

2021 VCE Yiddish oral external assessment report

General comments

The Yiddish oral examination assesses students' knowledge and skills in using spoken language. The examination has two sections – a conversation of approximately 7 minutes, during which students converse with the assessors about their personal world, and a discussion of approximately 8 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 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

The conversation will consist of a general conversation about the student's personal world, for example, school and home life, family and friends, and 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.

Overall, students exhibited an exemplary level of preparation for this examination, with outstanding ability and proficiency demonstrated.

Students performed very well in the conversation section, expressing themselves very competently across a range of subtopics. Students showed excellent comprehension skills and responded well to higher order questions. The questions were formulated to assess a variety of tenses, including various forms of past, future and conditional tense. Students were proficient in applying correct grammatical forms and also drew

on an extensive range of vocabulary. Greater attention to the reflexive and to word order would have resulted in stronger performances for some students, and these are noted as areas for improvement.

In 2021, students generally displayed an authentic Yiddish approach to both language choices and expression, including idiomatic speech. Responses to questions were detailed and reflected students' confidence in their oral language skills. Students were proficient in carrying the conversation forward, and often took control of the conversation. They advanced the exchange confidently, elaborating effectively with interesting and relevant information, ideas and opinions.

Section 2 – Discussion

Following the conversation, the student will indicate to the assessors 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, 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 Yiddish 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 Yiddish 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 Yiddish-speaking community.

Students achieved an excellent standard overall in this section of the exam. It was evident that students had undertaken thorough and thoughtful preparation of their detailed studies. The subtopics selected this year were fresh, mature and highly relevant, and the texts used were unique and varied. Some texts included complex vocabulary and/or addressed complex ideas. It is commendable that students took the initiative to study sophisticated texts rather than relying on more simple options. Students had clearly chosen texts that were meaningful to them, which enabled them to engage deeply with their texts. Most students were very articulate, summarising and relaying the important points of each text coherently. Students responded readily to questions and were able to carry forward the discussion confidently. In doing so, they displayed an excellent range of vocabulary and a highly appropriate style and register. Students demonstrated exemplary skills in analysing the content deeply and thoughtfully. They were generally able to elaborate on their ideas and opinions, with relevant and insightful responses that highlighted each text's relevance to the subtopic. Most students undertook deeper analysis of the meanings and contexts of the texts, resulting in very interesting, relevant and engaging discussions.