



## **2011 Languages: Chinese Second Language Advanced GA 3: Examination**

### **Oral component**

#### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

The oral examination consists of seven minutes of conversation, a one-minute introduction to the Detailed Study and seven minutes of discussion of the Detailed Study. Teachers and students are advised to follow the instructions and recommendations provided in the *VCE Chinese Second Language Advanced Study Design*.

The assessment criteria for the oral examination, Section 1 – Conversation, are:

- capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively
- clarity of expression
- relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas
- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar.

The criteria for Section 2 – Discussion are identical to those for Section 1 – Conversation, with the exception of the third dot point, which is:

- capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic.

Most students appeared to have prepared well and demonstrated a good understanding of the questions asked. Their answers were fluent and grammatically correct, demonstrating their ability to maintain good communication with a degree of authenticity and originality.

At some point during the examination, students will be asked questions that will allow them to apply their understanding of Chinese to an unfamiliar context. It is most important that students listen carefully to the questions being asked by assessors and ensure that responses are relevant and thoughtful. Successful students used a variety of structures without repetition of the same phrases and ideas throughout the examination. Students should be prepared to answer questions in the third person, such as from the perspective of parents or friends.

High-scoring students manipulated the language accurately to present complex ideas. Regardless of the question being asked, students should aim to go beyond a simple ‘yes/no’ response and not simply rephrase the question asked by the assessors.

Some students demonstrated very good communication skills. They interacted with the assessors naturally and their conversation flowed smoothly. Other students used their sense of humour to help the conversation flow and produce a pleasant atmosphere. However, a small number of students used informal behaviour and colloquial language that was inappropriate for this examination.

Listening skills are essential for success in the oral examination. It is important that students understand the key phrases in the questions to allow them to respond relevantly and appropriately. Students should pause to allow assessors to ask further questions, as the Conversation is an exchange rather than the student’s own mini-presentation.

#### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

##### **Section 1 – Conversation**

Students were expected to interact with assessors and talk about aspects of their personal world, including family and friends, school and activities, interests and future aspirations.

High-scoring students had obviously anticipated the type of questions that might be asked and had prepared appropriate and interesting responses. Some students occasionally used English words in their conversation; for example, the names of their school subjects and activities. Students are reminded that they should not state their name or the name of their school.



## Content

This criterion assesses:

- relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas
- range of information/ideas
- capacity to support/elaborate on ideas/opinions with reasons/examples/evidence/new ideas.

Students were generally able to talk about their family, school, hobbies and ambitions. Students may have performed better by focusing on the question itself rather than talking about only vaguely related subjects.

Strong students were proactive and able to connect the different aspects of their lives and situations so that the conversation was more authentic and meaningful. Weaker students tended to make up their own story with inconsistent information and opinions.

Students' capacity to support or elaborate on information, ideas and opinions with reasons, examples and evidence is crucial. Responses should avoid generalisations and stereotypes. It is better that students express their own opinions rather than memorise a statement prepared by another person.

## Language

This criterion assesses:

- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- variety of vocabulary and grammar
- appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar to the context, audience and purpose of the task
- appropriateness of register.

The performance levels of students on this criterion varied. Some students were able to demonstrate awareness of appropriate style and register, and of cultural appropriateness such as respectful forms for older generations and modest ways of talking about their own strengths.

Some students used Chinese idioms and colloquial phrases; however, not all students used them appropriately. It is suggested that students have to first fully understand idioms and phrases and then apply them to suitable situations.

Grammar and language misuse was an issue for weaker students; for example, 中国人的吃习（饮食习惯）. Students should always check with their teachers or a dictionary to make sure that vocabulary, phrases and expressions that are appropriate in one context are also appropriate in another.

## Section 2 – Discussion

This section included a one-minute introduction and seven minutes of discussion on a chosen topic related to the texts studied. Students are reminded that there is no need to introduce their selected topic for Detailed Study with the sentence, 'I have studied language and culture through Literature and the Arts'.

