

# 2020 VCE Karen oral examination report

## General comments

The Karen 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 will 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 sub-topic chosen for detailed study and, in no more than one minute, briefly introduce the main focus of their sub-topic, 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 will be to explore aspects of the language and culture of communities in which Karen is spoken and the student will be 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 Karen 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 must 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 must be able to relate this to the Karen-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.

Generally, the students had a very good understanding of the language and were able to use their speaking skills to converse with the assessors. Students were generally able to engage in conversation very well; however, some students had difficulty expressing their opinions due to limited vocabulary and terminology. Students are reminded of the importance of preparing for the oral examination. Many students spoke Karen very well but there were some students who had difficulty pronouncing certain sounds, such as ʉ ɔ ɔ, properly. Overall, the students' performance was satisfactory.

## Section 1 – Conversation

Students performed well in the Conversation section.

Most students were able to actively engage in the conversation and expressed themselves in a natural and friendly way. They properly greeted the assessors in a very polite way. Some students had difficulty engaging with the assessors, not because of their language skills, but due to their nervousness.

It was noticeable that many students used English words during the conversation, even when using simple terms. It is understandable that students will use some English vocabulary when there are no equivalent terms in Karen. However, students are reminded not to use or mix English words in speaking, except for words and terminology that are not available in Karen. Students are encouraged to make an effort to learn and speak Karen correctly, rather than using English words for their convenience when they speak.

## Section 2 – Discussion

The Discussion section was more challenging for students. Students needed to prepare what they would present, so they had to research for the topic they chose.

Some students presented and spoke confidently in this section of the oral examination. They were able to engage in richer discussions and use very high and proper Karen terminology with fluency. They were confident and outstanding.

The Detailed Study should be based on a sub-topic related to one or more of the prescribed topics listed on page 9 of the [VCE Karen Study Design](#). Many students had chosen and prepared very similar or the same topic for their presentations and they presented them well. However, when asked for more information, some students were unable to proceed further.

Reading more in the Karen language, using a dictionary effectively and learning terms that are not familiar would help to improve students' performance.