



2013 Chinese Second Language Advanced GA 3: Examination

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The oral examination consists of approximately seven minutes of conversation, a one-minute introduction to the Detailed Study and seven minutes of discussion of the Detailed Study. Teachers and students are advised to follow the instructions and recommendations provided in the *VCE Chinese Second Language Advanced Study Design*.

The assessment criteria for the oral examination, Section 1 – Conversation, are

- capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively
- relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas
- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar
- clarity of expression.

The criteria for Section 2 – Discussion are identical to those for Section 1 – Conversation, with the exception of

- capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic.

Students are reminded to check the time of their scheduled exam carefully and ensure that they arrive on time.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Students are expected to interact with assessors about aspects of their personal world, including family and friends, school and home lives, interests and aspirations.

Criterion 1 – Communication: Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

- capacity to link with assessors
- effectiveness of communication and repair strategies
- degree of support necessary to maintain the exchange

Students performed well on this criterion, showing that they had prepared thoroughly. It is important that students give appropriate and adequate answers to questions and ask for clarification when they are unsure. Strong students were able to respond well to unexpected questions. These students also demonstrated an excellent level of understanding by responding confidently.

Some students were nervous at the beginning of the oral examination, but were able to overcome it as they progressed. Students are encouraged to take their time and speak slowly. If a student makes a mistake or forgets what they were going to say, they should simply apologise (对不起) and start again.

Students generally answered the assessors' questions well, although some students did not listen carefully and gave irrelevant or off-topic responses. Some students did not elaborate on their responses sufficiently.

Some students were unable to respond appropriately when assessors asked questions for which they were not prepared.

Students should not rely on rote-learned language in the oral examination.

Criterion 2 – Content: Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

- relevance of information/ideas
- range of information/ideas
- capacity to support/elaborate ideas/opinions with reasons/examples/evidence new ideas

High-scoring students presented an excellent range of information, opinions and ideas clearly and logically, with highly relevant responses.



Strong students were proactive and able to connect the different aspects of their life and situation so that the conversation became a real one. Some students offered inconsistent information and opinions.

Students would have performed better by focusing on the question itself rather than talking about only vaguely related subjects.

Criterion 3 – Language: Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

High-scoring students spoke accurately and appropriately, and used self-correction strategies.

The performance levels of students on this criterion varied. Some students were able to demonstrate awareness of appropriate style and register, and of cultural appropriateness such as respectful forms for older generations and modest ways of talking about their own strengths.

Some students used Chinese idioms and colloquial phrases; however, not all students used them appropriately. It is suggested that students need to first fully understand idioms and phrases and then apply them to suitable situations.

Criterion 4 – Language: Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

- variety of vocabulary, grammar and expressions
- appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar to the context, audience and purpose of the task
- appropriateness of style and register

Students did not perform well on this criterion. A large number of students used casual, colloquial or inappropriate words and phrases. High-scoring students used an excellent range of vocabulary, structures and expressions. They also consistently used highly appropriate style and register.

Generally, students' vocabulary and grammar were quite good. Stronger students knew how to use idioms and alternative vocabulary appropriately in their conversation; however, a few students used idioms or proverbs inappropriately. Plentiful use of idioms and proverbs does not imply good oral communication if other elements do not meet the standards expected.

Criterion 5 – Language: Clarity of expression

- pronunciation, intonation, fluency, stress and tempo
- effective control of language to convey linguistic and culturally appropriate meaning

High-scoring students had obviously anticipated the type of questions that might be asked and had prepared appropriate and interesting responses. Some students occasionally used English words – for example, the names of their school subjects and activities – but this was not appropriate. Students are reminded that they should not state their name or the name of their school.

Section 2 – Discussion

The focus of the Discussion is to explore aspects of the language and culture of Chinese communities.

After seven minutes, assessors will bring the conversation to an end and lead into the Discussion. Students should indicate to the assessors the sub-topic chosen for Detailed Study. In no more than one minute, the student introduces their Detailed Study by briefly summarising the main focus of their sub-topic and alerting assessors to any objects that have been brought in to support the Discussion.

Students are expected to make reference to the texts studied but will not be penalised if they fail to mention three texts.

