

Interactive Sign Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students performed well in the 2014 Interactive Sign Examination. It was evident that most students had prepared thoroughly and were familiar with the specific requirements of the examination and signs associated with it.

The examination was divided into two parts: a seven-minute conversation and discussion; followed by an eight-minute presentation and response, which comprised a three-minute presentation of a chosen topic and a five-minute discussion with the assessor conducting the examination.

Students were assessed according to the following criteria.

Section 1: Conversation and discussion

- capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively
- relevance, breadth and depth of treatment of information, opinions, ideas
- clarity of expression and fluency of expression
- accuracy of vocabulary and discourse structures
- range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammatical structures

Section 2: Presentation and response

- capacity to sustain a presentation and response in a formal signing context
- relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas
- clarity of expression and fluency of expression
- accuracy of vocabulary and discourse structures
- range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammatical structures

Students should be reminded that the examination is an exchange, not a question-and-answer session, and that the setting is formal. When preparing students, teachers should simulate the oral examination and, where possible, include three assessors and a camera operator so that students become more familiar with the set-up and requirements of the exam. Students need to use appropriate signs and avoid colloquial terms. Students should use the polite form (second-person plural) when addressing assessors and should ensure that they make eye contact with the assessor conducting the examination.

Teachers and students should refer to the *VCE Auslan Study Design* and the *VCE Exams Navigator*, which clearly state what can be brought to the examination. Objects containing minimal language, such as photographs, diagrams and maps, may be brought to support the presentation. Notes and cue cards are not permitted.

In addition, students should be advised that chewing gum during the examination is inappropriate as it may affect the student's facial expressions.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation and discussion

During the seven-minute conversation and discussion, most students maintained and advanced the exchange with some spontaneity and expanded effectively on aspects of their personal world. They communicated well with assessors, needed minimal support and had good repair strategies.

Low-scoring students did not have good repair strategies and were not able to reflect on their own experiences. These students needed to be prompted by the assessor, as they were not able to advance the conversation.

There were many fluent signers who made excellent use of facial expression. A good variety of correct grammatical features was also evident. The use of space, role shift and fingerspelling were particularly noticeable, and fingerspelling was used in the correct context rather than for unknown signs.

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Students need to be reminded to:

- sign their student number in Auslan
- avoid revealing their own name, their family name, the name of their school or the name of their teacher
- avoid asking the assessor questions about his or her family
- use the correct form of address for the assessor at the start and end of the examination.

Common areas of difficulty faced by students included the following.

- Linking with the assessor – Students need to take a little initiative in the conversation and not see it as a question-and-answer situation. If a question can be answered briefly, they should not choose that option but instead choose an option that extends the conversation.
- Elaborating on ideas – Students need to let the assessors see as much of them signing as possible.
- Practice – Students need more conversation practice. The topics are very familiar and everyday topics.

Section 2 – Presentation and response

The assessor will indicate when it is time to move on to Section 2. The student should then indicate to the assessors the topic chosen for their presentation and response. Upon completion of the presentation, the student should respond to questions on the presentation raised by assessors.

Students and teachers are reminded that the Presentation runs for three minutes, but many students' presentations were longer than this. Assessors will indicate to the student when they have one minute left (using the one-minute paper). It is not the role of the assessor to explain to students during the exam that they have only one minute left. The one-minute paper is only a prompt for the student.

Generally, students performed better in the Presentation section of the examination than in the Conversation section. Students generally prepared their topic very well. High-scoring students were extremely well prepared and had chosen a topic that was relevant to them and their life experiences. A topic needs to be broad enough to allow for a discussion, but not too difficult in content and vocabulary. When selecting a topic, students should avoid topics that will already have been covered in the conversation section.

The main issues in this section were choice of topic, sitting versus standing during the presentation, and the timing of the presentation.

- Choice of topic – Many students simply retold a personal experience (for example, a holiday or sport involvement) in an informal mode; these topics are not impossible to present formally but can be more difficult. Many students were unable to show thorough preparation of content and a logical ordering of ideas.
- Sitting versus standing during the presentation – Students who used formal language in the conversation with the assessor were more likely to stand. Students should use formal language in this section of the examination.
- Timing of the presentation – Students need to be very careful to adhere to the time allowed; some students missed out on marks because they finished well under time and thus presented a truncated report. Often this appeared to be due not to signing skills but to a lack of adequate preparation or research. Many presentations were also longer than the time allowed.

Sign Comprehension and Sign Production Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students performed well in the 2014 Auslan Sign Comprehension and Sign Production Examination.

During the year, students should practise completing only one recording of their response, ensuring that the whole response has been recorded.

A few students were unsure of the requirements of the examination. To prepare well, students need to practise with past VCE Auslan examination papers.

During reading time, students can access their dictionary if necessary. Students need to practise effective dictionary skills during the year so that the dictionary becomes a valuable tool in the examination.

Almost all students demonstrated a clear understanding of the content of the videos, both informal and formal; however, there was a tendency to repeat very accurately what had been signed on the video – not verbatim, but in the same order

as on the video – rather than comparing and contrasting the ideas of the two signers. It was noted that some students lacked the ability to provide succinct responses to questions, instead giving responses that went beyond the required answers. This weakened their responses and demonstrated a lack of comprehension skills.

