



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The number of students who sat for the oral examination this year was very small. Generally, the majority of students demonstrated good skills in using spoken Maltese. Most students could effectively engage in conversation. The top students spoke like native speakers and were able to continue the flow of conversation with the assessors and give in-depth responses. Weaker students required some prompting in order to continue the conversation, although this was due mainly to nervousness.

The main topic for the Discussion for this year was the Knights of Malta. The sub-topics chosen were varied and included information about grandmasters, buildings and events that took place during the time that the Knights lived in Malta. The majority of students were well prepared for the Discussion and expressed their opinions and views clearly. Students should be careful not to revert to English, whether due to nervousness or an inability to remember the correct Maltese word(s).

The assessors noticed that most students demonstrated more confidence in their oral skills this year. Students who are less fluent in speaking the language should use Maltese as the medium of communication whenever possible. They should listen more to spoken Maltese (via media, music, etc.) in order to improve their pronunciation and oral communication skills.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

In this section, students are expected to converse with the assessors about their personal world. The higher performing students handled the Conversation with great confidence and demonstrated an ability to engage in flowing, spontaneous conversation. They could expand thoroughly on various personal topics and supported their opinions with sound reasons. They had excellent pronunciation and intonation skills and maintained the correct tempo in their speech. These students demonstrated the correct use of language structures and were able to link with the assessors effectively.

A few students were less fluent in their oral skills and expressed their ideas with some difficulty, perhaps because they were very nervous. In such cases, assessors often supported these students by rephrasing a question to overcome short pauses. Some students need to develop a greater range of vocabulary and learn the correct language structures and grammatical rules. Weaker students were found wanting in repair strategies.

Overall, the majority of this year's students demonstrated excellent oral skills and handled this section with great confidence.

Section 2 – Discussion

All students had thoroughly researched their topic and the majority supported their discussion by using props. It was pleasing to see that most students had researched a different aspect of the main topic and used various resources to obtain their information. They provided a lot of relevant factual information and demonstrated good research skills. These students answered questions without difficulty and were able to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately.

The average-scoring students demonstrated some knowledge of the texts studied but did not have enough content to fill the required time. They did not have enough command over the language to be able to express their ideas clearly. These students found it difficult to maintain the exchange with the assessors even when assessors rephrased the questions. Students are encouraged to choose sub-topics that can accommodate a range of interests, so that they have more flexibility in responding to questions posed by the panel. Students are also encouraged to practise their verbal communication skills so that the conversation sounds natural and spontaneous.

Most students kept to the time limit and all used the correct greetings when entering and leaving the room.



Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Generally, students' performances in the written component ranged from average to very high.

In Section 1 – Listening and responding most students did reasonably well, but some had difficulty in either understanding the questions or remembering details and therefore answered inappropriately. Students should listen to and use Maltese in their daily lives in order to gain fluency both in speaking and understanding the language.

In Part A of Section 2, most students demonstrated an understanding of texts and answered most questions accurately. In Part B, most students understood the task but, as occurred last year, demonstrated poor knowledge of the conventions of how to write a formal letter.

In Section 3, Questions 9, 11 and 12 were attempted by the students, the most popular one being the imaginative Question 9. No students attempted Question 10. In this section a number of students' responses showed a good understanding of the task, correct use of language structure and cohesiveness. Others were less able to demonstrate that they had understood the task.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and Responding

Part A

Students listened to five recorded conversations in Maltese and then had to answer questions in English. The majority of students did well in this section.

Text 1

Question 1a.

The Maltese word *wirja* means exhibition and variety show.

The majority of students answered this question correctly.

Question 1b.

Any of:

- offer guests a taste of Maltese food
- come and bring many friends with you
- according to the advertisement, everyone is invited.

All students answered correctly by choosing one of these answers.

Question 1c.

Any two of:

- it includes organised games
- sampling of Maltese dishes
- Maltese songs and dancing
- meeting friends and making new friends.

The majority of students answered this question correctly, although a few gave only one correct answer.

Text 2

Question 2a.

Any two of:

- he got up late
- his sister took ages in the bathroom
- he spilt coffee all over himself.

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Two-thirds of the students obtained full marks. The others gave only one correct answer.

Question 2b.

Any two of:

- the roads to the city were closed
- the police turned him back
- parking was difficult
- he was late for work.

Most students obtained full marks. The others appeared to have misunderstood the text.

Question 2c.

Any three of:

- public transport should be more efficient
- public transport should be more punctual
- just one car free day is easily forgotten – we need an ongoing system for a whole year so people will not forget
- the shops' facades and buildings will be cleaner

Nearly all students responded correctly to this question. A few students gave only two correct answers and others only one.

Text 3

Question 3 posed a challenge to most students as only two students answered all the questions on this text correctly.

Question 3a.

Because she was involved in a school (social studies) project.

Three-quarters of students answered this question correctly.

