2019 German (continuers) Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s 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

Interaction

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 clearly that students were engaged: responses were spontaneous, passionate, humorous
* featured open-ended questions that allowed students to respond with a range of information
* featured questions that allowed students to ‘go deeper’ and elaborate, reflect, argue a point and substantiate their opinions
* demonstrated high levels of authenticity through the use of 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
* 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
* 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
* displayed basic grammatical errors particularly with tenses and verb endings
* displayed frequent syntactical inaccuracies
* relied on pre-prepared (often overly rehearsed) responses rather than spontaneous discussion.

Text Production

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 particular text-production task
* used a range of 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 with and enjoyment of the task, which was based around 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
* 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

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
* needed to provide examples to substantiate an opinion or conclusion
* 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:

* consisted of topics that students clearly felt passionate about, for example, Germany’s response to the refugee crisis and the subsequent impact on German politics and society, the issue of social engineering in a contemporary German scenario and in WWII Germany
* had contemporary relevance and/or a degree of controversy, which allowed students 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 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, for example, 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
* needed to reflect that adequate research was undertaken in one or both tasks
* featured presentations that appeared underprepared: containing too many unnecessary errors (grammar/ syntax/ pronunciation) and/or were poorly paced
* featured overly simplistic and/or repetitive vocabulary and structures
* needed to use textual features associated with different text types effectively
* were based on topics that limited genuine reflection on any aspect of IR3
* 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.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Examination

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

The majority of the 73 students who completed the examination were generally well prepared for the oral and written examinations.

Oral Examination

The oral examination consists of two distinct 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. It needs to be noted that this year almost half of the cohort of students received full marks for the conversation and the discussion.

Section 1: Conversation

The more successful responses commonly:

* provided depth of treatment of information and ideas and supported their responses with detailed explanations
* demonstrated the ability to speak well and engage with interest about topics such as family, self, hobbies, school life and exchange experiences. Some students had obviously thought about the well-known topics (such as family, hobbies, school life, future plans and exchange experiences) from the angle of what would be interesting for someone who didn’t know them and had clearly structured their responses
* a number of excellent students were fluent, authentic, accurate, discursive, detailed and able to elaborate.

The less successful responses commonly:

* used a very limited range of vocabulary and relied on basic linguistic structures, at times even slipping back into English and English sentence structures
* lacked in detail and depth when responding to the examiners, often needing to be prompted or encouraged to add more detail in support of their response. Students need strategies and phrases to win time and to maintain conversation
* frequently paused for long periods of time to search for linguistic resources and/ or to comprehend the question being asked or repeatedly asked for translations.

Section 2: Discussion

There were some interesting topics chosen and many students presented detailed and insightful accounts of their research. Examiners noted that students who had a strong personal connection to their topic in general performed better and could express opinion and reflection well. However, the use of the in-depth study outline is of critical importance for the presentation of the topic. Teachers are encouraged to assist students in establishing the main points covered in their topic. Students are expected to be able to discuss their research in relative detail and cover at least 3 sub-topics in depth.

The more successful responses

* had a clear focus on the German-speaking world and often provided historical context
* students were able to give an overview of their topic and explained in detail what they researched
* discussed their topic in detail, gave opinions, and where appropriate, compared their findings within an Australian context
* compared their own values, beliefs, opinions and perspectives with those presented on the topic of their in-depth study
* used topic-specific vocabulary.

The less successful responses

* lacked depth and breadth of treatment, showing superficial treatment of ideas
* focused on topics that did not genuinely lend themselves to critical reflection of their own and others’ values, beliefs, opinions and perspectives
* did not demonstrate the capacity to support or explain opinions
* showed little interpretation or reflection on the topic
* were not able to explain the focus of their oral presentation or their written German text
* relied on a limited range of vocabulary and language structures to convey meaning.

General information 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. Teachers are encouraged to expose students to more challenging questions about their topics, in particular regarding interpretation and reflection (IR 3.1 and 3.2). Students should be able to discuss aspects of their English reflection task in German.

Depth of treatment of ideas, information, and opinion is still a key area for improvement. Discussion needs to be practised frequently. It is recommended that teachers ask ‘why’ more often to facilitate opportunities for students to explain, reflect and draw conclusions about topics and issues. Students need to know not only topic specific vocabulary but also the language used to express opinion and make comparisons.

