

2020 VCE Serbian oral examination report

General comments

The Serbian 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 Serbian 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 Serbian 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 Serbian-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.

Section 1 – Conversation

In this section, most students performed very competently in conveying ideas and opinions related to aspects of their personal world.

Students who were able to demonstrate their language skills, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar, clarity of expression, depth of information, and capacity to elaborate on ideas and opinions at a more sophisticated level achieved higher scores in this section. These students demonstrated a capacity to use correct pronunciation and intonation as well as use self-correction strategies where applicable and identified. It was observed that these students confidently engaged in the conversation with the assessors and were able to provide satisfactory responses to questions.

Students who did not score as highly demonstrated a limited range of information, which allowed for only very short answers, and were unable to elaborate on provided information on their comments or link effectively with the assessors; for example, 'Ја волим спорт', when asked the question, 'Why do you like it?', they would not be able to justify their responses. Some students' use of the Serbian language was basic and often inaccurate. They lacked understanding of agreements and tense knowledge, which often made the exchange difficult to follow.

In preparation for the conversation, students must be aware that questions from the assessors may be presented in a range of ways, to allow for a variety of responses from the students, and therefore they should listen carefully and provide relevant responses.

Also, to increase their fluency, students are encouraged to listen to Serbian podcasts, news or watch films in Serbian language. In addition, when preparing for the oral examination, students must practise pronunciations and cases (e.g. Била сам у Србију ... Ишли смо у Француска ... ја учим сада математика, енглески, биологија) and prepositions (e.g. 'Ја сам ишла у Србију у 2016' instead of 'Ја сам ишла у Србију 2016-те године').

Section 2 – Discussion

A variety of subtopics on different aspects of Serbian culture was presented. Some examples included subtopics that focused on famous Serbian scientists, writers etc. Subtopics chosen provided stimulus for students to formulate opinions and ideas that could then be defended or explained using a range of information taken from various texts.

Those students who performed very well in this section chose their subtopics and aspects of the subtopics according to their language competence and completed a thorough study. They showed high levels of linguistic and analytical competence and were able to provide relevant in-depth information and use concrete examples to clearly illustrate their points of view. Some students chose to use a visual stimulus to support their discussion. Students who did this well were able to draw on information conveyed by the visual to support their ideas and opinions about aspects of the subtopic.

Some students did not prepare well and found this section challenging. The presentation and discussion of the texts they have studied / their chosen subtopic lacked detailed information and had a narrow scope for discussion. Some of the subtopics chosen were beyond the students' linguistic ability, and consequently the accuracy of expression and fluency of delivery suffered. These students struggled with terminology and pronunciation as well as with the understanding of what they were presenting, which may have affected their level of achievement.

It is recommended that the subtopics selected are appropriate for individual students' abilities. Also, students would benefit from practising strategies for dealing with questions they find unfamiliar or anticipating what types of questions might arise in response to opinions and ideas they express on their selected subtopic.