

2021 VCE Punjabi oral external assessment report

General comments

The Punjabi 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.

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.

Students must be prepared to use language spontaneously in unrehearsed situations. 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 ...'.

Students will be assessed in both the conversation and the discussion in communication, content and language. The criteria are published on the VCAA website. It is important that all teachers and students be 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.

Section 1 – Conversation

Section 1 consists of a general conversation about the student's personal world, for example, school and home life, family, friends, interests and aspirations. It is an organic conversation about the student's personal world. These examples provide students with a basis for preparing a range of interesting and engaging ideas about their personal world, so that they can engage in a spontaneous discussion with the assessors about things that interest them.

Students may be asked about any or all of the areas outlined above, and they are expected to be able to expand on their answers with a range of information, ideas and opinions that helps the assessors understand their views and interests and ask further questions. Some students mentioned why particular subjects were their favourites or described characteristics of various family members; others described their home or school environment in great detail to illustrate a point they were making. Music, film, food and memorable school excursions were some of the other things students chose to discuss, thus showing their capacity to use a variety of vocabulary, grammar and expressions effectively in a spontaneous discussion about their personal world.

Most of the students conversed very well, but a few used English words to express their views. They should avoid using words from other languages and slang words. They should use Punjabi, including idioms, sayings and quotes in the correct context. Students are advised not to mention their name or their school's name during the conversation.

Section 2 – Discussion

Following the conversation, the student indicates to the assessors the subtopic chosen for detailed study and, in no more than one minute, briefly introduces 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 Punjabi is spoken, with the student being expected to make reference to the texts studied.

The choice of subtopic for the detailed study is very important. It should be an engaging subtopic that motivates students to become familiar with the content and vocabulary needed, 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 Punjabi so that students can become aware of key vocabulary related to their subtopic. 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 Punjabi-speaking community.

In this section, students prepared a diverse range of detailed study subtopics. Some students presented their subtopics using photographs, posters and maps to support their discussion. In general, the level of spoken language and depth of knowledge were good. The content, vocabulary and grammar components were appropriate.

Students are advised to properly prepare their subtopics. Students should have enough content on their chosen subtopic to meet the time requirement of the examination. They need to be able to sustain the discussion on their chosen topic for the full duration of this section of the examination. They should prepare their topics in depth and prepare widely around their topic.