



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The French oral examination consisted of seven minutes of general conversation, a one-minute introduction for the Detailed Study and seven minutes of discussion based on the Detailed Study.

Students and teachers are reminded that French at VCE level requires students to respond with a degree of maturity. Even if students have been on overseas trips to improve their oral proficiency, they will still need to prepare thoroughly for the examination and address the requirements of the *VCE French Study Design*.

This year, many students successfully demonstrated a working understanding of the questions asked and possessed excellent knowledge of the content related to the prescribed topics. These students led the conversation in the direction that was favourable to them, and developed and elaborated on their responses with opinions and additional information using sophisticated linguistic skills. They listened and responded carefully to assessors' questions. 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 practised more and taken notice of the assessment criteria. The general conversation section reflects work studied in previous years, and thorough preparation in the years leading up to Year 12 is essential.

Although the Conversation and Discussion criteria appear the same, they assess different skills. The Conversation assesses the student's ability to speak French spontaneously in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way. It relates to familiar personal topics: school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations. On the other hand, the Discussion is designed to test the student's skills in presenting and exchanging ideas, opinions and information on a sub-topic which is related to French-speaking communities. A more objective approach is required in the Detailed Study. Students should be able to express ideas and opinions on their chosen topics.

Repair strategies were not frequently in evidence. Some less successful students relied on rote-learned information and were unable to link texts they had studied. These students often struggled to continue when interrupted by assessors and were hesitant in responding to assessors' questions.

The assessment criteria for the oral examination 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
- clarity of expression
- capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic.

For students to maximise their performance during the oral examination they should:

- understand that the conversation is an exchange. Replying with short responses and waiting for more questions does not display adequate conversational skills
- elaborate on ideas and opinions and be able to justify what they say in unrehearsed situations without resorting to memorised information. Students should have practised numerous ways of answering a question and be prepared for information to be elicited in a variety of ways. Some students struggled when questions were phrased in a different manner to their expectations
- be able to use the appropriate language and techniques that enable them to engage in a discussion
- answer each question with some breadth and depth, adding information and/or expressing opinions
- practise techniques including eye contact and body language
- practise using the criteria as part of their examination preparation and be very familiar with them
- have acquired techniques that cater for their individual learning needs
- learn key vocabulary and structures that allow them to make comparisons and comments as well as use connecting words accurately so that their responses flow
- be able to converse with ease using basic tenses and moods such as the present, future, perfect, imperfect and conditional
- pay attention to the tense of the verb in the question asked and answer questions with an appropriate tense
- provide answers that are not slabs of rote-learned work and know how to make reference to and link their opinions to texts studied



- be able to self-correct, ask for clarification and develop repair strategies in order to avoid lengthy pauses
- have a fine-tuned one-minute introduction to their topic and guide the assessors to the focus of the study
- be aware that what they say will often prompt the assessors to ask questions about that information
- understand that visual aids can be useful if they have been chosen carefully and the content has been rehearsed. Visual aids must contain only a minimal amount of French language.
- appreciate that merely quoting dates and rote-learned lines may make the conversation seem stilted.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

The most successful students had prepared thoroughly for the oral examination and were able to advance the exchange assertively, displaying a confident command and range of accurate, sophisticated language and vocabulary. They moved easily from one tense and topic to another, and used connectives effectively. These students had also practised gap-filling, conscious self-correction techniques and strategies to link with the assessors. They provided extensive and non-predictable responses, demonstrating excellent mastery and a working knowledge of the basic tenses required at VCE level. They used complex structures including the passive, causative faire and the subjunctive. These students were able to lead the assessors to their areas of strength and maintained a consistent pace without unnatural pauses.

Conversely, the less successful students struggled with basic questions and structures. These students were satisfied with simplistic responses, and experienced difficulty in offering, expanding on and justifying opinions. Their pronunciation was frequently stilted, and their stress and tempo were not appropriate. The less proficient students relied too heavily on rote-learned material. They were barely able to advance the conversation and used few connectives, often resorting to anglicisms to compensate for their lack of preparation and gaps in their grammatical knowledge. They were frequently unable to use the basic tenses required, confused genders and pronouns and had problems with subject-verb or noun-adjective agreements.

Section 2 – Discussion

In the one-minute introduction students should provide the title and focus of their Detailed Study, highlighting the issue they have considered and advising assessors of any support material. Students should not list texts they have studied, especially if they are unable to comment on them. They should be prepared to answer any questions based on the texts, but, where appropriate, be able to say that they 'aren't quite sure of the answer, but they think that ...' or their 'opinion is ...'. The topic selected should promote discussion and students should be able to link the resources studied. Not only should the Detailed Study generate new ideas by expanding on the topic and suit the student's language capacity, but it should ensure that students have the opportunity to express their opinions. It is suggested that the title of the Detailed Study include an inferred question/issue that encourages an answer as this provides a form of structure to the discussion. Some students went beyond the one-minute limit to introduce the sub-topic, launching into a presentation, and were then thrown when assessors interrupted them.