Attention to detail and grammatical correctness is encouraged. It is expected that students are familiar with the following:

* correct use of tenses, in particular perfect tense
* use of correct word order and application of correct case rules
* use of correct personal pronouns
* correct use of infinitive clauses, placement of *zu*
* correct subject-verb agreement.

Written examination

Section 1: Listening and Responding

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

Question 1

1. The more successful responses identified the purpose as an advertisement for trainee jobs in the space and aircraft industry. The text aimed to generate interest and get potential employees to apply for one of the 60 traineeships.

The less successful responses did not recognise that it was a job advertisement, said it was just advertising the company.

1. The more successful responses identified three language strategies that the text employs: audience is addressed in the familiar *du* to encourage identification. Rhetorical questions are used as headings before the information. The speaker uses very positive language and tone to describe the benefits of working in this industry.

The less successful responses focused on content, did not explain the language strategies.

Question 2

1. The more successful responses identified at least three benefits of attending the Istanbul High School: offer of a distance education programme with a German university for highly gifted students. Students gain Turkish as well as German school leaving certificates and are highly sought after in universities in both countries. Students can become fluent in German, even if they start with not knowing any German language. The school focuses on Maths/ Science and is part of the Excellence School Network in Germany. The best responses listed the three benefits briefly in the first sentence and then supported that with quotes from the text in subsequent sentences.

The less successful responses did not list all three benefits and or misunderstood some of the content, e.g. distance education programme only seen as distance German language programme and not as a programme for highly gifted students in Maths/Science.

Question 3

The shortest text of this section was quite challenging. The more successful responses identified that success does not depend on talent, but rather on a positive attitude towards the subject, much hard work and that a person shouldn’t give up. They are in control and can change the outcome of their studies.

The less successful responses misunderstood the opening statement about Maths being one example. They assumed the text was about Maths.

Question 4

1. The more successful responses explained with evidence from the text what Stefan and Sabine were doing to make the world a better place: Stefan — improving the environment, only buying sustainably produced products, predominantly local, works in an environmental group at school, collects and recycles rubbish. Sabine — concentrates on social issues and human relationships, she helps refugee children with German, organises a youth group in their town, goes to the local aged-care home, plays music or cards with the residents or just chats with them.

There were only few less successful responses who misunderstood some of the vocabulary, e.g. *Flüchtlinge* or *Altenheim*.

1. The more successful responses translated the saying and explained its relevance to the text. The quote is used because it is an important lesson about individual contribution and the impact on a larger scale. Stefan and Sabine are active on a small scale, but many people working together form a powerful group which could change the face of the world.

The less successful responses just translated the saying.

Question 5

The more successful responses clearly linked content with language technique. They identified the text as an advertisement which uses persuasive language, gave examples from the text and provided at least three examples: use of superlatives, exclamations at the beginning and end of the text, use of imperative verb form, directly addressing the listener (*Kommen Sie uns besuchen*!) positive tone and imagery throughout the text.

The less successful responses simply repeated as much of the content as they could remember or understand.

Overall students should avoid rephrasing or repeating the question in their answer. That takes up too much of the answering space.

Section 2: Reading and responding Part A

For both texts questions and answers were in English.

Question 6

1. The more successful responses identified more than three issues and provided reference to the text: new constructions are expensive, damaging to the environment, ‘poison’ for historical cities. With new constructions, there is loss of green and ecologically valuable space in cities and the impact on quality of life. Constructions outside of the city (shopping centres and new housing estates) destroy natural environment and landscapes, increase traffic/pollution and result in deserted city centres.

Less successful responses were less comprehensive in their answers and misunderstood some of the vocabulary and structures, e.g. *lebendig* translated as living, present particles like *leerstehende Gebäude*, *wachsender Verkehr, energiesparende Effekt* were not translated correctly.

1. The more successful responses identified that renovating existing old houses and an innovative use of empty buildings was the best way forward according to the author. A ban on all new constructions is called for but without a question (*ohne Frage*) the most sustainable alternative currently is reusing existing spaces.
2. The less successful responses did not recognise the comparative *nachhaltigere Alternative* and consequently did not recognise the reusing of old houses as the best option in the author’s opinion.

