



Oral Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The majority of students were well prepared for the oral examination. Students performed well in the Conversation section, with topics covered including school, friends, hobbies and interests, and future aspirations.

The range of themes and topics for the Discussion section varied slightly from previous years with the introduction of a few new topics as well as retaining the classic ones on Serbian history.

In terms of overall performance, well-prepared students showed their willingness to extend their vocabulary, to learn more and to share their knowledge with the assessors. They used gap-filling strategies successfully, built on comments made by the assessors, and used repair strategies when needed. Those who were less successful often used colloquialisms and their lack of grammatical knowledge was evident in their inability to produce correct sentences in Serbian. It is possible that some students felt that it was not necessary to prepare for the examination and relied on a natural flow of conversation based on their fluency in the language in everyday situations. While some students put a lot of effort into their preparation, it appeared that those who had come to Australia in recent years had not prepared as well.

Recommendations from last year's Assessment Report seemed to be taken on board and students showed more interest in the themes and topics studied through their responses and readiness to research their chosen topic.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Students talked about their friends, school, future, hobbies and interests. They were keen to talk about their interests and hobbies and their future aspirations; however, some were reluctant to talk about their families. They were often more eager to emphasise friendships and their lives outside strict family circles.

Well-prepared students were able to talk about all areas of the general conversation. They connected well with the assessors, used appropriate and rich vocabulary and accurate grammar to describe their activities, and had little or no need to self-correct. They moved the conversation forward, were interesting and showed pride in their achievements.

On the other hand, some students presented for the examination having undertaken little or no preparation, hoping that their fluency would suffice. These students found the first seven minutes very long due to the fact that they often talked too fast and finished their responses quickly, but were then unable to add any additional information in order to sustain the conversation. Very often they viewed this part of the exam as a question-answer type interview and would wait for questions rather than take the initiative or venture into more elaborate answers.

Less able students also showed gaps in their grammatical knowledge, especially the use of cases, which are crucial when speaking in Serbian. Some of these had been born in Australia and did not speak Serbian very much at home. Teachers should provide students with more grammar-based and pronunciation exercises to teach them how to use the seven cases in Serbian and help them to achieve their best. Other students seemed to have forgotten how to structure sentences based on the rules of the Serbian language. Some of these students tend to use English word order rather than Serbian and adjusted their pronunciation and stress pattern to English rather than focusing on Serbian pronunciation and word order.

Section 2 – Discussion

Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

Many students were well prepared and showed their understanding of the task by clearly stating the theme, topic and sub-topic of their Detailed Study as well as the resources used. The choice of topic showed students' inclinations for particular types of issues: a historical topic (the battle of Kosovo), which was more exact; a broader topic that was more open to discussion (the role of men and women in Serbian society); a topic concerning Belgrade and its features; a topic solely based on the literary work of well-known writer Bora Stankovic; or the life and work of Saint Sava.



The historical topic on the battle of Kosovo, which is rich in its many aspects of interpretation, proved to be a very good choice for many students who were able to choose a sub-topic which best suited their understanding, knowledge and level of language proficiency. The sub-topics included:

- heroes of the battle
- women of the time
- heroes versus traitors
- the significance of the battle for young people in Australia
- commemoration of the battle – national identification
- the history of the battle written in verses of folk poems.

A few very talented students who spoke on folk poems about the role of women within the battle of Kosovo showed outstanding insight, understanding and interpretation of the poems. However, some students merely scratched the surface of their chosen sub-topic and were not able to discuss it in detail, to offer a fresh view on the problem, or to express an opinion. Students are advised to choose their sub-topic wisely, to ensure there are adequate resources and to focus on a particular problem that can stimulate discussion.

A smaller number of students chose to discuss the role of men and women in Serbian society in the past and today. Their ability and skill at discussing the topic varied, often based on their readiness to research and read widely rather than rely only on their own experience and observation. Those who chose this topic usually took sides, either supporting women or men and their way of living and treating others. The sub-topics included:

- today it is easier to be a woman/man
- traditional and modern jobs
- life of women in the past
- traditional point of view versus modern point of view
- women in the Serbian community and within Australian society.

Students who chose this topic were generally more relaxed and confident in their verbal skills as, even though they had to refer to the resources studied, they could also draw on their own experience and real life knowledge, which often helped them to defend their point of view.