This year, many students successfully demonstrated an understanding of the questions asked and excellent knowledge of the content related to the topic chosen. These students led the discussion in the direction that was favourable to them, and developed and elaborated on their responses with opinions and additional information using sophisticated linguistic skills.

Some students chose historical or current Chinese figures as their topic, such as 刘邦, 曾国藩, 武则天, 王羲之, 曹雪芹, 彭丽媛, etc. Students who were prepared and logical scored well. However, many students tended to give small pieces of information that did not add any particular meaning to the discussion. Other students gave superficial information



without further explanation, in-depth analysis or evaluation. There were some students who discussed information and articles that were not relevant.

Some students had not prepared at all for this section. Despite the requirement, a few students' topics did not relate to Chinese culture and language.

It is important that students clearly indicate their Detailed Study topic as assessors will direct the discussion to the content. A few students mentioned their reference materials but did not mention their actual research on their chosen topic.

Criterion 6 – Communication: Demonstrated capacity to maintain and advance the exchange effectively and appropriately

- capacity to link with assessors
- effectiveness of communication and repair strategies
- degree of support necessary to maintain the exchange

Students performed very well on this criterion. Most students understood the questions and responded appropriately. While some students appeared not to understand assessors' questions, many were able to ask for clarification.

Some students recited content and were unable to respond when they were asked questions. Students are expected to give their opinion on the topic and support their opinion with relevant information.

Criterion 7 – Content: Capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic

- relevance of information/ideas
- range of information/ideas
- capacity of support/elaborate ideas/opinions with reasons/examples/evidence new ideas

Choosing topics and sub-topics that suit the student's interests and levels of proficiency is crucial. Some students choose difficult or rare topics to demonstrate their unique choice. This is acceptable as long as the topics chosen conform to the study design and are related to the Chinese-speaking community. Some students did not choose appropriate topics that allowed an in-depth discussion. Some topics were either too narrow or too vague, while others were too broad or complicated to cover in seven minutes of discussion. Therefore, students should focus on specific aspects of topics. Some students' topics were too abstract and did not allow for a detailed discussion. Consequently, they were often presentations of information only, with little scope for expressing opinions or ideas about the chosen topic.

Some topics were too broad or complicated to cover within seven minutes of discussion. Therefore, it is better that students focus on specific aspects of topics.

Some students' topics were too abstract and did not allow for a detailed discussion. Consequently, they were often presentations of information only, with little scope for expressing opinions or ideas about the chosen topic.

Many students did not perform well on this criterion. There was a clear distinction between the more capable and the less capable students. Students who performed well had carefully considered their topic and sub-topic and had anticipated a range of questions. Using resources such as books, movies and documentaries would further support students' study and preparation. The less successful students appeared not to have practised structures or prepared the content in depth. They needed to elaborate more on their research. Many students focused on a story(ies) or legend(s) in relation to historical figures but had insufficient content and were unable to carry the conversation forward.

Only a few students were unable to answer the questions related to the topic they had chosen. Students need to understand that the discussion should be an analysis of their chosen texts rather than just an introduction to a broad topic. Students should focus on their particular sub-topic. Students also need to cover both breadth and depth while respecting the seven-minute time limit.

Students need to refer to recently published resources if they wish to analyse current aspects of topics.



Criterion 8 – Language: Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Generally, students had prepared well for this criterion, although a few students made mistakes with sentence structure and grammar. Students who scored well used languages and self-correction strategies accurately and appropriately. They had selected a topic that interested them and could converse at a language level suited to their ability.

Students should be aware that, following their initial answers, assessors will often ask further questions and rote-learned passages will not help them to cope with spontaneous questions.

Criterion 9 – Language: Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Students who scored highly used an excellent range of vocabulary, structure and expressions. They also consistently used highly appropriate style and register.

Students who performed well showed in-depth knowledge of the topic, explained their thoughts and opinions logically and convincingly, and offered possible solutions to the issues they presented. However, some students gave only general information.

When asked what they had learned from the resources and references, some students either could not reflect on the topic they had chosen or responded that this was not a part of their research.

Criterion 10 – Language: Clarity of expression

- pronunciation, intonation, fluency, stress and tempo
- effective control of language to convey linguistic and culturally appropriate meaning

Most students' pronunciation and tempo was good. However, some students tended to talk too quickly.