



Oral Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

This year students were fairly well prepared for the oral examination. Their performance in the Conversation section was better than the performance in the Discussion, where the depth of their research was not always shown and a lack of variety of resources was sometimes evident.

It should be noted that, once again, some students thought that their ability to converse fluently in Serbian was enough to prepare them for the exam. However, their fluency was not enough to enable them to score well if their topic for the Discussion or the themes for the Conversation section were not rehearsed and prepared well.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Students should be commended for their conversational skills in the Conversation section, as they could talk on a variety of topics, such as school, future aspirations, leisure time, friends and interests. They responded well to the questions asked and showed the ability to use the language mostly fluently, with minor recourse to regional dialects when they could not find, or were not aware of, an appropriate word or expression in standard Serbian language.

Most students were well prepared and could talk about their VCE subjects and the reasons for choosing them, their aspirations and their hobbies or interests, ranging from sport to folk dancing.

Students who were well prepared responded to all questions and extended their answers without being prompted. Those who enjoyed reading displayed their mastery of the language, richness in their expressions and ease in conversing on a range of topics. Many students whose skills had not been as well developed through extended reading still performed well in the Conversation section because they practised the types of questions and topics likely to be covered in this first part of the examination. Their grammar usage, tenses and the use of cases was good because they had rehearsed their answers.

Less prepared and less fluent students often used English words with the Serbian suffix, a practice which is wide-spread among the Serbian community but not appropriate for the examination. It is standard Serbian that is used in all VCE examinations.

Students who were not well prepared were often unable to use the correct words for the subjects they studied at school, or for names of hobbies or interests, and used the English word for them rather than the proper expression in Serbian. More practice in this section of the oral component will help students.

Section 2 – Discussion

In the Discussion section, students chose a variety of topics. These ranged from the historical (for example, the Battle of Kosovo; medieval Serbia; Serbian kings; and monasteries) to the more modern (for example, the capital city of Belgrade; and Serbia in World War I) and literature (such as folk poetry).

Most students were fluent and had no problems in understanding the assessors' questions, but some struggled to respond well or to extend their answers. Those who had studied hard and prepared well throughout the year performed well. Students should be encouraged to prepare for this section of the examination.

The most common errors were in the use of cases and the agreement of nouns with adjectives and verbs. These errors occurred because a number of students were used to using a dialect form of the language rather than its standard form. Students who had lived in Australia for a significant amount of time tended to use English sentence structures, which led to confusion and mistakes. Although colloquialisms show the richness of the language, students should be reminded that in the examination only the standard form of the language can be used.

A number of students came to the examination well prepared and showed an understanding of their topic by clearly stating the theme, topic and sub-topic of their Detailed Study as is required by the study design. Some students



mentioned their sources in the first minute of their introduction of the topic while others opted to mention their sources as they progressed through the discussion. Students mostly showed responsibility for their learning in the way they discussed their chosen sub-topic. Good students were able to compare different resources and their validity and were able to form their own opinion about the topic or issues raised within the topic.

All topics were again very challenging, especially those about Serbian monasteries, medieval Serbia and the Battle of Kosovo, as they all required a very good grasp of the language, and an understanding of the historical data, as well as the literature which was produced around that time.

The most popular topic again was the Battle of Kosovo, but it rarely involved in-depth analysis of the battle or any given aspect of it, as students could choose to talk about the heroes, the traitors, folk poetry, myths and legends or factual, historical data. Many students supported their findings using only one source, the movie *The Battle of Kosovo*, and used this as the basis of their arguments and their presentation. However, it proved to be a very limited resource which did not enable students to respond sufficiently to the questions asked, to compare this source with others and ultimately to compare different views on the topic chosen. In future, students should expand their knowledge and focus on written, as well as visual, resources. These resources could also include information from reliable websites and excerpts from books on the topics studied.

Some students discussed the main characters, heroes and traitors of the Battle of Kosovo, as described in historical documents and folk literature. Many believed the folk literature to be more trustworthy than the historical data and were well prepared to discuss and defend their opinion. However, only a handful of students were able to show an in-depth analysis of the topic, that a variety of resources had been used, and were knowledgeable about the topic to the degree of citing verses from folk poems to support their claims.

Students who chose to discuss Serbia in World War I generally showed their understanding of the topic. Strong students were able to connect well with the assessors, show that they had used a variety of resources and display an engagement with the topic studied. Many were confused with the names of places and famous people. Students were able to prepare for this topic using a variety of resources, from historical data to literary texts to documentaries which could vividly present the topic and place it in context for them.

Students who opted to discuss WWI used a variety of resources including poems, documentaries and historical data but were at times lost in the sheer volume of data so that their in-depth research mainly focussed on recollections of what they remembered from the documentary they saw. A few students cited the famous poem *Plava grobnica (The Blue Grave)* and discussed its significance to the corpus of literature of that time and how it symbolises an enormous loss of life of one nation.

Monasteries and medieval Serbia were other challenging topics which involved a lot of research. Students who prepared these topics showed a good understanding of places and events, and used mainly written resources and some pictures or paintings to illustrate the places they were talking about. Students should be encouraged to use a variety of resources in this section of the examination.

Belgrade was another interesting topic, but this should have been better researched and prepared as it is quite complex. Students who had studied this topic chose to talk about its history, significant monuments or landmarks or its present day existence.