

Oral component

Most students were well prepared for the conversation section, displaying a sound knowledge of the prescribed topics. However, some students still tended to rely on pre-learned material. The discussion was competently handled by many students but there is a need for improvement in a number of areas.

To improve their performance in the Conversation and Discussion, students should:

- be familiar with the criteria
- be thoroughly prepared
- realise that a conversation is an exchange and not an opportunity to recite pre-learned material
- know that there are various ways of asking the same question
- respond to questions in some breadth and depth
- build on comments made by assessors
- have a good knowledge of key vocabulary and structures
- be able to converse in basic tenses such as the present, future, conditional and perfect
- self-correct or seek clarification
- express and elaborate on ideas and opinions and justify them or make comparisons
- use language spontaneously in unrehearsed situations
- develop repair strategies to avoid lengthy pauses
- know techniques and appropriate language to enable them to engage in discussion
- know how to make reference to texts studied
- be able to link opinions to texts studied.

Whilst the Conversation and the Discussion criteria are the same they assess two very different tasks, one on familiar matters; the other focuses on the Detailed Study which requires a more objective approach, so that the language is less predictable. The criteria assess:

- the student's capacity to maintain the exchange appropriately and effectively
- the relevance, breadth and depth of information
- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar
- clarity of expression.

Section 1 – Conversation

This task involves a conversation about the student's personal world, for example school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations.

The most successful students provided extensive answers to questions and moved the exchange forward with little effort. During the conversation they were able to switch from one tense to another with ease. These students also demonstrated the capacity to respond to and build on comments made by the assessors. There were no unnatural pauses and a consistent pace was maintained throughout the assessment. Less successful students, however, made frequent false starts and offered responses at the most basic level. The content of their answers was mediocre and, at times, minimal. They often did not know the gender of subjects and were unable to make subject/verb agreements.

Section 2 – Discussion

Student performance in this section was heavily dependent on the choice of sub-topic. It should not only reflect the interests of students, but also suit their linguistic ability and promote discussion of the issues and resources studied. Some topics were either beyond the capabilities of the student, too narrow, too broad or too vague. Descriptive or purely informative topics should be avoided as they do not generally promote discussion, expression of opinions or permit the generation of new ideas. A poor choice of sub-topic invariably inhibits the student's chances of meeting the criterion, which assesses 'relevance, breadth and depth of information'.

More successful students outlined the sub-topic within the one-minute time limit, stating whether the topic was Text or VCE VET, the title of the sub-topic, giving a brief elaboration of the sub-topic, focusing on the issues for discussion and letting the assessors know whether any support material had been brought.

During the Discussion they demonstrated an excellent knowledge of their topic citing three or more varied resources in different text types. They were not only thoroughly conversant with the content of their Detailed Study, but also highly skilled in expressing and elaborating ideas and opinions, substantiating them with pertinent evidence. At this level students demonstrated the capacity to use an extensive range of vocabulary and a range of complex structures and accurate language.

By contrast, a small number of students were not well prepared and were then unable to discuss different aspects of their chosen sub-topic. A number of students quoted only two resources or no written resource, citing only the Internet. Some students were unable to demonstrate an adequate knowledge of texts they had allegedly studied, whilst many were unable to show links between topics and texts. The least successful students could not express opinions or if they

did, were unable to substantiate them. Many were unable to engage in sustained, meaningful discussion, frequently resorting to their pre-learned material.

Written component

The tasks were designed to assess the students' capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts and to respond accurately and appropriately in French.

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A

Most students acquitted themselves well in this section, with only a relatively small percentage answering in the wrong language. It was surprising that in Question 1 a few students thought that '*glace*' meant 'glass'. Question 10 proved difficult for some students, who answered 'flamorous' for '*flamand rose*', while very few students understood the word '*taureau*' in Question 11.

Text 1

Question 1

One of ice-cream/sorbet.

Question 2

A sorbet **and** it has 4 times fewer calories than a sorbet/fewer calories.

Question 3

9 pm **or** 21 hours.

Text 2

Question 4

Because she has a (slightly) sore throat.

Question 5

Being outside in any weather/being outside all the time.

Question 6

Grandmother says so.

Question 7

Two of showers/storms/lower temperatures/floods.

Text 3

Question 8

One of they might fall into the water/fall overboard/fall off the boat.

Question 9

One of fauna/flora/park/migratory birds.

Question 10

One of flamingos/cormorants/herons.

Question 11

One of raises bulls/looks after bulls.

Text 4

Question 12

Duties of first job

1. sort books
2. put books back on shelves.

One positive feature one of he can borrow books/comics/it's an evening job/he's free during the day/friendly staff.

Duties of second job three of take customer's orders/pack CDs/label them/send them.

Robert's objection one of he doesn't want to work on the first day/he has other plans.

Part B

Students were required to demonstrate the capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts and convey information accurately and appropriately.

As in Part A, most students answered in the correct language and handled this section quite well, responding in phrases or complete sentences, as required. The most successful students provided complete sentences in excellent French, where the grammar and spelling were almost free of error, and the content appropriate. However, a significant number of students misspelled common words like 'amour', or were unable to handle reflexive verbs, omitting the reflexive pronoun in the answers to Questions 15 and 20, so that the answer was either grammatically incorrect (Question 15) or made no sense (Question 20).

Text 5

Question 13

Christine a visité des sites touristiques pour trouver une maison/endroit pour les vacances d'été (full sentence required).

Question 14

Deux des choses suivantes:

Une grande salle à manger/salle de bains/w.c./cuisine bien équipée/lave-vaisselle/lave-linge.

Question 15

Ils pourront se promener sur les plages/explore d'autres villages/aller pêcher/essayer les spécialités de la région (full sentence required).

