karla, the loss of sound quality, dynamic and sound quality of playing in a concert hall with an orchestra. Some students pre-empted some detail of the following question. Less successful responses identified only one challenge or gave only a general answer.

(c) This question was more demanding, as reflected in the marks allocation. It required students to compare the attitudes of the two musicians, to their recent experiences and the future. Students needed to gather relevant text evidence to identify the two different attitudes, with reference to their language use – what they said and how they said it.

Successful responses correctly identified and allocated the contrasting attitudes and supported judgements with a selection of relevant text evidence: Karla’s tone was negative, sad, pessimistic – her language and tone are often negative. She described her Corona Year as ‘simply awful’ and spoke at length about the downsides – she missed the creative energy, she says playing live with an orchestra ‘is something quite different’ to online, playing in a room with others is ‘simply better’, she feels ‘quite isolated’. As for the future, she’s also not sure things will improve — she says that Video-Livestream didn’t work for their orchestra rehearsals (too many people, bad sound quality, everything took too long) and doesn’t feel that orchestras can reach their audiences and earn money online.

By comparison, Konrad’s tone was described as very positive, upbeat, optimistic and adaptable. Konrad reacted differently to cancelled performances and rehearsals, and said that fortunately his band found it not too difficult to do almost everything online, for example connecting with other band via Videochat. He says he’s more optimistic about the future too, and likes the new creative possibilities online, for example, his band were part of an online festival, which was cool as they were heard internationally, save travel costs and it was good for the environment. He enthusiastic about the present possibilities and the future; he’s certain that live music will be back soon.

Less successful responses identified the contrasting attitudes but did not provide supporting text detail or refer to language use. Some responses were general, did not treat both perspectives or neglected reference to the future.

Section 2: Reading and responding Part A

One text with questions and answers in English.

Question 3

(a) This question asked students to describe how the families prepared their escape from the DDR using text evidence. More successful responses gave three points supported by specific detail from the text: They made a homemade hot air balloon, they researched everything thoroughly, constructed it secretly, they bought large amounts of material in different places, they sewed the balloon at night. Some responses also referenced that they had to overcome many problems.

Less successful responses gave general points that lacked specific detail from the text, or used knowledge from other sources. The false friend, heimlich was sometimes misunderstood as ‘at home’ rather than ‘secretly.’

(b) This question required students to demonstrate understanding of the quote (that today is a ‘different world’) and its context; the author outlines the situation of 1979 and highlights significant change in Germany. More successful responses gave at least two examples from the text contrasting the situation now and then: 1979 was the time of divided Germany and the Cold War. The DDR was a totalitarian system that did not allow freedom of speech or other personal freedoms such as travel, there were border guards with an order to shoot any attempting to escape. Today the DDR does not exist and Germany is reunited, and people today can hardly imagine how it was back then, when democracy was not a given.

Less successful responses just translated the quote or gave a general answer (e.g. that the DDR does not exist anymore, but did not expand on the differences with detail from the text).

(c) This question required students to comment on why this story is still important today, and to support their judgements with evidence from the text. Successful responses gave perceptive and well reasoned responses based on the text. Main points included - that the two families are role models, they had to overcome many problems/risks to achieve their goals; that their courage, creativity and perseverance are values that we need to promote; that their story encourages people today to think positively and not give up in the face of challenges; that it is important to understand this important part of German history – especially to understand that democratic rights and freedoms have not always been a given. Additional points were that the title pointed to the importance of the story for younger generations and that the author concludes by stating that it is still a relevant message today. Less successful responses gave general or partial answers lacking in text evidence.

General Observations on receptive tasks:

Overall, the Listening and Responding tasks were well-handled by most students, the RRA was also competently handled. The main challenge was effective use of text evidence (see comments below).

Students need to:

* Read the questions carefully and ensure that they address all aspects of the question.
* Understand the question type and depth required: does it ask the reader to identify simple information? to compare perspectives? to evaluate and interpret? Tip: Check the marks allocation as a rough guide to the amount of detail expected. Give as much relevant detail as possible.
* Use text evidence to support their judgements/answers rather than giving general responses, which may reflect background knowledge from other external sources.
* Select relevant text evidence to support their answers – language used, key words or phrases that give information or demonstrate the author’s position. Some questions invite comment on the language strategies of the speaker or writer e.g. use of positive or negative language, emotive language, superlatives, wordplays, idioms, rhetoric questions, imperatives and exclamations.
* Demonstrate understanding by giving text evidence in English – students should not include untranslated passages directly taken from the text in their answers. Students should translate or paraphrase their text evidence and embed it in their answer (typing out the German original will cost unnecessary time). If quoting a specific phrase or word in German students need to provide explanation in English.

