

# 2020 VCE Persian oral examination report

## General comments

The Persian oral examination assesses students' knowledge and skills in using spoken language. The examination has two sections: a Conversation of approximately seven minutes, during which students converse with the assessors about their personal world, and a Discussion of approximately eight 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. 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 Persian is spoken, with students 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 the student 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 types of texts used by students should vary in complexity and be in Persian 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 Persian-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 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.

## Specific information

### Section 1 – Conversation

Most students engaged well with the assessors in the Conversation. They generally responded readily and skilfully to a variety of questions and used the appropriate style and register. Students who scored highly listened to the questions carefully and carried the Conversation forward by elaborating on their ideas and opinions. Their vocabulary was generally accurate, and they used correct grammatical structures. Students who did not score well provided minimal responses to the questions asked. Sometimes English words were used when students struggled to find the equivalent Persian words. Students are encouraged to practise speaking Persian throughout the year to improve their vocabulary and confidence. Most students used the official Persian language.

### Section 2 – Discussion

In general, students were well prepared for the Discussion and engaged readily with the assessors when responding to questions. Students who scored highly provided an excellent range of information, ideas and opinions. They were able to talk about their chosen subtopic in depth and with clarity, using a wide range of vocabulary and well-structured sentences.

Students who did not score well provided a limited range of information on which they were generally unable to elaborate. They used simple language and struggled to find the correct words. Students are encouraged to develop and expand the vocabulary related to their subtopic as this would help them to address specific questions that may require a more detailed answer. A small number of students seemed to have prepared their subtopic by rote-learning. They were unable to expand on their ideas or respond coherently to unexpected questions. Students are reminded that they are expected to be able to justify their ideas and opinions when assessors ask them follow-up questions about their subtopics.

Some students brought objects such as posters, images, maps and charts to enhance the discussion of their subtopics. This assisted students to better structure their information and served as a prompt for their discussion points. Most students demonstrated good intonation, stress and tempo, and spoke with clear pronunciation.

The most common grammatical mistakes were adding the plural sign 'ها' to plural nouns or using singular verbs with plural nouns and vice versa. Some students used a very informal register and conversational vocabulary for the formal discussion.

It is important that students choose their subtopics carefully. As stated in the VCE Persian Study Design, the chosen subtopics should allow students to explore aspects of the language and culture of Persian-speaking communities. Students are encouraged to research a number of sources in Persian such as newspapers, articles, interviews, documentaries, radio programs, feature films and electronic texts.

Subtopics that worked well included those that related to historical places and famous people. Those that worked less well included subtopics that were not relevant to Persian communities or were superficial and did not provide students with opportunities to express their opinions.