

Chief Reader Report on Student Responses: 2017 AP[®] German Free-Response Questions

• Number of Readers	52			
Total Group				
• Number of Students Scored	5,089			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	1,169	23.0	
	4	1,226	24.1	
	3	1,448	28.5	
	2	893	17.5	
	1	353	6.9	
• Global Mean	3.39			
Standard Group*				
• Number of Students Scored	3,432			
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At	
	5	334	9.7	
	4	855	24.9	
	3	1,176	34.3	
	2	767	22.3	
	1	300	8.7	
• Global Mean	3.05			

* Standard students generally receive most of their foreign language training in U.S. schools. They did not indicate on their answer sheet that they regularly speak or hear the foreign language of the exam, or that they have lived for one month or more in a country where the language is spoken.

The following comments on the 2017 free-response questions for AP[®] German Language and Culture were written by the Chief Reader, Jennifer Redmann, Associate Professor of German, Franklin & Marshall College. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

Question #1**Task:** E-mail Reply**Topic:** Changes to the school cafeteria**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.68**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.50***What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?***

This task assessed writing in the interpersonal communicative mode by having students write a reply to an e-mail message. Students were allotted 15 minutes to read the message and write the reply. The response received a single holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. Students needed to be able, first, to comprehend the e-mail, and then to write a reply using a formal form of address. The reply had to address all the questions and requests raised in the message, as well as ask for more details about something mentioned in the message.

In this exam, within the theme of Contemporary Life (*Alltag*), students replied to an e-mail from Bettina Steinbach, director of the cafeteria (*Kantine*) at the student's school. In the opening of her message, Ms. Steinbach writes that the cafeteria administration is planning to institute some reforms in an effort to make the school cafeteria more attractive and its food healthier and better tasting. She goes on to explain that the focus of the reforms will be on healthy nutrition, the quality of the food, local food sourcing, methods of preparing the food, and a wide array of menu choices. Because the cafeteria administrators are interested in hearing the students' opinions and ideas, she poses two questions to the recipient of the e-mail: 1) What do you like about the cafeteria and the food served there? (*Was gefällt Ihnen an der Kantine oder dem Essen?*) and 2) What could be improved? (*Was könnten wir verbessern?*). Bettina Steinbach closes the e-mail by saying that she would be happy to answer any questions the student might have about the cafeteria's service or the planned reforms.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

In their responses, most students were able to maintain the interpersonal exchange in an appropriate manner by answering the two questions with some degree of elaboration and posing an additional question. The topic of food was clearly familiar to students, and nearly all were able to understand and write something in response to the questions about changes to the cafeteria. Strong responses incorporated varied and appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic expressions for stating and supporting opinions and offering suggestions. Strong responses also featured culturally appropriate writing conventions and register and a variety of simple, compound, and complex sentences.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although most students opened and closed their e-mail replies in an appropriately formal manner, some students struggled to maintain a formal register throughout the e-mail reply, addressing the recipient by her first name or shifting to informal pronouns in the body of the e-mail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In strong responses, students were able to maintain a formal register throughout their e-mail replies, not only by providing an appropriately formal greeting and closing, but also through consistent formal pronoun usage (<i>Sie/Ihr/Ihnen</i> vs. <i>du/dein/dir</i>) and word choice appropriate to the situation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the vast majority of students responded to the two questions posed in the e-mail, many neglected to ask for more details about something in the message, as specified in the task directions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses addressed all task requirements, including asking for more details about something in the message.

- Some students completed all task requirements by providing answers to questions and posing an additional question, but only in a minimal, unelaborated manner.

- Strong responses offered clearly appropriate responses with frequent elaboration, which demonstrated ease and clarity of expression in the writer’s use of German.

