



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2008 oral examination was arranged into seven minutes of general conversation, a one-minute introduction to the Detailed Study and seven minutes of discussion of the Detailed Study. It is the teacher's responsibility to follow the instructions and recommendations provided in the *VCE French Study Design*.

In the Conversation section this year, most students were very well prepared and approached the examination with commitment. Excellent students were able to demonstrate depth of knowledge and understanding of the work they presented. They were successful in developing their responses, providing opinions and additional information, and they were able to lead the examination in the direction that was most favourable for them. Students generally demonstrated sophisticated linguistic skills and systematically possessed excellent knowledge of the content related to the prescribed topics. Most were able to demonstrate a working understanding of the questions they were asked and elaborate commendably on their opinions. Moreover, highly proficient students were successful in listening to the assessors' questions and responding to what was being asked, rather than merely providing general and rote-learned material. Conversely, students who had rote-learned information and who were not able to answer questions spontaneously did not perform as well as they might have, had they rehearsed according to the criteria. As the Conversation section reflects work studied in previous years, there remains evidence that meticulous and thorough preparation in the years leading up to Year 12 is essential.

Although the Conversation and the Discussion criteria are virtually the same, they assess two very different tasks. The Conversation section relates to very familiar matters such as school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations. This section is designed to test the student's ability to speak French in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way that reflects VCE, not junior secondary standard. The Discussion, on the other hand, is designed to test the student's skills in **presenting** and **exchanging** ideas, opinions and information. The Detailed Study requires a more objective approach so that the language used is much less predictable.

Once again some students surprisingly performed better in the Discussion section than in the Conversation section. Conversely, some performances deteriorated markedly in the Discussion section. Students are advised to be more systematic in reflecting on what they are saying and how they are speaking. Repair strategies, for instance, were not frequently in evidence. Moreover, students should be able to express personal ideas on their topics. Assessors were aware of students who had studied by rote-learning as they tended to struggle to continue when assessors interrupted them.

Even if students have made overseas trips to improve their oral proficiency, they will still need to prepare for their examination in a very thorough manner.

The criteria for the oral examination assessed the:

- capacity to **maintain and advance** the exchange appropriately and effectively
- capacity to **support** or **elaborate** on information, **ideas** and **opinions** with reasons, examples, evidence and/or **new ideas**
- relevance, **range, breadth** and **depth** of information, opinions and ideas
- **accuracy, range, variety** and **appropriateness** of vocabulary and grammar to the context, audience and purpose of the task
- student's capacity to **link** with assessors
- **effectiveness** of communication and **repair** strategies
- **degree of support** necessary to maintain the exchange
- **pronunciation, intonation, stress** and **tempo**
- **clarity** of expression.

The following areas should be addressed so that students maximise their performance during the oral examination. Students should:

- be **very** familiar with, and practise using, the criteria as part of their examination preparation



- understand that the conversation is an **exchange** and not a question/answer interchange. Replying with short answers and then waiting for more questions does not display adequate conversational skills and therefore does not score highly
- be willing to go beyond a simple response and train themselves to build on comments made by the assessors by expressing opinions
- answer each question with some breadth and depth by **adding** information and **expressing an opinion**
- be able to use appropriate language and techniques including eye contact, and use appropriate language to engage in a **discussion**
- have learnt techniques that cater for their learning needs
- express and elaborate on ideas and opinions, and be able to justify what they say spontaneously in unrehearsed situations without resorting only to memorised information. Sound preparation and rehearsal carries weaker students through an examination. Students need to prepare for a variety of questions as unrehearsed responses often lack conviction
- understand that there are numerous ways of answering a question and be prepared for information to be questioned in a variety of ways. Although well prepared, some students seemed to flounder when questions were phrased differently
- acquire a quality collection of key vocabulary and structures that allow them to be able to make comparisons and comments
- have a **thorough** working knowledge of VCE level requirements and be able to converse in basic tenses such as the present, future, perfect, imperfect and conditional
- use connecting words accurately so that their response flows
- listen to the tense of the verb asked in the question, and answer questions using the appropriate tense in response
- provide appropriate answers to the questions asked, not resort to slabs of rote-learned work
- be able to self-correct, ask for clarification if necessary and develop repair strategies in order to avoid lengthy pauses
- know how to make reference to, and link their opinions to texts studied
- set up the parameters of the topic and know how to guide the assessors to the preferred areas of analysis
- appreciate that what they say will often lead the assessors to ask questions about that information
- understand that visual aids can be useful if carefully chosen and the content rehearsed
- know that merely quoting rote-learned lines and dates may seem stilted if they have not prepared adequately.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Sound preparation resulted in good performances. The most successful students provided extensive and non-predictable responses to the questions asked, assertively advancing the exchange while simultaneously displaying a confident command of accurate language and a sophisticated range of vocabulary. These students demonstrated excellent working knowledge and mastery of all the basic tenses to VCE level, as well as using complex structures such as **causative faire**, the **passive** and the **subjunctive**. They were able to respond to and develop comments made by the assessors as well as move with ease from one tense and topic to another by using a wide variety of connectives. These students rarely hesitated and maintained a consistent pace without unnatural pauses throughout the examination. Moreover, they were able to 'lead' the assessors, so it was evident that they had practised gap-filling, conscious self-correction techniques and strategies for linking with assessors.