For the task in Section I, there was also a focus on using the ideas of the first signer in preference to those of the second signer. This resulted in very little contrast between the signers' ideas, simply a reporting of what their ideas were.

Most students demonstrated the ability to introduce the topic in the informal signing section and set up their signing appropriately.

For the task in Section II, the formal signing, students had difficulty in responding to the task as outlined in the examination. Some students found it difficult to contrast the two signers' viewpoints. They merely presented an often excellent summary of what each signer had argued.

Despite these criticisms, the students almost without exception showed fluency and a natural rhythm to their signing. Fingerspelling was rarely if at all used if a sign was not known. Students used a wide variety of signs and grammatical structures correctly, with only rare repetition of signing phrases, resulting in interesting signing sequences.

In preparation for the examination, students must practise:

- using past exam papers
- focusing the camera on themselves
- looking into the camera when recording
- checking that they have recorded a response for both tasks
- checking the position of their hands
- using their time wisely during the exam; the texts are played three times
- recording one draft and labelling it clearly by signing their student number
- answering the question rather than repeating the resource presented
- using signs in the resources on the DVD.

Students are still:

- producing too many drafts. Usually the first draft is the best. Teachers must practise exam preparation with students during the year using past exams
- writing out whole responses in English rather than organising their response in Auslan. Students need to keep short reminder lists
- signing very short responses. Students should aim to produce a response in the time allocated in the study design.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section I: Watching and responding to informal signed texts

Description

Section I assesses students' knowledge and skill in analysing and responding to information from informal signed texts. It is related to one or more of the prescribed themes.

Students observed an informal signed discourse, which was a DVD-recorded performance. The signed discourse was 5–7 minutes in length and was played three times, with a two-minute pause between each performance, during which the student could take notes.

Some students:

- ignored the question
- did not use the information on the DVD
- produced a statement and failed to engage the audience.

Possible responses to the task could have included elements such as:

- schooling
- future education

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- employment
- aspirations
- marriage/children
- friends
- hobbies/travel
- impact of changing technology
- achievements.

The student could have also asked and answered the question, ‘Did your dreams come true?’

Assessment criteria

Students must have a clear understanding of the criteria for this task, and what they are being assessed on. When assessing performance in this section, the assessor will take into account the extent and depth to which the student demonstrates the criteria.

Students needed to identify Signer A’s and Signer B’s key points in the above areas. For example, for ‘schooling’ or ‘achievements’, students should ask themselves ‘What did Signer A hope to do in her life? Where did Signer B travel?’

In Section I, students who gave a reasonably comprehensive summary of the key points from the video gained two to four marks for criteria 1 and 2, depending on the depth of their answer.

Those students who used the ideas on the video to develop their own response – for example, their aspirations or what they want to achieve – or who reorganised the points on the video into a new and coherent structure received four to five marks.

Criterion 3 depended on the student giving a culturally appropriate Deaf response to the key points.

Section II: Watching and responding to formal signed texts

Description

Section II assesses students’ knowledge and skill in analysing and responding to information from formally signed texts.

Students watched a pre-recorded formally signed discourse between three and five minutes long. They were required to produce a three- to four-minute response to the signed text in Auslan.

Student responses had a similar pattern to the informal responses. Students generally understood the nature of formal discourse and set up the introduction, main body and conclusion well. Some students failed to extract, classify or reorganise the information. Students are again reminded to read the questions carefully.

The formal summary of the views of both speakers could have included the following elements.

Resource 1 – Signer A: Deaf people form a cultural minority group

- Deaf people belong to a specific cultural group with their own language and culture, like many migrant groups.
- A cultural group has learned behaviours (for example, greetings and farewells, such as asking the background of someone when meeting for the first time and school farewell rituals) that are used when meeting in their groups.
- Deafness, therefore, can make people more social.
- Deaf culture is not about what Deaf people can’t do (pathological view) but about what they can do.
- Deaf people, therefore, should only get social security when they really cannot get a job because of discrimination.
- Deaf people can communicate by reading and writing, using technology, etc.
- Many Deaf people have tertiary qualifications, have professional or trade jobs, or run their own business.
- Some Deaf people may be disabled because of other problems, but they are not disabled because they are deaf.

Resource 2 – Signer B: Why Deaf people are disabled

- Deaf people lack the sense of hearing; therefore, they are not normal but disabled.
- Lack of hearing can affect development of language, especially English.

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- This results in limited access to education at school and job training (for example, apprenticeships, trade school, university and professional qualifications).
- Deaf people can find work sometimes, but work is more stressful for them than for hearing people because of a lack of communication skills.
- Deaf people are often isolated at work and home, leading to depression.
- For these reasons, deaf people should qualify for legal protection (for example, through anti-discrimination laws).
- Deaf people should qualify for social security benefits because of education and employment difficulties.
- Deaf people should receive other support as needed to help them live the same lives as hearing people.

In Section II, Criterion 6 looks at the signing as a whole. A response that was awarded four to five marks would have reorganised the material on the video and/or included the student's own ideas linked to the topics and developed on what is presented on the resource.