2020 VCE German oral examination report

Specific information

2020 was the first year this study was delivered according to the newly accredited VCE German [Study Design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/german/Pages/Index.aspx) 2020–2024 and examination specifications. It is important that students and teachers familiarise themselves with the [specifications for oral examinations](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/German.aspx), available on the VCE German examinations webpage of the VCAA website. Students and teachers are also reminded that a [series of videos](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/RevisedSecondLanguageOralExaminationVideos.aspx) has been produced to help with preparation for the oral examinations; these are also available on the VCE German examinations webpage of the VCAA website.

Students in the 2020 VCE German oral examination were well prepared for the newly accredited study design despite the year’s difficult circumstances. Many students participated enthusiastically in the Conversation, spoke readily about their chosen subtopic and image in the Discussion, and generally interacted well with the examiners.

Students who scored highly displayed thorough familiarity with their chosen subtopic and generally did not rely on pre-prepared responses, which are not always used appropriately in the context of the conversation. They spoke with considerable breadth and depth of information, with some of the higher-scoring students even integrating idioms cleverly into their responses. These students added an interesting idea or ‘take’ on a subtopic, which made for an engaging conversation, and showcased a wide variety of grammatical structures.

It should be noted that during the oral examination:

* students may be asked a variety of questions of varying levels of difficulty. Questions may also be asked in a different order from the one students anticipate
* assessors may interrupt students to ask questions during either section of the examination; this should be regarded as a normal process in a discussion
* assessors may also repeat or rephrase questions
* normal variation in assessor body language is acceptable.

Section 1 – Conversation

Most students performed well in the Conversation. They were well prepared and demonstrated very good pronunciation. Students who scored highly used an outstanding range of vocabulary and grammar structures, and their responses were quite sophisticated. They were able to use complex grammatical structures such as the subjunctive and passive forms effectively even when responding to unrehearsed questions. Most students had detailed, interesting and well-prepared responses and good repair strategies. They handled all questions well and were able to successfully carry the conversation forward. Students who scored less well only gave a series of facts and few opinions. All students were able to identify some aspect of the German language or culture that interested them, with higher-scoring students taking this further by saying why this particularly appealed to them.

Section 2 – Discussion

Students presented a broad range of subtopics for discussion. Some students chose subtopics of considerable depth and demonstrated thorough knowledge of the subtopic. They elaborated on their responses when prompted and were able to seamlessly move from one aspect of their subtopic to another. Excellent subtopics were those that included several aspects, allowed for opinions as well as information and those that students were passionate about.

Students who scored highly gave a clear indication of what their chosen subtopic was and how the image they provided related to it. They had considered and prepared for possible questions they might be asked. They used strategies to bring out various aspects of the subtopic so they could demonstrate the breadth and depth of the information they had prepared and carry the discussion forward. Students who scored less well were only able to describe the supporting image and answer superficial questions about the subtopic, with some running out of things to say.

The choice of image determined how successful (or not) students were in steering the conversation into areas they wanted to discuss. Students are advised to give a lot of thought to the visual stimulus they choose and select a picture that will easily lead to the wider subtopic. Successful students used the image creatively; they were able to point out its significance to the subtopic, add something unusual or unexpected, and use it to move to other aspects of the subtopic. While the quality of the visual stimulus was not assessed, students who selected images that were easy to share with the assessors found it easier to communicate their ideas. Ideally, the selected visual stimulus should be big enough and clear enough that the image can be easily viewed by both assessors and the student. Students would benefit from practising how to refer to the visual stimulus. For example: Rechts auf dem Bild gibt es … und das ist mit dem Thema … verbunden. (On the right of the image there is … and that is linked to the subtopic by …).