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- The e-mail reply is primarily an interpersonal writing task, but it also requires skill in interpretive reading. Teachers should provide students with frequent opportunities to read and analyze e-mails before writing replies, drawing students’ attention in particular to the functions and referents of personal pronouns.
- Since students have only 15 minutes to read and respond to the e-mail on the exam, it is helpful for teachers to set time limits for students to write practice e-mails.
- Students should imagine that the e-mail is addressed to them personally and not be confused by impersonal salutations like “Dear Student.”
- It is imperative that students adhere to the task directions, answering all of the questions posed in the e-mail *and* asking for more details.
- Students should work on maintaining a formal register throughout their e-mail replies and pay close attention to how register is reflected in pronouns and word choice, as well as in salutations and closings.
- Overuse of memorized phrases should be avoided, since it may hamper student production of meaningful content in their e-mail replies.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the Scoring Guidelines throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-german-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>
- Use examples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance.
- Refer to the exam information page for additional essay tasks from previous years.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-german-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>
- Meet with educators who teach French, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will improve student performance.
- Have students respond to e-mails early in their language-learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures online module on interpersonal writing.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>

Question #2**Task:** Persuasive Essay**Topic:** Should zoos be closed?**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.37**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.14***What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?***

This task assessed writing in the presentational communicative mode by having students write a persuasive essay on a given topic while referencing three sources of information about the topic. Students were first allotted 6 minutes to read the essay topic and the two printed sources. Then they listened to the one audio source. Afterward they had 40 minutes to write the essay. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. Students needed to be able, first, to comprehend the three sources, and then to present their different viewpoints. They also had to present their own viewpoint and defend it thoroughly, using information from all the sources to support the essay. As they referred to the sources, they needed to identify them appropriately. Furthermore the essay had to be organized into clear paragraphs.

In this exam and within the theme of Global Challenges (*Globalisierung*), students wrote essays in response to the question of whether all zoos should be closed (*Sollte man alle Zoos (oder Tiergärten) schließen?*). The first print source (*Quellenmaterial 1*) offers a critique of zoos, claiming that they constitute a form of animal mistreatment. The article argues that the benefits provided by zoos in educating children (for example, about the protection of endangered species) are outweighed by the negative impact of zoos on the health and wellbeing of animals. The article claims that zoos do nothing to prevent the extinction of species and that the funding provided to zoos ought to be redirected to the protection of animal habitats in the wild. Furthermore zoos often house species that are not endangered and are instead focused on exhibiting particularly cute or exotic animals that draw visitors. The educational dimension of zoos is also compromised, the article argues, when zoos present their animals like performers in an unrealistic, action-filled “show” or “event.” The article concludes with the claim that zoos function effectively as prisons for animals and with an appeal to readers to stop visiting zoos. The second print source (*Quellenmaterial 2*), a table, summarizes the results of a survey that asked 725 German children between the ages of 6 and 12 whether or not they agreed with a series of statements about zoos. Over 85 percent of the children agreed with the statement that zoo animals are well treated, and over 84 percent viewed a visit to a zoo as something special. At the other end of the spectrum, 40 percent of the children surveyed agreed that they feel sorry for zoo animals because they are behind bars, and 14 percent of the children said they never visit zoos. *Quellenmaterial 3*, the audio to which students listen twice, presents a conversation between a zoo director and a biologist about the role of zoos in wildlife conservation. The zoo director argues for the importance of zoos in protecting endangered species. He cites the example of the European bison, a species that was saved from extinction through the work of several German zoos. He also emphasizes the educational function of zoos, asserting that seeing an animal up close is a very different experience from viewing it on a computer screen or at a distance in its natural habitat. The biologist counters with the argument that there are numerous ways in which people can learn about animals outside of zoos and that, for example, a better understanding of wild animals in Asia or Africa can be gained by visiting conservation sites in the areas where the animals naturally live. The zoo director counters this argument by noting in closing that only 1 percent of the population is able to travel to such remote sites to see animals.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