Students did not always understand the Passive *werden …. legitimiert, wird …neutralisiert*. It was sometimes mistaken as future tense.

The more successful responses were able to provide strategies and support them with specific examples from the text. The text looks at new constructions as compared to redevelopment, unpacks claims from different perspectives about new environmentally more efficient buildings. It contrasts the advantages of redevelopment through positive language as opposed to negative language when talking about new development. It uses strong and emotive language, e.g. *kaputte Landschaften, menschenleere Städte, Gift für lebendige, historische Städte.* The text uses rhetorical questions and repetition. It has a clearly structured argument.

Question 7

The more successful responses identified 3 concerning aspects. Even trainee teachers specialising in politics, history and ethics have little knowledge of current, political affairs. They don’t use traditional information sources like newspapers, but they find their news in social media. Their *Nachrichtenkompetenz*, that is their ability to critically evaluate information and to differentiate between fake and real news, is questionable. It is concerning that even university students who want to become teachers of politics or history, require coaching in critical thinking.

The less successful responses did not understand that *studieren* only refers to university study and that the study was done with trainee teachers (*zukünftige Lehrer, Lehramtsstudenten*) not other school students. Nachrichtenkompetenz needed to be mentioned and explained.

Most students translated the title correctly as ‘tutoring/ coaching in critical thinking’, however the more successful responses explained that thinking critically was a skill that needs to be taught at school. Scepticism is needed concerning political information. The text mentions 3 basic questions that need to be asked in order to distinguish fact from fiction/fake news. It is ironic that just those university students who will be teaching critical thinking skills in their future profession are in need of tutoring in that skill. Only very few responses combined the *Nachrichtenkompetenz* and scepticism with the fact that virtually all people are participating in social media and distributing and commenting on news. So, people are in fact journalists, they can like, blog and post things online.

The less successful responses simply translated the title but did not make the connection between critical thinking and participating in social media. The most important’ journalistic’ quality is critical thinking. Everyone has a responsibility when dealing with information.

Overall, students do not need to provide a long introduction to their answer, it only takes up valuable space.

Section 2: Reading and responding Part B

This question requires a response in German

Question 8

Students understood all or most of the issues presented in the source text and could respond with various degrees of success to the ideas raised. There was a tendency to repeat large sections of the stimulus text. While some use of words and phrases from the original text was unavoidable, this should not have been a major component of the written piece. Students need to demonstrate in-depth understanding of the text by somehow responding to all main points raised, not just copy ideas.

The more successful responses

* were well planned and showed logical progression of ideas in response to ideas raised in the text, as well as engagement of the audience and some detailed explanation about why students needed to join the protest, what actions they could take at a local level. The texts referred to forest fires, emissions, rising temperatures, other environmental impact like dying of fish, plastic waste in oceans and the UN climate treaty. They mentioned that politicians aren’t concerned enough about the future and then encouraged everyone to get involved and do something about the issues
* were well structured texts that clearly addressed the audience, used persuasive language and referred to own ideas about reasons for climate change and resulting problems. Were a call to action. Rhetorical questions and imperative were used well.

The less successful responses

* relied far too heavily on the ideas presented in the source text and at times even copied from the text but added grammatical errors
* demonstrated difficulties in clearly and accurately expressing ideas, information and opinions
* did not plan their texts well (including paragraphing)
* used pronouns indiscriminately, frequently switching from formal to informal
* frequently misused or did not use their dictionary at all, e.g. *Quelle* when they mean well at the start of a sentence, *ich Bedarf* for I need, protest as a verb instead of *protestieren*
* experienced difficulty with the following grammatical elements:
* subject verb agreement
* multiple verb forms in one sentence
* correct use of tenses
* correct gender of nouns, e.g. ein großes problem
* use of prepositions, e.g. gegen Klimawandel not für.

Section 4: Writing

Students could relate to all tasks and there was an even distribution in terms of the chosen question.

Question 9

The more successful responses included these considerations

* argued against the use of mobiles while driving because of mortal danger to others (pedestrians, other drivers) and themselves, included the costs and devastation in social and personal terms, when car accidents are caused by irresponsible use of mobile phones
* offered solutions, e.g. pull over, stop the car and some ended the text with a call for action: exercise some self-control, put the mobile out of reach
* asked what is so important that a driver needs to respond immediately? Whoever texts or calls should have 100% of the driver’s attention, otherwise it is a meaningless conversation. People who use mobile phones while driving are selfish, inconsiderate, silly
* used persuasive structures, especially rhetorical questions, exclamations and direct address of the audience, used Imperative correctly.