Conversely, less proficient students were satisfied with simplistic and basic answers. They seemed to struggle with the simplest questions and grammatical structures. They often made false starts and offered unsophisticated responses at an elementary standard. Their pronunciation was frequently stilted, and their stress and tempo indifferent. Moreover, their responses were often minimal, mediocre and memorised at the proverbial 'last minute'. Some students once again relied too heavily on rote-learned material and became disconcerted when they were asked questions they were either not anticipating or that were not in an order they were expecting. They were also unable to advance the conversation and rarely used connectives. They systematically resorted to anglicisms and pre-learned material to compensate for their lack of preparation or gaps in their grammatical knowledge. These students often confused genders and pronouns and were unable to make subject-verb or noun-adjective agreements. They had very confused notions of tenses, often being unable to switch through basic tenses such as the **present**, **perfect**, **imperfect**, **future** and **conditional** that are required at this level. Furthermore, they experienced difficulty in offering, expanding on and justifying opinions. Finally, merely conveying information does not support the requirements of the Conversation section.



Section 2 – Discussion

It is **essential** to be very careful when choosing the sub-topic for the Detailed Study. This section should be a discussion, not a memory test, about French life and culture, so the topics chosen should reflect more typical ideas and values. The Discussion needs structure and should not be ambiguous. Moreover, the texts selected should be appropriate for the cohort of students and should lend themselves to discussion. No topic is appropriate if it is not adequately prepared. Conversely, any topic is appropriate if it is designed, manipulated and prepared effectively and as long as it:

- follows the guidelines stipulated in the *VCE French Study Design*
- relates to French-speaking communities
- leads to discussion with assessors
- contains an issue that leads to discussion
- allows the student to express opinions
- ensures that students understand the links between the texts and the theme.

The **manner** in which the topic is handled is **crucial** and the final result is dependent on student ability. From the responses the strong students provided, it was evident that students seemed to enjoy their Detailed Study, which in turn led them to achieving better results.

The resources chosen to support the Detailed Study are also crucial and should be appropriate for the students **and** the topic studied. Students need to **understand** and be inspired and enthusiastic about the topic they are studying. Furthermore, it is strongly suggested that the sub-topic should include a question/issue that needs to be answered as this lends structure to the student's learning. Additionally, the topic should suit **the student's language capacity**. The topic should promote discussion and linkages of the resources studied and allow the students to **express their opinions** as well as generate new ideas by expanding on the topic. Students should also prepare a diversity of responses for questions they rehearse. The texts selected must be of substance and should be **in French**, and enable students to learn relevant and sophisticated vocabulary and structures. In too many cases the texts, interviews, and films selected as resources were in English or were limited. On another level, students should not resort to listing every text they studied if they are not able to comment on them. It is advisable that the students analyse all the texts in detail, and are prepared to answer **any** questions based on the texts they have studied. This includes being able to say that they 'aren't quite sure of the answer' but they 'think that...'.

