



2013

Languages: French GA 3: Examination

Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The overall quality of students' communicative skills in conversation and discussion in the 2013 French oral examinations was impressive. Most students were well prepared, were capable of linking appropriately with the assessors and had a very good level of pronunciation.

The following are some general comments on student performance in the examination.

- Students are encouraged to advance the exchange appropriately and effectively. Some students delivered rote-learned information, spoke very quickly and dominated the conversation. Other students had very little to say and did not take the opportunity to elaborate on their answers. Assessors needed to prompt these students by asking questions. Students are reminded that neither approach qualifies as an exchange. For the Conversation, students need to be well prepared, have internalised information that allows them to go beyond a simple answer and, for the Discussion, have several possible lines of argument in order to respond readily and confidently.
- Some students seemed to understand and were prepared to answer questions only when they were formulated in a specific way. The *VCE French Study Design* describes the designated topics; however, assessors may formulate questions relating to these topics in different ways. Students should be able to understand questions formulated in different ways, as this is part of a flexible and fluid exchange. Students should expect to be asked questions that go beyond or might be different from the questions they rehearsed in class.
- The topics chosen for the Detailed Study should be related to French life and culture. Some students struggled with the Detailed Study or did not show much personal interest in the topic. The chosen topic should be appropriate to the student's level of knowledge and linguistic ability.
- Some students showed great interest in their topics and treated them in great depth. Many students had researched the topic well, had explored various aspects of the topic, learnt the appropriate vocabulary and expressions, and were therefore at ease with the Discussion. Some students struggled to answer slightly challenging questions.
- Students should know the appropriate vocabulary for the context of their Detailed Study. For instance, if a student presents on the topic *La Nouvelle Vague*, they should not only have a rough idea on how to define it as a genre, situate it in the history of cinema and compare it with other cinematographic trends, but should know some vocabulary and expressions that make it possible to talk about the topic, such as the filmmaker, lighting, narrative, characters, point of view, etc.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

A high-scoring performance included thorough and sophisticated preparation of familiar conversation topics (such as family, school and leisure activities, and plans for the future). The use of personal stories and anecdotes allows students to use turns of phrase that are more personal and offers the possibility of using a variety of structures, vocabulary and tenses.

Criterion 1 – Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

Most students showed a very good level of understanding, communicated effectively and performed well on this criterion. Some students gave minimal answers and waited for the assessors' next questions, which led to too many pauses.

Criterion 2 – Relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

Most students presented a very good range of information, opinions and ideas.

Criterion 3 – Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Some students used poor sentence structures, displaying only limited understanding of basic grammatical structures. The most notable errors were with verb conjugation and agreements. Many students said *j'étude* instead of *j'étudie* or left the main verb in a clause in the infinitive rather than conjugating it. There were also a number of errors in



vocabulary choice such as *je veux étudier la loi* instead of *je veux étudier le droit*, or *étudier le médecin* instead of *étudier la médecine*.

Criterion 4 – Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Most students had a good range of vocabulary, structures and expressions, but could have produced a greater variety of vocabulary and better grammatical structures.

Criterion 5 – Clarity of expression

Most students had good pronunciation, intonation and tempo. The clarity of expression was generally very good.

Section 2 – Discussion

It is important for students to limit their introduction to around one minute and avoid speaking unnaturally quickly if they think their introduction is longer than one minute. It is also essential that students understand that assessors are likely to ask questions about anything mentioned in the introduction and students should be prepared to clarify and elaborate on this information.

Criterion 6 – Capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively

Some students produced confident responses during the Discussion, drawing on related ideas that moved the discussion forward. These students had clearly anticipated some of the questions based on their introduction. The less successful students were often unable to defend their ideas and the discussion remained on a superficial level, with students waiting for the next question to be asked.

Criterion 7 – Capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic

The more successful students were able to elaborate on information and ideas, and provide opinions that displayed some depth of information on the resources mentioned. After naming their resource (for example, an internet article or a website), some students had very little information to add, demonstrating that they had not prepared adequately for the Discussion.

Criterion 8 – Accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Some students were very accurate in their use of vocabulary and grammar. Most students used a good variety of structures but often the language was simple and predictable. The use of past tenses (*imparfait* and *passé composé*) was often incorrect, as were adjective agreements, particularly adjectives in the feminine.

Criterion 9 – Range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

Some students used an excellent range of vocabulary as well as some sophisticated expressions appropriate to the chosen topic. The less successful students struggled to use the correct words or the appropriate grammatical structures, and often used a limited range of vocabulary.

Criterion 10 – Clarity of expression

Pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo were generally very good.

Students should practise at length in the classroom, where they will gain confidence in speaking in public and learn from each other. Students need to present a Detailed Study that interests them and is appropriate in terms of their personality, general knowledge and linguistic ability.

The following are some general comments on the Detailed Study.

- Some topics were dealt with in a superficial manner, with a broad introduction. It is not sufficient to find articles on the internet. The topic needs to be explored in depth so that the students are well informed and have arguments readily available to them. There was a lack of understanding of the historical or social concepts of some topics. Sometimes the information given by the student was inaccurate, which made it difficult for assessors to ask relevant questions. Students repeated information and had little material to discuss. Some Detailed Studies did not reflect 15 hours of scheduled class time.
- Several Detailed Studies needed to be better planned. Scaffolding a new topic is essential for better comprehension and in-depth learning. Some students had too many resources and their range of discussion was too broad and superficial. Moreover, some of their resources were not in the target language, which made it difficult for the student to talk about them. All resources should be in French. A thorough analysis of more specific resources in the target language would give the discussion more substance.

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- Some topics for the Detailed Study were too complex. They challenged the less successful students and affected the language used. Often, the sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical structures needed to convey complexity in a topic were beyond some students' proficiency.
- Some topics were too descriptive and did not give the student the opportunity to express their opinion. It is advisable to present a topic with an issue to be discussed, so that students can offer opinions.
- Some students brought good visual materials (pictures, etc.) to support the discussion. The use of a visual support can facilitate the discussion and give the student a focus. It is very helpful for students who are less confident. However, a number of students did not follow examination regulations concerning visual materials and presented an item that included too much written text.