The less successful responses

* did not present a cogent argument either for or against the statement: Mobiles in cars — no thank you
* went on tangents, such as ‘the coolness ‘of mobile phones or anti-social behaviour prompted by mobile phone use, cyberbullying facilitated by mobile phones
* experienced difficulties with many grammatical elements such as:
* sentence structure, word order
* subject- verb agreement
* personal and possessive pronouns.

Question 10

The more successful responses

* discussed all three aspects — too much technology, too much information, too much consumption — at some depth
* looked at advantages and disadvantages of technological progress in various areas of life, of access to information on a personal/societal/global level
* considered the role and responsibility of the individual as well as societal norms and expectations in all three contexts
* discussed the need for critical thinking and reading when dealing with information/media
* put all three into context of expectations in western societies, arguing that the ‘too much’ is not necessarily true for all societies
* discussed what constitutes excessive use of technology, excessive consumerism and what can be problematic about ‘too much’ information
* outlined deliberate steps individuals can take to be responsible consumers, users of technology and critical consumers of information/ audiences.

The less successful responses

* focussed on only one of the three aspects, some discussed mainly one aspect, touching on the other two issues in only a sentence or two
* a number of students focussed exclusively on technology (especially mobile phones/phone use)
* went onto different tangents with responses not addressing the actual question (e.g. dangers: identity theft/blackmail)
* focussed only on the negatives of technology and information.

Question 11

The more successful responses included these many of these points

* went beyond a simplistic description of ‘coolness based on looks and possessions’ and took a range of views. They commented that the stereotype of ‘being cool’ (beautiful, rich, have latest technology, popular, girls: long hair, perfect teeth, expensive clothes/guys: sporty, fast car, tattoos), is rather superficial. They argued that everybody has a different view of what ‘being’ cool actually means and so the concept is ultimately subjective.
* had the participants in the discussion adopt differing views
* asked the question: ‘what is the relationship between coolness and happiness’. Are students happier in themselves if they perceive themselves as cool and if they are considered as being cool by others?
* correlated ‘coolness’ with societal attitude in pre-dominantly western societies and argued that they are too focussed on superficial and materialistic things, but not on what really counts, e.g. important global issues
* argued that coolness is not important, but being happy, healthy and having close relationships with key people in your life is
* being cool at school does not promise success in later life and being authentic and true to oneself are more important than belonging to the cool crowd
* mentioned the role of the media in propagating the stereotype and the need for students to be critical of (social) media/ influencers.

The less successful responses

* confined themselves to giving a simplistic description of what is cool/ uncool: ‘coolness based on looks and possessions, partying/ uncool: unfriendly, intimidating, not many friends
* focussed only on the ‘positive’ aspects of considering oneself cool, being considered cool by others
* went along with the stereotypes and argued importance for school kids to be cool to be accepted: ‘if you’re cool’, life is perfect — did not critically reflect on the topic
* had the participants both reiterating the ‘stereotypical’ view
* spent too much time on setting the scene, which did not address the actual question, e.g. introducing the participants in detail, thanking each other for participating, elaborating on the importance of discussing the topic, rather than getting stuck into discussing the topic.

Writing in German

It is important that students are provided with as many opportunities as possible to practise explicitly how to structure a successful piece of writing. To this end, text types and their textual features need to be taught and students need to understand that thorough planning is imperative for success in any kind of writing, be it narratives, expository or persuasive texts.

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

The more successful responses

* presented a thoroughly planned text which provided detail and examples to achieve sufficient depth and breadth of treatment
* produced sophisticated writing using a range of syntax, connective devices and metalanguage

The less successful responses

* did not show a clear understanding of the question in all its aspects
* superficially responded to the questions, made global statements without examples or substantiating evidence
* featured basic and repetitive sentence structures with only the most basic connecting devices, i.e. *dass, weil*
* featured frequent basic grammatical errors, i.e. tenses, adjective endings, subject verb agreement, pronouns and spelling.