2020 VCE German written examination report

General comments

2020 was the first year this study was delivered according to the newly accredited *VCE German Study Design 2020–2024* and examination specifications. It is important that students and teachers familiarise themselves with the [specifications for written examinations](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/German.aspx), available on the German examinations webpage of the VCAA website.

Student preparation for the examination should focus on revision of grammar such as verb forms, word order and adjectival endings. Extension of vocabulary and memorisation of usual phrases are also very important. The dictionary is an excellent tool, provided it is used wisely. When looking up the meaning of a word, the context in which the word is used is important. For example, in Text 1 Question 1b., the response required noting three ways in which the wallaby was cared for. The word wiegen was highly relevant and offered two possible meanings: either to rock or to weigh. In the context where the other two required points were being given milk and writing up what had been eaten, clearly, weighing once a week made more sense than rocking once a week.

Effective use of the 15 minutes of reading time is important. Selecting the Section 3 writing question according to ability and interest, but not necessarily what appeared to be the easiest, was a wise choice. Reading the questions for the listening texts in Section 1 Parts A and B during reading time provides an idea of the subject matter. Should reading time permit, students could also begin to read the texts in readiness for Section 2 Parts A and B.

It was pleasing to note the number of students highlighting key parts of questions, thus ensuring that all requirements were addressed. The space provided in the answer booklet for note-taking was also used well, particularly for Section 1 Parts A and B. Listening for key words, especially after the first reading, provides the opportunity to make note of those important key words and phrases.

Students are reminded that it is always preferable to attempt an answer rather than to leave a blank space.

Specific information

Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section 1

Part A – Listening and responding in English

Question 1a.

Sonia’s host mother’s unusual hobby was:

* looking after injured/sick wild animals
* they are orphaned / had no parents.

Question 1b.

The wallaby was cared for by:

* being fed with milk / given milk
* writing down/noting what it had to eat and drink
* being weighed weekly.

Question 1c.

* A skill critical to a kangaroo’s survival was using its paws for eating.
* This skill was taught by giving the kangaroo pieces of banana that would stick to its paws.

Many responses did not mention that the skill was to teach a kangaroo to use its paws to eat. It was not enough to simply mention the word ‘banana’; the context needed also to be explained.

Question 1d.

Animals that survived:

* were released
* were taken to an area where many wallabies/wombats/kangaroos lived.

Part B – Listening and responding in German

In this part of the examination students were assessed on their understanding of the listening text and their ability to accurately convey appropriate information from the text in German. The information presented in the response needed to be relevant to the question. Students were marked holistically according to the following criteria:

* the capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts
* the capacity to convey information and opinions accurately and appropriately.

They were not awarded separate marks for content and language. Responses that included the relevant information and were expressed clearly in German were awarded full marks.

Question 2a.

Five reasons Uli preferred to go shopping in the city were:

* being among people
* seeing and trying things on / you don’t get fakes
* finding the best bargains in shops
* there are interesting shops / not just mass-produced goods / Uli doesn’t want to look like everyone else
* Uli can pay in cash / she doesn’t have a credit card / she can use her birthday money.

Question 2b.

Possible reasons Alex preferred shopping online were (five of the following):

* online shopping is not as busy/stressful / is more comfortable / can be done from the comfort of home/while drinking ice coffee
* online shops never close
* Alex finds it exhausting to go to ‘1000 shops’ (when shopping in the city)
* it is easy to compare prices online
* everything is cheaper online
* there is more choice online.

Section 2

Part A – Reading, listening and responding in English

In Section 2 Part A, students were required to carefully use both the reading text and the listening texts to produce the required responses.

Question 3a.

Young men in Germany until 2011 had to:

* complete nine months of military service
* do 10 months of civil service / community service.

Question 3b.

Differences regarding community work and military service in Germany before and after 2011 were (five of the following):

* today no military service, compared with military service up to 2011
* today voluntary, compared with compulsory up to 2011
* today men and women, compared with young men up to 2011
* today no age restriction, compared with young men from 18 up to 2011
* today also migrants and refugees, compared with German citizens up to 2011
* today length can vary from 6–24 months, compared with 9–10 months up to 2011
* today a broader range of work offered, compared with no real choice before 2011.

Students needed to compare before and after 2011. Students also needed to avoid repetition and only partly completing answers.

Question 3c.

The reading text proposed that compulsory community work / compulsory work in social, cultural and ecological areas for young people/school leavers be introduced in the future.

Question 3d.

The argument for compulsory community work mentioned by both the author of the reading text (3A) and Sophie in the listening text (3B) was that it benefits society / is fair / everyone must contribute.

Evidence from the texts:

* regardless where they come from or whether they are rich or poor (Text 3A)
* everyone needs to give something back as well / you can’t just hold out your hand (Text 3B).

Question 3e.

Other than the argument from Question 3d., further arguments for and against compulsory community service presented by Sophie were as follows:

For

* It helps young people become independent.
* There is a shortage of workers in social areas.

Against

* It is wrong to force people to work for a year.
* It is better to have people who are motivated / volunteers who like their work / if her grandmother were cared for by someone unmotivated, this would not be okay.

Question 3f.

According to Sophie, voluntary work could be further improved by:

* volunteers getting more pocket money / receiving more than 400 euro
* volunteers having the opportunity to learn skills for their future job / participate in a course / being beneficial for their future career
* being able to do volunteer work abroad.

Question 3g.

The different conclusions the author of the reading text (3A) and Sophie in the listening text (3B) reached about the compulsory community work were as follows:

* The author says to introduce compulsory community service/work.
* Sophie thinks that the work should remain/be voluntary.