Section 2: Reading and responding Part B

Question 4

Students respond to an email (from Sascha) with questions and concerns and requesting advice on starting at a new school.

The questions and concerns raised include nervousness at starting at the new school, the expectations and strictness of teachers, making new friends and orientation support, choice of electives, foreign language and extracurricular activities, possibilities to try out different things before committing and time pressures of homework.

Students were required to respond from the perspective of a current student at the school that Sascha has enrolled, to give advice and information and to create a convincing text linguistically and socially appropriate to the context. The text-type email was a familiar one and relevance of ideas was rarely problematic, as the stimulus provided significant scaffolding.

All students understood the purpose of the text, but for some there was confusion regarding the respondee, Alex (not Anna).

Depth and breadth of content was variable, but a number of students produced extended texts with beautiful detail and offered insightful and surprising ideas, some drawing on their own experiences of starting a new school.

Accuracy of expression continues to be challenging across the cohort.

More successful responses

* comprehensively addressed questions and concerns raised in the stimulus text, demonstrating relevant ideas and arguments, and good depth and breadth of information
* developed an authentic response, using appropriate register and style
* expanded on the general concerns and issues raised with additional creative, individualised detail
* well-imagined the scenario/situation of Sascha and provided reassurance and encouragement Du hast sicher damit kein Problem!
* gave relevant advice
* included agreement and disagreement Ja, es stimmt, dass … , aber …
* gave detailed and entertaining opinions on subjects, teachers and extracurricular activities and reasons for recommending them or otherwise
* added creative and humorous ideas: Vielleicht will deine Cousine Anna dir nur Angst machen
* showed good organisation and structure with logical progression of ideas
* were convincing and engaging. Language strategies included direct address, idioms, exclamations, rhetorical questions and imperatives
* used cohesive devices and varied sentence structure for natural flow
* used email text-type features appropriately and creatively, appropriate greetings and closing statements: Wenn du noch/weitere Fragen hast, schick mir eine Email ... oder ruf mich mal an!
* used appropriate (informal) address form consistently
* demonstrated competence with basic grammatical structures.

Less successful responses

* relied too heavily on the stimulus text, staying too close to its structure and content, and adding little additional information or copying bits almost verbatim
* addressed only a couple of the aspects mentioned
* tended to answer the questions in brief and in sequence (of the stimulus), rather than creating a cohesive text
* did not give specific examples in response to points raised, and repeated simple ideas
* used lists of vocabulary items e.g. subject and activity names without explanation or expansion
* used pronouns indiscriminately, frequently switching from formal to informal forms of address: appropriate and consistent use of address form is a core competency for communicative tasks
* used incorrect word selection (dictionary use), used direct translation from English/English structures
* demonstrated significant difficulties in German expression - see further comments below (observations on productive tasks)

Section 3: Writing

This section continues to present the most challenge for students, largely due to problems with expression and accuracy. Regarding the distribution of responses, option 1 was most frequently chosen.

Question 5

Option 1

This questioned required students to write a blog for a youth audience on the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones and to give justified opinions on whether/to what extent they are a blessing or a curse.

Students came up with a wide range of valid ideas including negatives on personal costs (financial, health, security, privacy and Mobbing; Handysucht and need for regulation) and environmental issues (obsolescence, e-waste); and positives around convenience and necessity, educational, work-related, leisure and social uses.

More successful responses

* used text type features effectively, used appropriate (informal) register and style
* thought about the issues and tailored content that they had learned during their studies to the actual question
* gave arguments for and against mobile phones and provided comparisons and thoughtful evaluation, weighing up the benefits and dangers posed by constant use. Many raised the convenience of shopping or streaming content, researching etc, and also the impacts on eyesight, schoolwork and friendships
* enriched the text with own experience and justified opinions
* offered conclusions on the ‘mixed blessing’ of mobiles for themselves and their community
* used varied structures and cohesive devices effectively
* showed good text organisation and structure (introduction, main body and conclusion).

