

2020 VCE Hebrew oral examination report

General comments

The Hebrew 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 Hebrew is spoken, with the student being expected to make reference to texts studied.

The choice of subtopic for the Detailed Study is very important. It should be an engaging topic that motivates them to become familiar with the content and vocabulary needed, and thus be more skilled to support and 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 Hebrew so that students can become aware of key vocabulary related to their subtopic. Students 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 Hebrew-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 are 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.

Students who sat the 2020 Hebrew oral examination were able to communicate at a satisfactory standard. They generally expressed themselves confidently, used appropriate vocabulary and dealt successfully with grammatical challenges. The best way to prepare for this exam is to speak the language as much as possible.

Specific information

Section 1 – Conversation

Generally, the conversations flowed well, especially when students were able to carry the conversation forward with some spontaneity and with little prompting from the assessors. Students who were able to respond readily and confidently, using an excellent range of information and ideas to express their opinions on different topics and broad questions that went beyond a focus on their daily activities scored highly. Students who used more sophisticated vocabulary were able to converse naturally and with interest. For example, a conversation about the weather can develop depth and interest when students use the topic to describe their feelings and opinions about the issue.

Students who relied on using sentences or catchphrases they appeared to have prepared and learned by heart generally integrated these ineffectively or were unable to use them to create relevant responses to the question being asked. As a result, they received lower marks. Students should be encouraged to focus on what is relevant to the question, even if this means they risk making a few grammatical mistakes.

Section 2 – Discussion

Most students were prepared for the Discussion. Those who were able to elaborate on their subtopic and broaden the discussion by clarifying, elaborating on and defending opinions and ideas effectively gained higher marks. Students who used their sources not only as a resource for information but as a means to understand the opinions of the source's writer and to engage with those opinions increased the sophistication of their discussions. For example, when a student identifies that one of their sources is satirical and is able to clarify, elaborate on and defend opinions and ideas related to that fact, they improve the standard of the Discussion. Students who were passionately involved with their subtopic produced some outstanding discussions.

The use of a specific object during the exam (a picture, map etc.) can vary and broaden the Discussion, but if students base their discussion solely on the object and are unable to explain its significance to the selected subtopic, it does not contribute positively to the exchange. If an object is to be used to support the Discussion, it needs to be selected for its capacity to add value in discussing the selected subtopic. Students need to be able to relate the object to the texts studied and integrate information relevant to the object successfully into a discussion that explores various aspects of the selected subtopic.