The topic on Belgrade was well chosen and some sub-topics, such as ‘famous theatre companies’, ‘architecture in Belgrade’ and ‘Kalemegdan’ were very interesting, but many of the students who chose this topic were not well prepared. The topic seemed somehow alien to them, as though they had not experienced it first hand and did not have any bond or interest in it. Other students who chose to talk about Belgrade displayed a genuine interest in it and showed that its rich history, architecture and people make the city vibrant and interesting. These students showed how much easier it is to be well prepared if the topic chosen is interesting and relevant to the student.

The topic and sub-topics that covered the literary work of Bora Stankovic proved to be challenging as they required an excellent understanding of the language used in his novels, the time and places he wrote about and his place as the writer in the Serbian literary corpus. Students who chose sub-topics based on Stankovic’s work showed some understanding and were able to discuss it to some extent; however, future students who choose this topic are advised that covering one literary work in detail would be more beneficial than a broader discussion of a number of his novels.

Another topic was on Saint Sava, his work and life, as well as his significance to Serbian culture and history. Only a few students chose this topic but they had prepared well, using a variety of resources. Their genuine interest and pride in mastering such a complex and difficult topic was often evident.

All sub-topics were very interesting and challenging. Students required very good proficiency in the language in order to understand the sub-topic chosen, and present and discuss it appropriately. All topics necessitated lots of reading and research by students.

The resources used were good and often reflected the resourcefulness of teachers, who prepared materials that ranged from written resources, such as books, folk poems, legends and stories, to reports and historical data from the Internet and audio-visual resources such as documentaries and movies. Some students also brought visuals to help them in their discussion. This was especially helpful when they were talking about the battle of Kosovo, which they illustrated with reproductions of Kosovo’s maiden, Kosovo’s monasteries or Kosovo’s heroes (Czar Lazar and Milos Obilic). Students referred to these images, drew conclusions from them or used them as descriptive items to support their opinions.



Students this year were not burdened as much with memorising historical data or names of famous kings, which helped them to relax as much as possible under the examination conditions and to discuss their topic, using what they had learnt and prepared.

Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Most students showed maturity and responsibility for their learning in the way they discussed their chosen sub-topic. Good students were able to compare and contrast between two types of texts or two different but significant characters in the Kosovo epic (for example, a folk poem about Czar Lazar and a historical biography). They were able to discuss the influence of other people of his time and later, or the influence of two contrasting figures of the time, one hero and one traitor, and how they are depicted in history and folk literature.

Students who chose the more generic topic on the role of men and women were not as bound by historical data, rather they had to refer to the resources and interpret them in the light of past or present days. They had to give good reasons for their opinions and use well-chosen resources which they could draw upon and quote from. Most of the students who chose this topic also opted for modern sub-topics or aspects of life either of men or women, which was shown through their choice of resources. They often discussed the current situation of their generation more readily than discussing earlier times and the life of 19th century women or men. They seemed more interested in what the future holds for them and how their traditions and traditional upbringing will affect their relationships and work. These students often used more modern films and newspaper or magazine articles to back up their opinions, or used their own experience to justify their theories.

For the third topic, students relied on factual data to learn more about Belgrade, its history, architecture, significant buildings, monuments and other places of interest. Well-prepared students were able to discuss a particular sub-topic in depth. They showed that they had researched and prepared well by using lots of details, data (including years) and numbers and by discussing the significance of a particular institution or building in the time of its foundation and today. Some students also showed an excellent knowledge of film and theatre through their presentation on famous theatre companies in Belgrade.

Students who chose the topics on Saint Sava and Bora Stankovic were generally prepared well. However, students who choose these topics in the future are advised to use resources that help them to understand the sub-topic better and that do not contradict each other.

Accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

The most common mistakes made by students were in the use of cases and the agreement of nouns with adjectives and verbs. Some students used English sentence structures, which led to confusion and mistakes. Others used a lot of colloquialisms, as they would at home in everyday communication with their parents. Although this certainly adds to the richness of the language, they are not a part of usage in Serbian's standard form and should therefore be avoided. Most students were fluent and were able to understand the questions and respond to them. Those who had studied hard and prepared throughout the year generally performed well.

Clarity of expression

Most students discussed their sub-topic well, as they had a better understanding of what was required from them in the second part of their examination. Although assessors do not ask questions that are outside the students' topic, students should be aware that incorrect or misleading resources can lead to questions on areas that students do not know or did not cover while studying. Good students presented lots of interesting details and opinions to share with the assessors. They were confident and referred to the resources they used.