Less successful responses

* showed little evidence of planning before writing
* used inappropriate register, style and/or text type features
* gave few or simple statements on advantages and disadvantages
* developed a narrow range of ideas; repetitive use of simple ideas
* gave few opinions, did not justify or qualify statements and conclusions
* problems with expression significantly limited the response and reader comprehension (see overall comments below)

Option 2

This question required students to write an article for the school magazine giving ideas and tips on healthy and environmentally sustainable eating.

More successful responses

* were appropriate to audience (peers), purpose (giving opinions, information and advice, persuading) and text type (article – semi-formal style, appropriate features including title, paragraphs). While a formal address form was usual, use of informal address was not precluded as long as forms were used correctly and consistently
* showed planning
* reflected on the statement that sustainable food choices are vital for health and the environment – and responded with opinions and advice
* described healthy food choices and food choices that are also environmentally friendly, provided examples
* gave detailed advice and tips – suggestions included a range of ideas such as eating less meat, eating local produce (and reducing emissions), eating fresh foods and shopping at markets; reducing food waste and plastic packaging; eating organic foods
* adapted topics covered in studies (such as healthy eating, fair-trade/organic foods, environment and emissions, global warming) to the question
* used persuasive language to engage the audience (including rhetorical questions, exclamations).

Less successful responses

* did not plan and structure the response or apply text type features of an article
* struggled to link healthy eating with environmental issues – addressed one aspect only
* did not develop ideas
* used a collection of simple statements, rather than creating a cohesive text with logical flow
* had problems with expression which significantly limited the response and reader comprehension (see overall comments below).

Option 3

This questioned required students to write a speech welcoming a young German-speaking travel group and recommending sights and activities to make their stay ‘in your part of the world’ unforgettable. The question was intended to allow open interpretation as to locality of the writer, but an Australian perspective was envisaged. Several students had an alternative interpretation of the question and chose to use a German perspective, giving tourist advice for destinations in Germany. This related closely to course topics of travel and tourism topics. This treatment limited opportunity for intercultural comment but was not penalised as such where ideas were appropriately developed and elaborated, and were clearly customised to the task.

More successful responses

* used text type effectively including formal features (greetings/closing/best wishes for their stay) and appropriate/consistent form of address
* used language strategies to engage the audience: used descriptive and persuasive language including exclamations, imperatives, rhetorical questions
* showed creative and original ideas
* connected ideas to their own experience (e.g. well-known activities and destinations) and considered what would be interesting and memorable for people from a German-speaking country
* considered what would be interesting and memorable for young people with diverse interests
* justified the choice of sights/activities, gave opinions and interesting detail to achieve depth in ideas, such as comparisons of weather, lifestyle, popular activities, foods, festivals and traditions (Australia-Germany).

Less successful responses

* did not demonstrate appropriate text type features, register and style
* used significant amounts of pre-learned material (e.g. on travel/tourism in Germany) without clearly connecting and adapting it to the question and context
* used superficial ideas, including listing sights and activities, with little expansion; used repetitive ideas and language
* used few, simple, repetitive opinions: ‘it is great/interesting/fun’
* did not comment on why the sights/experiences would be memorable or unique for the group
* had problems with expression which significantly limited the response and reader comprehension (see overall comments below).

General Observations on productive tasks:

Writing in German

It is important that students are provided with as many opportunities as possible to practise how to structure a successful piece of writing. Alongside teaching of text types and features, students need to be able to develop strategies for unpacking questions and elaborating ideas. They should use a range of cohesive devices to link statements and provide flow at the text level, gradually expanding their repertoire from familiar conjunctions (coordinating and subordinating) to include use of connecting adverbs (e.g. außerdem, trotzdem, jedoch etc.) with correct word order.

Expression and accuracy are essential in conveying ideas, and continues to be an area for improvement.

Students need to master grammatical basics (see comments above under General information for the oral examination plus standard German spelling and punctuation). They need to regularly practise structures learnt in class, adapting them with different topics. Only when grammatical basics are mastered can they proceed to more complex language.

It is recommended that students avoid overreliance on the dictionary under exam conditions and word-for-word translation using English structures, and regularly practise word selection/dictionary skills in course work.