In their responses, students were for the most part able to offer an effective or suitable treatment of the topic of whether all zoos should be closed. Most students understood the question (although some struggled with the word *schließen*, “to close”) and were readily able to connect it to their own personal experiences regarding zoos and animals. This allowed the majority of students to present a personal viewpoint on the topic. The sources offered a rich array of perspectives and information on the role of zoos in the protection of animals and endangered species, and the strongest essays made connections between the topic of zoos and environmental issues.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	Responses that Demonstrate Understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students summarized source material instead of integrating it into their own arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong essays are characterized by an integration of source material into the student’s argument; in doing so, students tend to draw on information from the sources that is most relevant to the student’s own point of view. In a strong essay, the student is frequently able to refute information from the sources by presenting a counter-argument, drawn either from the student’s own experiences or from the source material.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students misunderstood the source material, as shown by inaccurate paraphrases or by neglecting to address one or more of the sources in their essays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong essays integrate key information and relevant details from the source material, thereby demonstrating a high degree of comprehension of the sources.

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Teachers should encourage students to read the overview to each of the three sources (*Übersicht*) carefully before diving into the source itself, since the overview will often preview key terms and points of view found in the source.
- Students should learn to develop a clear outline for their essays before they begin writing. Although working on an outline during the exam may take time away from writing, a relatively short essay that is well organized and concisely argued will receive a higher score than a longer essay that is repetitive or rambling.
- Students should be encouraged to state their thesis (i.e. their answer to the question) early and draw on the source material to support that thesis, rather than begin with a summary of the sources.
- Students can and should take advantage of words and phrases from the source material in building their arguments, but they should be reminded to use quotation marks if they are citing the sources verbatim. In general, students should use direct quotes sparingly, since paraphrasing source material is a better way to demonstrate their comprehension of the material than direct citations. It is critical that students cite the sources as they draw on them, and students should feel free to use a short parenthetical citation form (e.g. Q1 for *Quellenmaterial 1*) to save time.
- If students do not know the German translation for a particular English word, they should do their best to circumlocute rather than simply insert an English word. While it is helpful for students to learn phrases typically found in academic essays (such as *laut des Textes* or *meiner Meinung nach*), they can detract from the persuasiveness of the student’s argument when used too frequently or inappropriately.
- Teachers should remind students that legible handwriting and correct punctuation, especially in the use of commas, contribute enormously to the readability of their essays. Students should practice producing legible handwritten essays, in pen and under a time limit.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the Scoring Guidelines throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-german-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>

- Use examples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance. Have them pay particular attention to how the content from the sources is cited and integrated.
- Refer to the exam information page for additional essay tasks from previous years.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-german-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>
- Meet with educators who teach French, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will improve student performance.
- Begin having students write essays based on sources early in their language-learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience. For example, have students respond first to one source (article, chart or audio) and then gradually build up to having students integrate two and three sources.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures online module on presentational writing as well as the module called *Building Students' Skills in Developing Effective Written Arguments*.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>

Question #3**Task:** Conversation**Max. Points:** 5**Topic:** Hannah’s piano recital**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.48**Standard Group Mean Score:** 3.11***What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?***

This task assessed speaking in the interpersonal communicative mode by having students respond as part of a simulated oral conversation. Students were first allotted 1 minute to read a preview of the conversation, including an outline of each turn in the conversation. Then the conversation proceeded, including 20 seconds for students to speak at each of five turns in the conversation. The series of five responses received a single holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. The responses had to appropriately address each turn in the conversation, according to the outline as well as the simulated interlocutor’s utterance.

