



**2012**

**Languages: Arabic GA 3: Examination**

## **Oral component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

The oral examination assesses students' knowledge and skill in using spoken language. Section 1 of the examination focuses on a conversation between the student and assessors, and consists of a general conversation about the student's personal world. This part of the examination lasts for approximately seven minutes. Section 2, the Discussion, is approximately eight minutes long. The student commences this part of the examination by giving a one-minute introduction to the topic of their Detailed Study.

Students who had prepared thoroughly for this examination were more successful in satisfying all of the assessment criteria than those who had not. Well-prepared students were generally at ease during the examination and seemed to be more confident. Less-prepared students, however, seemed to lack confidence and experienced difficulty in meeting all the examination criteria.

### **SPECIFIC COMMENTS**

#### **Section 1 – Conversation**

To prepare effectively for the Conversation, students should ensure that they discuss and elaborate on a wide range of topics within their personal world; for example, school and home lives, family and friends, interests and aspirations. High-achieving students were able to use an excellent range of vocabulary and expressions to articulate ideas accurately and appropriately. They also displayed competence in the use of more complex tense structures. These students self-corrected errors and consistently used an appropriate style and register.

Students who performed competently in this section of the examination also displayed confidence and thorough preparation. They responded readily and advanced the Conversation with minimal support from assessors. These students demonstrated an excellent understanding of the questions asked by assessors, and their communication was natural and free-flowing.

Students who achieved excellent scores in this part of the examination provided a range of information and ideas that they were able to discuss in depth, and support with appropriate examples and evidence from the texts. These students were also able to express varying opinions on the topics discussed.

In contrast, students who experienced difficulty in this section were slow to respond to assessors' questions and had a very limited ability to advance the conversation. These students often hesitated and had a number of false starts. The conversation was often shallow and consisted of few ideas, opinions or examples. Some of these students had significant problems with pronunciation, stress and intonation. Some students did not seem to have prepared adequately as the conversation lacked depth and substance. Given that the topic of the conversation focuses on students' personal worlds, students should ensure that they prepare appropriately for this section. It was disappointing that some students lacked basic vocabulary skills and, at times, had to rely on English words to sustain the conversation. Others relied on rote-learned responses and were unable to respond and continue when interrupted. Students are advised not to memorise responses as conversations are impromptu forms of interaction.

#### **Section 2 – Discussion**

This section of the examination required students to discuss an aspect of their Detailed Study. Students were required to use the texts that were studied to present information, ideas and opinions about their chosen topic.

This year, high-scoring students demonstrated a readiness to connect with assessors when responding. They provided an excellent, clear and logical range of information, ideas and opinions. These students elaborated on and carried the Discussion forward by introducing new ideas, opinions and examples related to the topic of their Detailed Study, and supported their answers by making references to the texts they had studied. The discussion seemed to flow naturally, and these students seemed to have authentic pronunciation and appropriate stress and tempo. These students were able to develop the discussion by using varied and more complex language structures appropriately and accurately. They presented a wide range of topics with varied resources. Students who were well prepared had an in-depth understanding of the reference materials that they had studied and were able to draw on a wide range of resources in support of their

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argument. These students had studied a variety of resources that enabled them to expand on their topic effectively, by referring to articles, interviews, films and extracts from novels.

Conversely, students who experienced difficulty in the Discussion section presented a limited range of information on which they were generally unable to elaborate. Many of these students discussed resources that lacked depth and content. Consequently, they were unable to effectively draw on their texts to advance the Discussion. They also displayed limited ability to interact with and relied on extensive support from assessors. Their performance was often hindered by weak language skills, poor pronunciation, stress and tempo. Their limited range of language structures and vocabulary prevented them from advancing the Discussion successfully. Weak students generally displayed inaccurate and deficient language structures.

When preparing for the oral examination, it is imperative that students be familiar with the examination specifications. Students must be prepared to converse confidently with assessors and be able to offer a wide range of opinions with supporting evidence from the texts. Basic responses are not appropriate at this level as they prevent communication. Students' preparation should include a thorough investigation of the topics chosen for the examination so that they respond in depth to assessors' questions. When preparing for this examination, students should make a point of revising and practising their grammar, as stated in the *VCE Arabic Study Design*. It is important that all students are aware of the requirements set out in the study design.

To maximise student performance in this examination, it is strongly recommended that topics presented for the Detailed Study have sufficient depth and substance so that themes can be explored extensively. It is also important that resources be updated when possible. Texts and reference materials should be selected with care in order to ensure that students have sufficient content, vocabulary and ideas to draw on in the examination. In some cases, a picture, cartoon, poem or slogan may not provide students with adequate scope for elaboration. Some texts may in fact prevent students from being able to extract supporting evidence for their ideas and opinions. Likewise, resources should not be in English as they will not provide students with the appropriate vocabulary to draw on.