Some topics were superficial, purely factual and descriptive and were handled inappropriately, as often there were slabs of rote-learned information not followed by ideas and viewpoints. Moreover, some of the topics chosen did not relate at all to the information the students stated they had studied in the texts, with some students unable to link information from the texts to the sub-topic they had studied. This resulted in the students being unable to elaborate on their comments, provide opinions, and often did not lead to discussion.

Poor choices of sub-topics also tended to inhibit the students' chances of meeting the criterion that assesses **relevance, breadth and depth of information**. Good choices of topics reflected the students' interests and inspired students to be willing to elaborate and respond **with opinions**. In short, good topics contained factual information and a scope for ideas. Many students struggled where they simply had some ideas which they did not develop effectively and were unable to offer solutions to problems. Detailed Studies that did not allow students to have an opinion had a tendency to produce little discussion, but rather resulted in a description/presentation of each text, thereby penalising the student. Informative topics such as *La Provence*, *La Tour Eiffel*, *Montmartre*, *Le Mariage*, *Le reflet de la vie* and *La Place de la Bande Dessinée en France* often failed to lead to discussion.

Further examples of problem areas in topics selected were as follows:

- *La France Plurielle* – this topic is too one-sided and needs to reflect both sides of the argument
- *La Nouvelle Vague* – this topic was too ambitious and sophisticated with students resorting to anglicised versions of difficult vocabulary
- *L'environnement* – this topic needed amplification to specify an particular aspect of the issue
- *La ville artistique de Paris* – the number of texts students used was minimal and they were often inappropriate for in-depth discussion and eliciting opinions
- *L'injustice humaine* – this topic was too broad. Students struggled to understand this because the texts they had used were inappropriate
- *L'Emancipation de la femme* – many students concentrated only on one famous woman, thereby making it difficult for them to pursue the discussion more broadly. Moreover, some students used the topic Anne Frank for their discussion, which was irrelevant to French-speaking communities



- *Les Sciences: Pasteur, Lavoisier et médecins sans frontières* – this was descriptive and did not lead to discussion.

It is strongly advised that students structure their introduction tightly, and direct assessors to **their** preferred areas of discussion by including one or more questions they had addressed while studying their Detailed Study. They should deliver the introduction at a measured pace. Strong students outlined the sub-topic within the required one-minute time limit. They provided the title of the sub-topic, and gave a very brief elaboration of the sub-topic highlighting the issue they had considered and advised assessors of any support material that had been brought in. Less proficient students went beyond the one-minute limit, launching into a presentation rather than giving an introduction. Other students cited too many resources and then were unable to discuss the content of these documents in depth.

Highly proficient students demonstrated excellent knowledge of their topic, citing three or more varied resources that consisted of different text types. Not only were they thoroughly conversant with the content of their Detailed Study, but they were also highly skilled in expressing and elaborating on ideas and opinions, and substantiated them with sophisticated evidence. At this level, students demonstrated the capacity to use an extensive range of vocabulary, connectives and a range of complex structures and accurate language. Discussion of the texts, their merits and their strengths and weaknesses, also led to a lively discussion.

Examples of successful topics that produced enthusiastic responses from students were:

- *Problèmes sociaux en France – SDF, Le Chômage*
- *Le thème de la persécution des Juifs dans les films*
- *L'esprit révolutionnaire et la Contestation en France*
- *La fraternisation pendant la seconde guerre mondiale*
- *La Résistance et la deuxième guerre mondiale du point de vue d'une mère française*
- *La place des immigrés en France*
- *Le problème des jeunes dans la banlieue parisienne*
- *Le contraste de l'humour dans la société française*
- *L'injustice du racisme*
- *L'aide humanitaire*
- *La Résistance*
- *La France: Un pays d'accueil ?*

It should be reiterated that it was the **manner** in which these topics were presented that generally produced very good outcomes for the students. In contrast, a number of unprepared students seemed oblivious to the stipulations for the Detailed Study in the *VCE French Study Design*. Limited information resulted in students being unable to present and express their opinions. Some students stated that they had studied a number of texts, but were then unable to demonstrate adequate knowledge of the texts they had studied by showing the links between the topics and the texts. A number of students quoted only two resources or no written resources, citing only information they had downloaded from the Internet. These students were unable to go beyond the boundaries of the texts and remained only within the topic they had chosen. Consequently, they were unable to discuss different aspects of their chosen sub-topic. A small number of students presented unsuitable topics that had no obvious links to French-speaking communities. To reiterate, discussion topics need to be significantly related to French-speaking communities and reflect 15 hours of scheduled class time.