Part B – Reading and responding in German

Students were required to demonstrate an understanding of the stimulus text(s) and to address the requirements of the task by conveying the relevant information from the text(s) that was appropriate for the audience and the prescribed writing style and text type.

The reading text included a visual stimulus. High-scoring students were able to successfully incorporate information from the visual stimulus in their response.

Student responses were assessed holistically according to the assessment criteria and the expected qualities published in the examination specifications on the VCAA website. The criteria for this section are:

* the capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts
* the capacity to convey information and opinions accurately and appropriately.

Students were not awarded separate marks for content and language accuracy; however, language accuracy was an important expected quality that was considered in the assessment. A number of students provided lengthy responses beyond the scope of the task and some included additional information that was irrelevant.

Question 4

This task was generally answered very well. The best responses easily slipped into the role of Hundertwasser and prepared a speech aimed at primary level students and their questions. Their prepared speech was authentic, personable and used language accessible to the children. The role of childhood, Hundertwasser’s love of and connection to nature and the aspects of his work relevant to this were all explained. Direct reference to the visual text was also important.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Guten Tag Kinder!

Ich heiße Friedensreich Hundertwasser und bin Künstler, Architekt und Naturschutzaktivist. Ich freue mich heute hier zu sein, und werde euch von meinen Kunstwerken und Motivationen erzählen.

Viele von euch haben gefragt, warum ich denn ein Paradies auf Erden erschaffen mochte. Dazu sage ich: warum denn nicht?

Die Welt ist nicht immer bunt und schön, also finde ich es wichtig in seinem Leben zum Guten in der Welt beizutragen. Als Kind habe ich während den zweiten Weltkrieg viele schlimme Sachen erlebt und weiss deswegen, dass man für die schonen Sachen kämpfen muss. Besonders wichtig, ist es die Erde zu schützen, so dass die Menschheit in Harmonie und Frieden mit der Natur leben kann. Die Kunst ist einer der wunderbarsten Sachen im Leben also habe ich als Lebensziel zu zeigen, das wir zusammen dieses Paradies wirklich erschaffen können.

Und wie? Meine Kunst ist etwas kindisch, aber bunt und organisch. In der Natur gibt es keine geometrische Formen, nur Bögen, Wellen, Kreise und Spiralen. Diese naturliche Formen haben mich in meiner Architektur sehr beeinflusst, wie ihr in Hundertwasserhaus in Magdeburg sehen könnt. Es gibt überall Pflanzen und geknickte Linien, aber am wichtigsten – viele Fenster! Zimmer sollen meiner Meinung nach immer viele Fenster haben, weil sie die Welt hinein lassen. Durch meine eigenartige Kunstwerke möchte ich Frieden und Glück erwecken für alle Menschen ob Groß oder Klein – und so zeigen, dass Paradies auf Erden erfassbar ist.

Also Kinder, habt in eurem leben Spaß und ich wünsche euch viel Glück! Macht in eurem Leben so viel Kunst wie möglich und kämpfe dadurch für die Sachen, die Ihr für richtig halten.

Danke für eure Aufmerksamkeit!

Section 3 – Writing in German

Section 3 provided four question options, offering persuasive, imaginative, evaluative and personal writing.

As mentioned in the general comments, students are reminded to use the reading time to carefully select a question best suited to one’s interest level as well as ability. The originality and quality of content in this writing piece is important, as is the ability to demonstrate an effective style of writing and text type.

Choosing what may at first appear to be the most straightforward or easy question is not always the best choice. Rather, it is wise to choose a question that has scope for an original response that includes relevant content and ideas. It was wonderful to read the many excellent extended responses.

Question 5

This question required students to write an email to their parents, who are currently away on holiday, persuading them to give permission to hold a farewell party at home. Relevant here was that the student planned to spend a year away.

This was the question chosen by more than 61 per cent of students. Higher scoring responses used appropriate characteristics for an email text type, acknowledged that their parents were on holiday, and then presented a very strong argument why the parents should give permission for this party. Responses included the following points as arguments: their going abroad for a year and being away from friends; their history of trustworthiness; their good character; the demonstration of careful planning, including guest list and supervision for this party; and how they proposed to clean up afterwards.

Question 6

This question required an imaginative story and the task prompt gave students broad scope to imagine an adventure or event set in 19th century Australia. The photograph assisted in giving ideas of what life might have been like then. There was no right answer, and this was not a test of history but rather an opportunity for students to write an imaginative piece. Responses often focused on adventures with wildlife (e.g. snakes). The photograph could also have been used as a stimulus; for example, what were the people in the photograph about to do or what had they just done? They appeared to be dressed up. What was the reason for that? What about the children?

Question 7

This question required students to evaluate whether leisure time should be simply free time or rather planned and organised time with activities. The task required students to produce an article for a school magazine that weighed up both arguments. About 18 per cent of students attempted this question and did very well. There were mature and thoughtful pieces carefully detailing possible options for both possibilities, with most concluding that a balance of both was the healthiest and best outcome for all concerned.

Question 8

The question required students to write about their thoughts for both their own and the common future. It was a personal writing piece and the higher scoring responses shared details of both. Many focused on their personal interest in technology and where they saw the world moving; others wrote about the environment and the role they hoped to play in supporting that in their career. Some did not have a definite pathway in mind yet but described their hopes for a common future. About 14 per cent of students chose this question and there were many excellent responses, with students writing original and authentic personal pieces.