

# 2021 VCE Serbian oral external assessment 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.

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.

In 2021, students demonstrated the ability to communicate effectively with the assessors. They successfully sustained and advanced conversation on subtopics of personal interest and significance such as family, school, free time, hobbies, future plans and comparisons of Australian and Serbian cultures. As it is expected to be a spontaneous conversation, demonstrating what the students have learnt and practised during their study, it was noted that for those students who appeared to have thoroughly prepared, the conversation flowed successfully, and the language used had correct conventions (including correct use of tenses, adjectives, pronouns and noun declension).

Responses that were rote-learned were very easily recognisable and often did not have natural flow. These students were unable to move the conversation forward and often paused while trying to resume their prepared material. In this situation the students had difficulties with grammar and accuracy, which led to using English words instead of Serbian.

Grammatical accuracy is important. In particular, students need to revise:

- using the dates correctly (*Рођена сам другог фебруара, две хиљаде и пете године*; I was born on 2 February 2005)
- declensions and conjugations (*Моја мама је дошла у Аустралију*; My mum came to Australia)
- the correct form of conditional (*волела бих; моји родитељи би желели да*; I would like; my parents would like to)
- using correct form of register and recognising formal and informal register when addressing assessors (*извините, можете ли да поновите, Ви знате*; sorry can you repeat, you know).

## 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 Serbian 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 Serbian 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 Serbian language-speaking community.

Students displayed in-depth research into their chosen subtopics and skilfully introduced their subtopics for discussion with the assessors. Students presented and discussed the subtopic of distinguished people in Serbian history, ranging from scientists, writers, contemporary artists and athletes. They used various sources for their detailed study such as poems, books, movies, documentaries and sources from the internet.

Some students researched biographies of people connected to their own fields of interest, whom they could see as role models and inspiration. In addition, this presented them with the opportunity to display the skills of narration, description and critical thinking.

The strongest elements of the students' discussions were communication, content, clarity of expression and range and accuracy of vocabulary, while some errors occurred with accuracy of grammar (e.g. verb conjugations, noun declensions and syntax).