In this exam, within the theme of Beauty and Aesthetics (*Schönheit und Ästhetik*), the interlocutor (Hannah) opens the conversation by greeting the student and noting that she had intended to send the student a text message that day. She then asks the student about the student’s plans for the weekend. The directions contained in the outline of the conversation tell the student to respond by answering Hannah’s question. In the second turn Hannah describes a problem that she has: she has to play in a piano recital on Saturday and is very nervous and stressed about it. Hannah comments that music *ought* to be fun, regardless of whether one plays or listens, and asks the student for confirmation of this point of view (*Findest du nicht?*). The student is directed to react to this question. In the third turn Hannah asks for advice: she would like to stop taking piano lessons, but she feels that she cannot do so because her mother would be very disappointed. Hannah asks what the student would do in her position, and the student is directed to give a piece of advice. In the fourth turn Hannah considers the advice and notes that it would be nice not to have to sit at the piano every day. She then asserts that young people should be the ones who decide what activities they participate in (such as music or sports), not their parents (*NICHT unsere Eltern*), and asks the student’s opinion of this perspective. The student is supposed to both state an opinion and back it up with a rationale. In the final turn Hannah mentions that she might talk to her mother. She then sees that her bus is coming and, before leaving, asks the student whether the student would like to do something later. The directions tell the student to answer the question.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

In general, responses to the task showed that students understood the situation and related well to the topic of music lessons and other activities. In strong and good responses, students were able to maintain the conversation across all five turns in a clearly appropriate and fully comprehensible manner, drawing on varied vocabulary and demonstrating accuracy in grammar, syntax, and usage.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students did not adhere to the conversation overview and responded inappropriately or only partially to the interlocutor’s statements and questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses follow the conversation overview and demonstrate knowledge of idiomatic language for various kinds of speech acts (stating opinions, giving advice, etc.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students did not understand some of the words and phrases used by the interlocutor and gave inappropriate responses as a result. For example, in the first turn, some students misunderstood the future-oriented perspective of the verb <i>vorhaben</i> and discussed what they did <i>last</i> weekend rather than their plans for the <i>coming</i> weekend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses are characterized by clearly appropriate statements in every turn of the conversation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students offered only brief, if still fully appropriate responses to the interlocutor's questions and statements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses feature frequent elaboration, allowing the student to clearly demonstrate ease and clarity of expression.

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Students should be reminded to read the task overview, since it may contain words and phrases that are relevant to the task itself, but they should avoid anticipating the topic presented in the overview and should instead listen carefully and follow the lead of the interlocutor.
- Students should actively learn the vocabulary items typically used in the conversation overview – both the meanings of the words (such as *begründen* or *einen Vorschlag machen*) and the phrases that one would use to support an opinion, make a suggestion, and so on.
- In practicing the conversation, teachers should remind students to adhere to the overview and to avoid taking the conversation in a different direction, since that would undercut their ability to maintain the exchange with appropriate responses.
- Although students are not required to fill the 20 seconds in which they respond to each turn, they should be encouraged to elaborate within their responses and say as much as they can (while still maintaining the appropriateness of their responses).
- The improvisational nature of the conversation lends itself to all kinds of role-playing in the classroom. From the earliest stages of the curriculum, teachers should provide students with opportunities to take on a role and practice responding appropriately in an unfamiliar situation. Within this context, students should learn words and phrases for opening and closing conversations, responding to questions, giving opinions, and dealing with complications.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the Scoring Guidelines throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-german-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>
- Use examples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance.
- Refer to the exam information page for additional conversation tasks from previous years.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-german-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>
- Meet with educators who teach French, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will assist student performance.
- Work with students so they become familiar with how long 20 seconds is and can become more attuned to how long their responses can be.
- Teach students how to use the conversation outline to their advantage. Examine trends from year-to-year so that students can anticipate types of responses.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures online module on interpersonal speaking.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>

Question #4**Task:** Cultural Comparison**Topic:** Regional cultures**Max. Points:** 5**Total Group Mean Score:** 3.10**Standard Group Mean Score:** 2.89***What were responses expected to demonstrate in their response to this question?***

This task assessed speaking in the presentational communicative mode by having students make a comparative oral presentation on a cultural topic. Students were allotted 4 minutes to read the topic and prepare the presentation and then 2 minutes to deliver the presentation. The response received a single, holistic score based on how well it accomplished the assigned task. The presentation needed to compare the student's own community to an area of the German-speaking world, demonstrating understanding of cultural features of the German-speaking world. Furthermore the presentation had to be organized clearly.