The very weak students presented little, superficial information in the Discussion and needed a great deal of support, especially with topics in which they were uninterested or that were too difficult for them. They consequently could not express opinions, and if they did, they were generally unable to develop their responses to substantiate their opinions or the information they presented. Some students were unable to diverge from pre-learned materials thereby demonstrating that they lacked the skills to engage in a sustained and meaningful discussion. It should also be noted that some weak students attempted to 'wing' this part of the examination by claiming ignorance and trying to bring written work into the examination room.

Some general recommendations

Students should:

- prepare their one-minute introduction concisely, presenting the topic and the resources used carefully without putting ideas and content into the introduction. Students should also speak clearly so that assessors have time to record key information



- limit the texts they study, know them **in depth**, and have a **variety** of things to say about the topic and issue they have chosen
- be able to discuss the structure and merit of their resources, how they link with each other, which ones they preferred and why, and what conclusion they have drawn from their study
- be encouraged to **reflect** on the topic they have studied and be able to express their **own opinion**
- avoid basic communication by answering in a variety of ways and using at least two or three sentences
- not assume that being a native or near-native speaker will automatically produce excellent results unless they have prepared the tasks and show that they have met the criteria
- be able to link the texts they have studied for their topic
- be prepared to discuss **any** aspect of the resources they bring
- be prepared to **discuss** and **justify** information, not just state/present it
- practise throughout the year and not display the lack of depth and rehearsal
- not recite pre-learned material
- be trained to avoid generalisations, lists of descriptive comments and stereotypes
- use a variety of structures and vocabulary as they develop their answers
- revise their grammar very carefully to avoid basic errors such as *beaucoup des, j'étude, sujet* instead of *matière, au sujet de* instead of *environ de, guerre* instead of *gare*, etc.
- articulate and enunciate clearly when they speak
- avoid anglicisms.

On a practical level, it is very important that teachers understand their students' needs as these affect their students' overall performance. Firstly, if students require special consideration because of visual, speech or hearing impediments, it is the **responsibility of the school** to ensure that the student is assisted by applying for special consideration in time. It should also be noted that students seem to have increasing problems with hearing and this tends to affect the students' comprehension and enunciation. Secondly, many students suffer from examination nerves and should receive assistance in time to address this. Thirdly, students should be reminded not to wear their school uniforms or mention the names of their schools, as was the case on many occasions in 2008. It is recommended that students wear neat casual dress.

The overall performance of the students who presented for the 2008 French examination was generally very pleasing.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students were, on the whole, well prepared for the format and time constraints of the examination. Only a few students appeared to run out of time and did not complete Section 3. The most successful students performed at a consistently high level in the listening, reading and writing sections of the examination, demonstrating an excellent knowledge and command of all aspects of French.

A conscious effort was often made to use subjunctive and more complex sentence structures, even though these were not always used successfully.

Common mistakes included:

- agreements of adjectives and past participles
- object pronouns
- verb endings
- incorrect tenses
- word order/syntax, position of adjectives and adverbs: *ta lettre dernière* instead of *ta dernière lettre*
- genders: *le/la poste*
- anglicisms such as *sur le weekend, sur le vendredi, temps* instead of *heure* for time, *jouer du sport* instead of *faire du sport*
- incorrect use of register: for example, *vous* instead of *tu*
- *Beaucoup DES*
- *a* and *à, ou* and *où*.

Spelling was not always accurate, for example, *le travail/le travaille*. Some students also struggled with English spelling, for example, using 'by' instead of 'buy' and of/off. Students' performance was also often impeded by their poor knowledge of English grammar.



Students must write legibly. Crossing out neatly and re-writing is better than going over an answer, which can result in the answer being unclear. Correct punctuation is important as it can change the meaning of a sentence.

