2021 Romanian oral external assessment report

General comments

The Romanian 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.

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 are reminded that they 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 subtopic, 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 and 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.

The majority of students were well prepared and were able to engage with assessors in conversations. These students presented a range of information and ideas and were usually able to clarify ideas and opinions. They demonstrated very good control of grammatical and sentence structures, and used vocabulary appropriately, following style and register conventions.

Some students demonstrated an excellent capacity to engage with assessors, employed highly effective repair strategies and did not require support to carry the conversation forward. These students were able to elaborate on ideas in order to maintain the conversation. For example, when discussing favourite holiday destinations, they not only mentioned their ideal holiday location and described it in great detail, but also compared it and contrasted it with other locations. They used sophisticated vocabulary, such as apă cristalină (crystalline water), climă mai uscată (drier climate) and este o minunăție (it's a wonder). They had excellent pronunciation and demonstrated exceptional vocabulary and grammatical accuracy.

Some students communicated well, but with hesitations and pauses. These students were able to express their ideas despite errors such as disagreement between masculine/feminine nouns and adjectives, incorrect use of indefinite articles and incorrect verb conjugation.

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 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 Romanian 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 to 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 Romanian 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 Romanian-speaking community.

All students were able to introduce their chosen subtopics for discussion and state the resources used. Subtopics students chose for discussion included, but were not limited to, historical personalities, cultural and historical aspects of Romania, and famous Romanian sportspeople.

The majority of students demonstrated a very good level of preparation. They were able to understand the questions asked by assessors and presented a range of information. Discussions that scored highly included not only information, but also opinions on the chosen subtopics; they elaborated on and supported these opinions with relevant evidence from the texts they had studied. These students used consistently accurate sentence and grammatical structures and were able to self-correct.

Some students demonstrated a very good level of understanding but often needed support to carry the discussion forward. They used simple vocabulary and language structure, with common errors including incorrect use of definite articles, for example regiul instead of regele (the king); incorrect use of subjunctives, for example să folosea instead of se folosea (it was used); armata urma să vin instead of armata urma să vină (the army was coming); and use of Anglicisms, for example să mă direcționez pe instead of să mă axez pe (to focus on) or să mă concentrez pe (to concentrate on). These students occasionally relied on memorised structures and were able to convey the information despite minor pronunciation errors.