In this exam, within the theme of Personal and Public Identities (*Persönliche und Öffentliche Identität*), students were asked about the role of regional cultures, as manifested, for example, in dialects, eating habits and traditions, in their communities (*Welche Rolle spielen regionale Kulturen (z.B. Dialekte, Essgewohnheiten, Traditionen, etc.) in Ihrem sozialen Umfeld.*) In their oral presentations, students compared perspectives on this question in their home community with those in a German-speaking region and were also invited to describe their own observations, experiences, or what they had learned in school.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

In general, students were challenged by the task of comparing regional cultures in their home communities and the German-speaking world. Although many could say something related to the three examples given the prompt (dialects, eating habits, and traditions), relatively few students were able to provide examples, place them within the broader context of regional differences, and also compare the role those differences might play in their own culture and the target culture.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students did not address the <i>role</i> that regional cultures play in their own community and German-speaking communities, offering instead only facts about regional cultures, often in the form of a list and divorced of context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses provided not only information about regional cultures but also offered a context and rationale for why the student's own culture and the target culture might differ in certain respects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students misunderstood the concept of <i>regionale Kulturen</i> and offered a general comparison of their own culture and the target culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong responses drew clear comparisons between different regional cultures within their own communities and in the German speaking world. For example, in discussing dialects, some students noted that people using different dialects in Germany might not be able to understand one another, whereas linguistic differences in the U.S. do not generally interfere with communication

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- When preparing for the Cultural Comparison, teachers should remind students that they must both address the topic *and* compare the two cultures. The prompt for the Cultural Comparison always takes the form of a question, and students must make an effort to answer that question in their presentations. The question may require students to address the meaning of a particular cultural phenomenon or the role that it plays in German-speaking and American societies. It is therefore important for students to practice describing aspects of culture in detail and depth. Students should be aware of the fact that they may focus on a single cultural phenomenon in their presentations, as long as they address both cultures and answer the question in the prompt.
- Students may want to consider beginning their presentations by addressing the German-speaking culture in order to maximize their opportunities to demonstrate knowledge of the target culture. Since they will naturally have more to say about their own communities, discussing their own culture later in the presentation may help them avoid running out of time before they are able to make an effective comparison. Alternatively, students may want to alternate between the two cultures in making points related to the topic of the presentation.
- In their presentations, students should avoid vague generalities by giving concrete examples from a specific region or city in the German-speaking world with which they are familiar. Mentioning the source of their information (a literary text or news article, an exchange student, or their teacher) makes their statements more convincing and adds to the overall effectiveness of the presentation. Use of phrases such as "the Germans" can lead to overly broad generalizations, and teachers should encourage students to use qualifiers such as "some Germans" or "many Germans" instead.
- Students can develop strategies for organizing their presentations by learning appropriate phrases for opening and closing the presentation and for transitioning between topics. At the same time, it is important that students keep their organizational statements brief in order to maximize the amount of time they have to communicate information.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Use and apply the Scoring Guidelines throughout the AP year and in years leading up to the AP experience so students are familiar with how their response will be scored.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-german-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>
- Use examples of student performance to provide concrete examples of strong, good, and fair performance and have students apply the scoring guidelines so they can improve their performance.
- Refer to the exam information page for additional cultural comparison tasks from previous years.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-german-language-and-culture/exam?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>
- Meet with educators who teach French, Italian, and Spanish Language and Culture to determine what common issues there are across languages and to share strategies that will assist student performance.
- Begin having students develop presentations early in their language-learning experience so they become familiar with the task and begin to integrate more sophisticated language well before the beginning of the AP experience.
- Complete the AP World Languages and Cultures online module on presentational speaking.
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/ap-world-language-culture-interactive-online-modules?course=ap-german-language-and-culture>