Students are advised to use the 15 minute reading time wisely. Reading the questions in Section 1 will help them to be more focussed when listening to the passages, and be more aware of the information they will need to provide. When tackling Section 2, students are advised to read through the whole passage before attempting to answer each question.

Students are able to access their dictionary and are encouraged to do so. Many students continue to confuse nouns and verbs. Students should establish a wide vocabulary so that they do not have to waste time looking up too many words during the examination.

Students need to be reminded that this examination is a test of their knowledge of standard French and should be wary of using too many colloquial expressions inappropriately.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding Part A – Answer in English

This task was designed to assess students' capacity to understand general and specific texts. The number of marks available for each question indicated the number of points or responses required.

Generally the order of the questions corresponds to the order in which the information is presented in the texts. However, some questions can relate to the passage as a whole and some information may need to be found in different parts of the text.

Text 1

Question 1

Tea room/tea rooms/tea salon

Tea house was not accepted.

Question 2

Any two of:

- umbrellas (on the walls)
- paintings/pictures of hunting (scenes)
- paintings/pictures of dogs.

Question 3

Opposite Saint Geneviève's Church

Some students ticked two boxes and were not awarded any marks.

Question 4

Cake (with) orange jam/marmalade, served with custard, covered OR topped with chocolate

Answers that were not accepted included orange cake, English cream/cream – chocolate cake OR chocolate sprinkles OR chocolate cream.

Text 2

Question 5

Women's/girls'/female rugby

Feminine rugby/feminine version of rugby was not accepted.

Question 6

French delegate/representative OR representative of women's rugby

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Question 7

Increased number of teams

Increased number of players or girls was not accepted.

Question 8

One of:

- it is not a sport for women
- it is violent/too rough.

Too physical was not accepted.

Question 9

Both of:

- more technical/skilful
- less physical.

Less violent was not accepted.

Question 10

Both of:

- tournament/round robin/championship/competition
- French or France Stadium/Stadium of France/Stade de France.

Question 11

Encouragement/approval/support/enthusiasm/wishes them good luck/says 'go girls'

Part B – Answer in French

In this part of the examination students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand a text spoken in French and respond to it in French. Ten marks were given for the capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts, and five marks were given for conveying information accurately and appropriately in French. The accuracy of the language is assessed even if the answers given are not correct. Students must respond in full sentences, however this was not always the case with Question 15. Students' sentences should also communicate their ideas in their own words.

Text 3

Question 12

All of:

- *Sans Limites/cela/ça parle de Napoléon/du jeune Napoléon*
- *Cela parle de ses (premiers) amours/ses ambitions/ses conflits*
- *Cela se passe en Corse.*

Jean Napoléon was not accepted.

Question 13

Two of:

- *Elle aime/préfère le grand écran*
- *Ça leur fera une sortie/elle aime sortir*
- *Ils pourront boire un verre en ville après.*

Question 14

Three of:

- *Il est difficile de garer sa voiture/le parking est difficile*
- *La séance de 22 heures/c'est tard pour lui/trop tard*
- *A la maison/chez lui on sera plus tranquille/on peut se détendre/regarder des DVD (sa collection)*
- *Il pleut.*



Question 15

Both of:

- *Nadia: elle aime les films historiques OR d'action*
- *Julie: il aime les documentaires (sur la nature) OR les films classiques (des années 50).*

Section 2 – Reading and responding

This section is designed to assess students' knowledge and skill in analysing and responding to information from written texts. The passages can contain more complex vocabulary, and students should take the time to read the passages several times to get the gist before answering the questions. Students should use the 15 minute reading time for this.

Part A – Answer in English

Students were asked to show their understanding of general and specific aspects of the texts read. The number of marks available for each question indicated the number of points or responses required.

Text 4

Question 16

Reward/payment/incentive/subsidy for **buying** a 'clean'/green/eco-friendly car (2 marks)

Bonus was not accepted. One mark was given for 'reward' or synonym alone.

Question 17

If you **buy** a car that pollutes

Drive/Have a car was not accepted.

Question 18

Both of:

- **buy** an ecological/environmentally friendly car
- get rid of/trade in your car which is more than 15 years old.

'Old car' alone received no mark.

Question 19

To reduce pollution on the roads (2 marks)

One mark was awarded for 'reducing pollution'.