In the Discussion students need to:

- give a brief one-minute introduction of the main focus
- indicate a sub-topic
- make reference to resources used. It is suggested that resources include a range of texts including books, movies, articles and so on
- remember that cue cards are not allowed in Second Language Advanced examinations.

This year, many students successfully demonstrated a working understanding of the questions asked and excellent knowledge of the content related to the prescribed topics. These students led the discussion in the direction that was favourable to them, and developed and elaborated on their responses with opinions and additional information using sophisticated linguistic skills.

Resources other than those in the Chinese language are not recommended. Students should be advised that if their topic relates to a Chinese instrument, there is no need to bring the instrument to the examination. It is also not acceptable to bring reference materials such as books or magazines.

The Discussion should focus on an issue related to aspects of the language and culture of Chinese-speaking communities and be based on a sub-topic that relates to one or more of the topics prescribed in the *VCE Chinese Second*



*Language Advanced Study Design.* Students are encouraged to use a range of texts as resources to support their Detailed Study.

The topics chosen should reflect the interests of students and inspire them to elaborate on information and respond with their opinions. Coherent responses in the discussion are recommended. Topics that were too narrow, too broad and sophisticated to organise, and topics that were too superficial or lacked depth, proved problematic.

Topics were broad-ranging and included Chinese historical or contemporary famous figures, such as 王昭君, 花木兰, 郑成功, 李时珍; 朗朗, 成龙 and so on.

Some topics were not related to Chinese culture or the Chinese-speaking community. The Detailed Study needs structure and the title should not be ambiguous. The texts selected should be appropriate for the level of the student and should stimulate discussion.

## Communication

This criterion assesses:

- the student's capacity to link with assessors
- effectiveness of communication and repair strategies
- degree of support necessary to maintain the exchange
- pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo
- effective control of language to convey linguistic and culturally appropriate meaning.

Choosing topics and sub-topics that suit the student's interests and levels of proficiency is crucial. Some students tend to choose difficult or rare topics to demonstrate their unique choice. This is acceptable as long as the topics chosen conform to the study design and are related to the Chinese-speaking community. However, some students were not able to construct the content at their own level and instead pieced information together. Some students did not choose appropriate topics that allowed an in-depth discussion. Some topics, such as exam pressure, the advantages of living in the city versus the country and study life, need to be made specific to the Chinese-speaking community otherwise they are barely related to the requirements of Chinese Second Language Advanced Detailed Study.

Some students recited content and were unable to respond when they were asked unexpected questions. Students are expected to give their opinion on the topic and support their argument with relevant information.

## Content

This criterion assesses:

- relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas
- range of information/ideas
- capacity to support/elaborate on ideas/opinions including reasons/examples/evidence/new ideas.

Students who performed well on this criterion prepared their Detailed Study logically and sequentially and were able to present their knowledge of the subject, their opinions and their own analyses. The use of resources such as books, movies and documentaries in this area is recommended. Students are allowed to bring support material to the examination, such as photographs or diagrams, provided they contain minimal Chinese text.

Some students' topics were too abstract and did not allow them to have a detailed discussion. Consequently, they were often presentations of information only, with little scope for expressing opinions or ideas about the chosen topic.

Some students appeared to have compiled the information from their resources and references. When asked what they had learned from the resources and references, they either could not reflect on the topic they had chosen or responded that this was not a part of their research.

## Language

This criterion assesses:

- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- variety of vocabulary and grammar
- appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar to the context, audience and purpose of the task
- appropriateness of register.

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Students who performed well on this criterion had selected a topic that interested them and that was at a language level suited to their ability. Generally, students had prepared well for this criterion, although a few students made mistakes with sentence structure and grammar.

Students should be aware that, following their initial answers, assessors will often ask further questions and rote-learned passages will not help them to cope with spontaneous questions.