It is essential that the topics and sub-topics chosen for the Detailed Study be chosen carefully. Aims and time limits should be made clear to students, and practical examples of the amount of study to be completed should be provided. Many students do not seem to fully understand the requirements and expectations of the Detailed Study. This section of the examination should be a structured and defined discussion, with students responding critically to spoken and written texts that reflect aspects of the language and culture of French-speaking communities. The texts should be appropriate for the cohort of students. The choice of resources to support the Detailed Study is crucial. The resources chosen should be appropriate for the students and the resources used should lend themselves to discussion. Students need to understand, and be inspired and enthusiastic about the topic they are studying.

For the discussion section, a topic is acceptable as long as it:

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

The topics chosen by students were generally appropriate and it was evident that most students had enjoyed their Detailed Study. Students and teachers are reminded that the texts selected for the Detailed Study must be authentic, of



substance and written or spoken in French so that students are able to learn the relevant vocabulary and structures. The *VCAA French Study Design* provides an extensive list of relevant resources. In many cases, the texts, films and interviews selected as resources seemed rather limited or inappropriate for the topic chosen.

Strong students were able to demonstrate an excellent knowledge of their topic, citing three or more resources in different text types. They were highly skilled in expressing and elaborating on ideas and opinions, substantiating them with evidence. These students used connectives and demonstrated the capacity to use an extensive range of vocabulary as well as a range of complex structures and accurate language. Some topics were purely factual, superficial and descriptive, with some students presenting slabs of rote-learned information. Some students were unable to link information from the texts to the sub-topic, and could not elaborate on their comments, provide opinions or adequately discuss the sub-topic they presented. Descriptive topics that did not permit students to express opinions tended to undermine discussion.

Good topics enabled students to develop their ideas or offer solutions to problems. Good choices reflected the interests of the students who were enthusiastic and able to respond with opinions. An inappropriate choice of sub-topic tended to prevent the student from meeting the criterion that assesses relevance, breadth and depth of information.

Successful topics that produced solid responses from students included:

- *La Résistance pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale*
- *La Belle époque*
- *L'Esclavage des enfants en France et les pays francophones*
- *La Banlieue difficile en France et de le problème des jeunes*
- *L' Esprit Révolutionnaire*
- *Les Misérables: le rôle du bien, du mal et la moralité*
- *Les problèmes et la place de l'immigration en France*
- *Le contraste de la discrimination et le racisme dans la société française*
- *L'humanité française dans les films*
- *Le rôle des « Médecins sans frontières »*
- *Victor Hugo: l'injustice au dix-neuvième siècle.*

The manner in which these topics were presented generally produced very good outcomes.

Informative topics such as *Paris, La Provence, L'industrie du parfum, Les relations et sens de responsabilité en France* and *L'Eco citoyenneté* for instance, did not tend to lead to discussion.

Some problem areas were:

- limited resources and information
- students producing rote-learned information
- students' inability to demonstrate adequate knowledge of the texts studied by showing the links between the topics and the texts
- some students cited information they had downloaded from the Internet and were unable to go beyond the boundaries of the texts
- a small number of students presented unsuitable topics that had no obvious links to the French-speaking communities
- some introductions to the Detailed Study exceeded the time frame
- some students presented some very confronting and inappropriate visual aids.

Some general recommendations

Students should:

- listen carefully to the questions asked and respond by paying particular attention to the tenses used
- use well-considered and accurate responses as well as language in the general conversation.
- answer in a variety of ways and use at least two or three sentences in response to questions
- avoid anglicisms and rote-learned material
- practise throughout the year and prepare thoroughly
- not assume that being a native or near-native speaker will automatically ensure excellent results without thorough preparation and evidence of having met the assessment criteria
- ensure that the introduction is relevant to the documents

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- enunciate clearly when introducing the Detailed Study
- limit the texts studied and know them in depth, have a variety of information and articulate their opinions on the topic they have selected
- be prepared to discuss any resources brought in
- be able to discuss the structure, merit, strengths and weaknesses of their resources, how they link with each other and the topic they have studied, which ones they preferred and why and what conclusion they have drawn from their study
- revise French grammar very carefully to avoid basic errors such as *beaucoup des, j'étude, je suis intéressant dans, au sujet de environ de, je suis laine de la famille, mon pere's nourriture* and *le seulement revolutionnaire*.
- use the correct register.

On a practical level, it is very important that teachers address their students' learning styles and individual needs as these affect students' overall performance. Students suffering from examination nerves need to address this in time. Students should be reminded that they must be organised before they come to the examination room – they should read the *VCE Exams Navigator*, not wear their school uniform or mention the name of their school and remember to bring their photo identity cards. It is also recommended that students wear neat casual dress when attending the oral examination. Students and teachers should refer to the VCAA website for advice and guidelines for this study.