Text 5

Question 20

Both of:

- great colonial power
- exploited African slaves.

Two marks were allocated to this question, which indicated that two answers were required. Some students did not answer this question, possibly because they did not see it at the bottom of the page under Text 5. Other students thought that France was still a colony.

Question 21

Both of:

- holding the national day of commemoration of the abolition of slavery – not celebration
- recognising slavery as a crime against humanity.

Question 22

Both of:

- **school books** to contain topics on slavery – not school courses/curriculum
- history and geography teachers will be **trained** to teach about slavery.

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Question 23

Both of:

- long years of pressure
- big march/demonstration (in Paris).

Question 24

Two of:

- some (people)/the French deny that modern France has any responsibility for the faults of the past
- for **supposed** faults of the past
- some have difficulty accepting the painful past.

Question 25

Any three of:

- **validate/give new value to/reassess** the slave culture – not recognise/acknowledge
- give value to the culture of the descendants of former slaves
- pay homage to ancestors
- make the history of their forebears known and respected.

Part B – Answer in French

In this section students were asked to show their capacity to:

- understand general and specific aspects of the text
- convey information accurately and appropriately in French.

Each criterion carried five marks and students were asked to answer in full sentences.

Text 6

Question 26

Any two of:

- *Il n'y aurait pas de dictionnaire*
- *Il n'y aurait pas de règles*
- *La langue ne serait pas fixée*
- *Il n'y aurait pas de mots nouveaux.*

This question should have been answered in the conditional mood.

Question 27

Elle/L'académie française, as well as any three of:

- *Donne des subventions à des sociétés littéraires ou savantes*
- *Donne des subventions à des œuvres de bienfaisance*
- *Donne des aides à des personnes dans le besoin*
- *Donne des bourses*
- *Décerne des prix littéraires*
- *Décide du sort des propositions sur les mots nouveaux*
- *Reçoit des dons et des legs.*

Section 3 – Writing in French

In this section, students were asked to write an original text of 200–300 words in French on one of the five topics, using the following criteria:

- relevance, breath and depth
- appropriateness of structure and sequence
- accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary.

Each criterion carried five marks. Students generally performed well in this section of the examination. Students are reminded that the maximum number of words is 300 and that there is no 10 per cent leeway.



Students used their imaginations well, but by using pre-learned material did not always fulfil the requirements and follow the instructions for the task. It is of the utmost importance that students read the topic carefully and plan their writing, respecting the prescriptions for the various text types.

The first three topics were the most popular and very few students were unable to complete this section.

Question 28

Students were asked to write an informative article that included a title, a date, a brief self introduction, and use 'facts' and examples, such as extra-curricular activities and the location of school transport. The writing should have been informative and objective; persuasive and evaluative writing were to be avoided. Some students used material learnt for the general conversation and did not respect the appropriate structure for an article.

The more competent students used a range of tenses, such as the conditional, and also used more complex sentence structures. Relevant ideas were developed, such as the advantages and disadvantages of a single-sex school, interesting activities, and a very active music school.

Question 29

Students were generally familiar with the conventions of an informal letter and this topic was treated well. Some students spent more time describing the job rather than the interview, obviously using pre-learned material and not covering reactions and expectations as required in the topic. Students did not always take into account that in the topic the interview had just taken place or that the supposed company was located in Paris. Again, a more careful reading of the topic would have been beneficial.

Question 30

This topic allowed students to use their imagination and come up with interesting and amusing pets such as a snail, intelligent and friendly dogs, and parrots which would be good company for the flatmate. The writing was persuasive, and three arguments, as required, were usually presented. However, the correct register was not always used.

Question 31

Students were asked to write an imaginative short story that included a title, a fictional author's name, to create a strong sense of context and situation, be descriptive, and create the desired atmosphere. The short story started with *hier*, however this was ignored by some students. The more effective pieces showed evidence of good planning and a degree of cohesiveness.

Question 32

Students who chose this topic had obviously studied it thoroughly and scored highly on vocabulary and expression. However, some students exceeded the word count and/or did not respect the text type. This meant that they did not gain marks for Criterion 2 despite presenting an excellent piece of writing.