



## Oral Component

### GENERAL COMMENTS

Almost all of the students had a broad knowledge of the Sinhala Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design and the examination procedures. They came to the examination fully prepared and most students interacted with the examiners confidently. The majority of students were able to answer questions raised by the assessors without hesitation. Many of them had a good knowledge of spoken language and could maintain an effective conversation. The most popular options for the discussion were from the theme of 'the Sinhala speaking communities'. Only a few students chose the topics from the theme of 'the changing world'.

The assessors observed that there were some formulaic answers that had obviously been prepared prior to the examination and memorised for use in the conversation and discussion. Nevertheless, the majority of students had researched their topic intensively and were well prepared with relevant information to support their arguments, opinions and ideas.

### SPECIFIC INFORMATION

In the 2004 oral examination students were assessed based on the following three categories, using the relevant criteria:

- communication
- content
- language.

#### Conversation

##### Communication

In communication the two main criteria were the student's ability to maintain and advance the exchange and their clarity of expression. Most of the students had the ability to link with assessors. They demonstrated a good level of understanding by responding appropriately and confidently. They showed their ability to carry the conversation forward and used highly effective repair strategies. Few students needed support to maintain the conversation. Most students had remarkably good expression, and there were no problems with pronunciation and intonation.

##### Content

Here the main criterion was relevance, breadth and depth of information, options and ideas. The students presented high quality information about their families, schools, friends, leisure activities, hobbies and future aspirations. Some students gave highly relevant responses by elaborating their ideas and opinions. It was evident that they were well prepared for the task.

##### Language

The criteria were accuracy, range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar. Some students used an excellent range of vocabulary, structure and expressions and they knew how to use these to structure their sentences accurately and appropriately. A few students anglicised terms and phrases when describing their school and future aspirations.

#### Discussion

In this section, the main criterion was the student's capacity to maintain and advance the exchange using clear language and expression. A high percentage of students demonstrated a good level of understanding by carrying the discussion forward with minimal support. There were a few excellent students who used highly effective repair strategies. They displayed very good pronunciation, intonation and emphasis. A few students had memorised the content, had a limited ability to advance the discussion and experienced minor problems with pronunciation due to their strong Australian accent.

Content wise, students were assessed on their capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on the chosen topic. All the students were well prepared for their detailed study. Many of them presented a good range of information, ideas and relevant opinions. It was clear they had done intensive research on their particular topics. Students must study a range of at least three texts, the length of which will vary depending on the complexity, in order to explore their sub-topic in sufficient depth to meet the relevant outcomes.



A large number of students used a wide range of vocabulary, structures and expressions accurately and appropriately. They had a good knowledge of spoken Sinhala. Even the weaker students communicated well, despite some minor errors.

All the students supported their discussion with illustrative material such as photographs, diagrams, maps and replicas. The assessors were highly impressed by the performance of most of the students.

## **Written component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

In general, a high percentage of students performed satisfactorily in the written examination. They identified and analysed information from the texts skilfully, and conveyed the information accurately and appropriately. Those who were unable to do so received low marks.

In the 'Reading and responding' section, questions were given to assess students' capacity to compare, contrast and evaluate. Some of the students had difficulties with translation, which was reflected in their responses to Part A. Students can overcome this weakness by starting translation exercises earlier. For this purpose, it is better to familiarise students with the Sinhala–English (not English–Sinhala) dictionary from the beginning. Teachers can help students by providing a glossary of technical words. Students should read at least one weekend Sinhala newspaper and try to do one or two translations to enhance their skills.

Students should also be familiar with the meaning of words such as 'explain', 'discuss', 'comment' and 'analyse' and text types and styles of writing.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

#### **Section 1 – Listening and responding**

When judging the performance of students in Section 1, assessors were looking at the student's ability to understand the general and specific aspects of a text by identifying and analysing information and conveying the information accurately and appropriately. Almost all of the students were able to understand the general and specific information of the texts but, although they had jotted down notes correctly, some of them could not convey the information accurately and appropriately in English.

#### **Part A**

##### **Text 1**

Text 1 was a radio news item about a new system of air traffic control being introduced for internal transport.

##### **1a**

Most students correctly identified the purpose of the announcement as informing listeners about the new mode of transport, but only a few explained it precisely.

##### **1b**

Most of the students identified the new air traffic system as Sea Planes.

##### **1c**

Many students answered this analytical question correctly. They understood the connection between the Sea Planes for the tourists and the availability of tanks or reservoirs in Rajarata, where the Sea Planes could land.

##### **Text 2**

Text 2 was a community announcement about an evening with the Sri Lankan cricket team.

##### **2a**

For this multiple-choice question, students had to identify the main purpose of the event, which was to raise funds for the development of cricket in rural Sri Lanka. There were a remarkable number of incorrect answers. One of the more common errors was that the purpose of the event was to meet the Sri Lankan cricket team.

