

2020 VCE Armenian oral examination report

General comments

The Armenian 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.

Following the Conversation, the student will indicate to the assessor(s) the subtopic chosen for detailed study and, in no more than one minute, briefly introduce 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 Armenian 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 topic that motivates students to become familiar with the content and vocabulary needed, and thus be more skilled in supporting and elaborating 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 Armenian so that students can become aware of key vocabulary related to their subtopic. Students are reminded that they must be prepared to use language spontaneously in unrehearsed situations. 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 Armenian-speaking community.

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 topic, but I think ...', 'I don't know, but I feel ...' and 'I am not sure about this question but I know ...'

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.

Three criteria are used in assessing both the Conversation and the Discussion: communication, content and language. Details of the assessment criteria and descriptors 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.

Specific information

All students were generally well prepared, confident and at ease with the structure, pace and direction of both the Conversation and Discussion. Vocabulary, fluency and expression were of a very good standard. Students were able to converse clearly and confidently using appropriate constructs and the correct register (for example, դուք, ձեր) when addressing assessors.

Students generally demonstrated competence and fluency, exhibiting an excellent range of sophisticated vocabulary and expressions, using grammatical structures accurately and appropriately. Students also generally had very good pronunciation, stress and tempo.

High-achieving students used an extensive vocabulary, and most responses had no unnatural pauses. Anglicisms were rare, suggesting students are aware that they need to focus on correct and authentic use of the language.

Section 1 – Conversation

A wide range of topics was covered in the Conversation, including family background, personal issues, career aspirations, hobbies, travel plans or experiences, part-time employment and future plans. Students responded to questions confidently with relevant and spontaneous answers, elaborating on opinions with reasons and justification. Some displayed a strong sense of identity, self-awareness and belonging to the Armenian community.

Sentence structure and expression were very good, and the depth, breadth and complexity of the Conversation were satisfactory. All students engaged with the assessors confidently. False starts were rare, and self-correction, clarification and elaboration indicated excellent preparation.

Students are reminded to use the correct terms to describe full-time work (լիաժամ աշխատանք) and part-time work (կիսաժամ աշխատանք) when referring to current or future employment. They would also benefit from practising irregular declensions with the commonly used nouns of kinship, such as հորս, մորս, քրոջս, եղբորս.

Section 2 – Discussion

Students were very well prepared for the Discussion and had mastered their chosen Detailed Study subtopics, using a wide array of sources for research. This allowed for a free-flowing discussion where students demonstrated their ability to engage the assessors by giving appropriate responses and to influence the direction of the Discussion. As with the Conversation, little effort was needed by the assessors to maintain the exchange.

Topics for the Detailed Study ranged from the invention of the Armenian alphabet in 301 CE to the formation and structure of the Armenian community in Australia, and the links between Armenia and the diaspora. Students expressed a strong desire to visit Armenia and Artsakh and presented a coherent plan and explanation for their motivation.