Question 3b.

Any two of:

- instead of having individual birthday parties, have a combined party
- there would be too many parties.

Only one-third of the students scored full marks for this question.

Question 3c.

Any three of:

- teachers
- parents
- business people
- local leaders
- local council.

Approximately 40 per cent of the students included three correct answers; the others gave one or two correct responses.

Question 3d.

Both of:

- students' tasks became lighter with outside help – in fact they had the same responsibilities
- only girls were organising this project – the school was co-educational and boys were also involved.

Only one quarter of the students answered this question correctly.



Part B

Text 4

The majority of students performed well in this section and answered most questions correctly. A small number of students demonstrated poor comprehension skills and answered some questions incorrectly.

Question 4a.

Any two of:

- spent Christmas in Australia
- loved her holiday
- went on a cruise
- nearly drowned.

Students had to give their answers in complete sentences. The majority of students answered this question correctly.

Question 4b.

Both of:

- there are lifesavers
- there are designated places for swimming/there are places where one should not swim.

One quarter of students included only one correct statement and therefore did not score full marks.

Text 5

This was another challenging text.

Question 5a.

Any two of:

- he had thought the designers were vain, attention-seeking and greedy
- he worried that he would be dizzy or have ear problems due to the height
- he had thought that the lift could take ages to get up to the top floors.

Question 5b.

Any four of:

- he now thinks that the designers are people of imagination and courage
- he praises the view
- he does not experience any ill effects
- inside the building everything is quiet in spite of a storm outside
- he seems impressed that everything is electronically controlled
- he is sorry that he cannot live in such a building
- he tells his viewers to invite him to dinner if they decide to live there.

Section 2 – Reading and Responding

Part A

Text 6

Most students did well in this area and gave correct responses to all three questions. The others left out a few important details or gave incorrect answers.

Question 6a.

All of:

- the rainfall of 445 mm was the highest since 1899
- eight surrounding areas were declared a disaster area
- houses, parks, infrastructures, roads and bridges were affected
- emergency services had to work hard to evacuate residents.

Students needed to respond in sentences. Half of the students included all four answers and scored full marks.

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Question 6b.

For example:

- 'The extent of the floods'
- 'The volunteers/rescuers' or 'Community cooperation'
- 'Praise for young volunteers and local people'.

All students answered this question correctly.

Question 6c.

Any three of:

- young volunteers spent all night in torrential rain
- families were rescued in low lying areas
- the community members showed a willingness to help each other
- even a cat was rescued from the top of a tree.

Most students responded correctly to this question.

Text 7

Question 7a.

All of:

- a dam to be built upstream to act as a barrier and provide drinking water
- modern flood warning systems
- young people drawn from all ethnic groups to be more active in council matters
- old storm water drains to be replaced by new ones.

Question 7b.

Any six of:

- town prone to flooding/near the river Springthorpe
- a popular township with a growing number of residents
- has many young people of different ethnic origins
- has cooperative residents who care for their neighbours
- residents are responsible: they came out to an evening meeting even though they had young children
- the town has its own State Emergency Services
- young volunteers
- its council members have been very successful, but they are getting old.

Forty percent of students obtained full marks for this question. The others gave three–five answers.

Part B

Text 8

Question 8

For this question students had to write a formal letter to the director of Calleja Music Stores to apply for the position of manager. The top-scoring students demonstrated good knowledge of how to write a formal letter and used the conventions of letter writing correctly. Their responses showed good organisation of information and ideas as well as an understanding of more complex language structures. Average-scoring students also included these skills but to a lesser degree.

Some students did not seem to know what conventions should be used when writing a formal letter, which caused many students to lose marks. Teachers should ensure that their students know the difference between a formal and informal letter.

Section 3 – Writing in Maltese

Question 9

Students had to write an imaginary story for a literary competition ending with the words 'that event changed my life'. This question was the most popular in Section 3, with three quarters of the students choosing it. The scores for the

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responses ranged from average to high with three students gaining nearly full marks. The higher scoring students demonstrated a good understanding of the task as well as an extensive knowledge of vocabulary and syntax. Some story lines were very creative and impressed the assessors. The average scoring students demonstrated a satisfactory knowledge of the language. However, in some cases their writing did not show a complete understanding of the task.

Question 10

In Question 10 students had to write a review, to be published in the local paper, evaluating a recent film.

No students chose this task.

Question 11

Students were required to write an informative article for the school magazine to tell other students about the benefits of continuing their studies of the Maltese language. Few students chose this question. Those who did scored highly and demonstrated a good knowledge of the requirements of the task, using very persuasive arguments in their article. The responses were generally quite cohesive and demonstrated satisfactory spelling skills.

Question 12

Students had to write the text of a speech for a debating team on the argument 'Television offers a good education for young people'. Few students attempted this question. Students needed to place more emphasis on giving strong arguments which convinced the audience of their viewpoint.