# 2004 Assessment Report



## 2b

Students had to find a similar word for 'unusual opportunity' from the text. The expression 'golden opportunity' was identified by most, but not all, students.

## 2c

Students were expected to absorb the language and give examples of language in the text which was used to attract the listeners' attention. There were only a few who gained the four marks.

## Text 3

Text 3 was a long text; a telephone conversation between two cousins about their visit to Sri Lanka.

## 3a

The students had to identify that the main purpose of Sunil's visit was to gather information for his university project about wild animals. The responses were quite satisfactory.

## 3b

Students were expected to explain why it is worth going to Yala, which is farther away. There were many correct answers but only a few got all three marks.

## 3c

Most of the students identified three other activities Sunil might enjoy while working on his project.

## 3d

Students had to explain why the term 'Jack of all trades' could be applied to Sunil. There were many correct answers but some students, instead of explaining, just wrote in point form.

## Part B

### Text 4

Text 4 was an announcement by a school principal to the students about a working bee at their school.

## 4a

The students were expected to describe the tone of the speaker. Although there were many unsatisfactory answers, there were quite a number of good responses too.

## 4b

This question seemed to be an easy one. Students correctly identified that the idea of the announcement was to inform the students about the working bee.

## 4c

There was a high percentage of correct answers. As past pupils provided the lunch, it was obvious that they still supported their old school.

### Text 5

Text 5 was based on a TV program (discussion) about an ancient stone bridge in Sri Lanka.

## 5a

Most of the students realised that Professor Suraweera was invited to appear on the program because he is the Professor of Archeology.

## 5b

There were many good responses to this question. When asked why Anuradhapura was an important centre, students recognised that the city was the capital and the commercial centre of the time as well as the fact that it was connected to the main ports by highways.

## 5c

Three marks were allocated for this question and many students gained full marks. They absorbed all aspects of the text on bridge building in ancient time.



**5d**

The question was 'Why was it necessary to build such bridges?' There were a remarkable number of students who gave the correct answer, 'to transport goods to the capital and for the traffic of horse drawn and other carriages'.

**Section 2 – Reading and responding**

In this section, students were expected to show their understanding of general and specific aspects of the text by comparing, contrasting, summarising, evaluating and conveying the information accurately and appropriately.

**Part A**

**Text 6**

Text 6 was a story about a typical traditional family affair in rural Sri Lanka. It contained contrasting views.

**6a**

The students had to explain why it is not possible for Namal to marry Sandalatha. Only a few students obtained full marks after summarising the text.

**6b**

This was an analytical question on Namal's views about marriage and there were only a limited number of successful answers.

**6c**

This question focused on Loku Hamine's tone of language. Many students gave simple, correct answers but did not elaborate.

**6d**

Students were expected to evaluate Selesthian's view about the custom of marriages based on family background. Most of the answers were wide of the mark.

**Text 7**

This passage was from a newspaper article on World Habitat Day.

**7a**

Students were asked to discuss the importance of World Habitat Day, using complete sentences. Answers ranged from poor to excellent.

**7b**

The students had to explain why the United Nations Organisation would support World Habitat Day. There were not many correct responses.

**7c**

Students were asked, 'How has Sri Lanka responded to World Habitat Day?' Many of them answered correctly.

**7d**

The students had to evaluate the statement, 'Cultural activities are a strong medium for educating people.' It seemed most students were not confident with this type of question.

**Part B**

**Text 8**

The students were required to read a short text in Sinhala, which was an advertisement from the Student Support Services at Bourke University, and write a letter as an overseas student requesting more information about two or three services in the brochure.

Here the assessors took into account whether the students had the capacity to understand general and specific aspects of the text by identifying, analysing and responding to information, as well as whether they could convey information coherently and appropriately. Most of the students knew the discourse form of a formal letter, but the content, structure and appropriateness of some students' letters were not up to the standard required for full marks.



### **Section 3 – Writing in Sinhala**

Students were required to provide a piece of writing containing 200–250 words in Sinhala. They could select from four different kinds of writing. This task was designed to assess the student's ability to express ideas and opinions relevant to the task, their ability to use an accurate range of vocabulary and sentence structures and their knowledge of the text type. Fifteen marks were available. There were a few students who demonstrated their creativeness and a high standard of expression levels. All four text types were used.

#### **Question 9**

Question 9: informative leaflet. Those who selected this question provided sufficient information but very few followed the correct discourse form.

#### **Question 10**

Question 10: evaluative review. Students were expected to present and evaluate both sides of an argument and discuss the issue rationally and objectively. However, students mostly saw only one side of the issue and neglected to provide an objective analysis of both sides of the issue.

#### **Question 11**

Question 11: imaginative story. Only a limited number of students selected this question; however those who did wrote quite good stories.

#### **Question 12**

Question 12: persuasive text of a speech. Students had to convince members of a book club to read a particular book. There were quite a few good answers, although others merely recounted the content of the book.