

2021 VCE Khmer oral external assessment report

General comments

The Khmer oral examination assesses students' knowledge and skills in using spoken language. The examination has two sections – a conversation of approximately 7 minutes, during which students converse with the assessors about their personal world, and a discussion of approximately 8 minutes.

It should be noted that during the oral examination:

- students may be asked a variety of questions of varying levels of difficulty. Questions may also be asked in a different order from the one students anticipate
- assessors may interrupt students to ask questions during either section of the examination; this should be regarded as a normal process in a discussion
- assessors may also repeat or rephrase questions
- normal variation in assessor body language is acceptable.

Students are reminded that they must be prepared to use language spontaneously in unrehearsed situations. Students are not expected to be 'experts'; they are expected to have learnt strategies in order to respond to unexpected questions. It would be valuable for students to learn phrases such as, 'I have not studied this aspect of the subtopic but I think ...', 'I don't know, but I feel ...' and 'I am not sure about this question, but I know ...'

Students will be assessed in both the conversation and the discussion in communication, content and language. The criteria are published on the VCAA website. It is important that all teachers and students be familiar with the criteria and descriptors, and that students use them as part of their examination preparation. This will help students to engage in a lively and interesting exchange with assessors. Although there are similarities between the assessment criteria for the conversation and discussion sections of the examination, the criteria assess two very different aspects of performance. Students who are well prepared are generally able to demonstrate their abilities and proficiency in the language.

Section 1 – Conversation

Section 1 consists of a general conversation about the student's personal world, for example, school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations. It is an organic conversation about the student's personal world. These examples provide students with a basis for preparing a range of interesting and engaging ideas about their personal world, so that they can engage in a spontaneous discussion with the assessors about things that interest them.

Most students completed the conversation section well, although a few students needed to prepare for more elaboration of any points they were discussing with the assessors.

To elaborate more readily during the conversation students could practise conversing about a wide range of possible subtopics that reaches beyond the above suggested examples. Students are reminded that the focus of the discussion is their personal world, so many other areas can be discussed. It is advised that students prepare for this task thoroughly, so that they are confident and fully engaged in the conversation with highly relevant responses. Preparing ideas in advance gives the advantage of being able to move the

conversation forward easily and elaborate on subtopics more readily. Students can become familiar and comfortable with words that are often used in different subtopics of the conversation.

High-scoring conversations included:

- lead-in statements that responded directly to the assessors (e.g. ‘Thanks, this is good question ...’), and demonstrated a capacity to link with assessors at a high level
- responses that elaborated on information
- successful repair strategies (e.g. ‘Excuse me. What I meant to say is ...’, ‘I did not mean to say ...’, ‘What I mean is ...’, ‘I’d like to clarify what I said ...’)

Section 2 – Discussion

Following the conversation, the student indicates to the assessors the subtopic chosen for detailed study and, in no more than one minute, briefly introduces the main focus of their subtopic, alerting assessors to any objects brought to support the discussion. Suitable objects include photographs, maps or diagrams, and should include no text or very little text. The support material must have minimal writing, which includes only a heading, name or title.

The one-minute introduction should give assessors an indication of the area of discussion. The purpose is for students to briefly introduce their chosen subtopic; it is not an opportunity for students to list all their information or texts.

The focus of the discussion is to explore aspects of the language and culture of communities in which Khmer is spoken, with the student being expected to make reference to the texts studied.

The choice of subtopic for the detailed study is very important. It should be an engaging subtopic that motivates students to become familiar with the content and vocabulary needed, and to elaborate on information, ideas and opinions. It is important that students and teachers select materials for the detailed study carefully so that students are exposed to a variety of views. The type of texts used by students should vary in complexity and be in Khmer so that students can become aware of key vocabulary related to their subtopic. Students should be able to draw on the texts they have studied and make links between the texts to support, expand on and explore opinions and ideas on the subtopic and different aspects of the texts. Students should be able to relate this to the Khmer-speaking community.

Overall, students performed very well in the discussion. Students presented various subtopics and were very informative, which indicated that most students had done sufficient research using a variety of sources, with specific examples that were relevant to their subtopic.

A few discussions went longer than the allotted 8 minutes. It would be useful to observe the time limit when preparing for this task, to avoid going over time and to provide enough information in student responses so that responses are not too short or too long.

Students were generally successful using linguistic elements. A few words that students used incorrectly were:

- កាន់កង្វះខាត instead of កាន់ខ្វះខាត (lacking)
- បង្រាយសំរាម instead of ពង្រាយសំរាម (scattering rubbish)
- អោបរំ instead of អប់រំ (education)
- ចង់ក្លាយជាវិស្វកម្ម (want to be an engineering) instead of ចង់ក្លាយជាវិស្វករ (want to be an engineer).

Students need to be aware that effective communication requires clarity, well-selected vocabulary, familiarity with terminology, clear pronunciation and a natural flow of speech, so practice in using Khmer vocabulary during class time and checking words with a dictionary is highly recommended.

High-scoring discussions demonstrated relevant responses to open questions, displaying an excellent understanding of the broader subtopic and the texts used for detailed study, original thoughts and an ability to elaborate on and defend opinions and ideas in the discussion.