Text 6

Question 16

Deux des choses suivantes:

La vie/l'amour/la famille/la société.

Question 17

Une des choses suivantes:

Les chanteurs populaires/la chanson populaire.

Question 18

Une des choses suivantes:

Un milieu ouvrier/un milieu populaire/une classe ouvrière/une origine ouvrière.

Question 19

Une des choses suivantes:

Il doit tenir son rôle dans la société.

Il doit observer les gens.

Il doit voir ce qui les inquiète.

Il doit trouver des solutions pour des causes justes.

Il doit militer pour des causes justes.

(full sentence required)

Question 20

Une des choses suivantes:

Les Canadiens se reconnaissent dans le monde de ses chansons

Les Canadiens apprécient son sens de l'humour.

(full sentence required)

Students should:

- practise sound-discrimination exercises
- listen to a range of texts in various text types
- practise picking out key points in French listening texts
- learn to respond in complete sentences or phrases as required
- practise the necessary skills by listening to spoken French in films or the news on SBS
- spend reading time examining the questions in Section 1 to determine what kind of information is required
- listen intently from the outset of the Listening and Responding Section
- make notes in the margin of the examination paper while the examination is in progress
- consult their dictionary for unknown key words during the pauses between the first and second readings of texts
- have a sound knowledge of basic tenses
- acquire a range of vocabulary from the Themes and Topics table in the study design. (page. 13).

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Part A

This section is designed to assess students' capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspects of texts.

A high proportion of students obtained good scores on both texts in this section. It was pleasing to note that very few students answered in French.

To perform well students should:

- read extensively in French
- select a wide range of texts in different text types
- try to determine the gist of the passage without looking up every word
- during the second reading of the text in the examination, check the meaning of key words.

Text 7

Question 21

One of the men were cowering/hiding/crouching/the men were anxious.

Question 22

One of containers/packages of weapons/ammunition/explosives.

Question 23

One of postal vans/post office vans.

Question 24

Farm, isolated and uninhabited.

Question 25

They work in the technical department of the postal service.

Question 26

Mme Lebon gives the code to her son/Mme Lebon keeps her composure.

Her son knew what to do/Her son warns the Resistance fighters.

Text 8

Question 27

One of because of a truck fire/repairs to the tunnel.

Question 28

1. commercial
2. tourist.

Question 29

Three of clean air/no noise pollution/no road danger/increased tourism.

Question 30

Rail transport.

Question 31

Stage one of reform restoring/re-establishing existing rail lines

Stage two of reform extra rail lines

Question 32

1. the quality of life of the inhabitants
2. the tourism industry.

Reading and responding

Part B

Students are required to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of a text and their ability to convey information accurately and appropriately.

Question 33

The task was to write to the president of the Progress Association regarding problems in the community.

Students had to respond to the following points:

1. Rubbish in the public gardens
2. Walls covered in graffiti
3. Insecurity – young people roaming around the streets at night
4. Renovation of the old gymnasium
5. Outfitting activity rooms
6. Finance – everyone's help is needed
7. Do you want to be a volunteer?
8. Clean up the town
9. What would occupy our young; sport perhaps?
10. Possible solutions.

This task was well handled by most students. The conventions of formal letter writing were observed, although there were minor slips in the beginnings and endings of letters and the occasional switch from formal to informal register. More successful students skillfully combined the comments about the problems in the town with suggestions for improvement, producing writing of high quality within the prescribed word limit. Less able students presented pieces, which were either too short or too long, while some students ignored the questions or comments altogether. Poor letters lacked fluency and cohesion and were frequently characterised by undue transcription or inaccurate language, e.g. *à cause de la facte, les enfants plus ageux, j'ai écrire votre lettre, à qui il se affaire* (to whom it may concern).

Students should:

- make a plan so that the writing flows
- combine points where possible
- avoid irrelevant details
- use paragraphs, topic sentences and ensure that sentences lead on logically from one to the other
- use appropriate connectives
- write in the appropriate text type, style and register
- observe the word limit
- allow time for proofreading.

Section 3 – Writing in French

This section is designed to assess students' ability to express ideas through the creation of original text in French. Students were required to write 200–250 words on one of four topics. Questions 34 and 37 were the most frequently chosen topics; followed by Question 36, with only a small proportion attempting Question 35.

Students need to:

- practise writing regularly in French on a variety of themes and topics
- be aware of time and word limits
- read texts written by their classmates, exchanging texts to correct errors
- plan their response before attempting to write
- be familiar with styles of writing and common text types in the French Study Design (pp. 48–50)
- know key elements of the grammatical concepts listed in the French Study Design (pp. 14–17).

Question 34

Some students presented profiles on already famous people, whom they had obviously discussed in their Detailed Study. These students wrote at great length about the well known achievements of these people but omitted to include their rarely recognised accomplishments, thus presenting a slightly unbalanced view. Others wrote about a family member but few took the opportunity to pay tribute to an unsung hero for his/her contributions to the community.

The more able students produced well structured pieces which included a title. There were at least two reasons given for admiring the person and two or more examples of his/her achievements. The language was accurate with a good range of vocabulary and structures and in the appropriate text type. Less able students omitted a title, failed to cover all aspects of the topic, and offered mundane content in language marred by grammatical and lexical errors.

Question 35

The most able students presented the pros and cons of spending public money on medical research, supported by convincing evidence. The style of writing was objective and the language included expressions of cause, consequence, opposition and concession. After discussion of the facts, these students rounded off their pieces with a logical conclusion.

By contrast, less successful students failed to treat both sides of the argument or did not provide evidence of their claims. Their language was of an indifferent standard, containing inaccurate expressions and verb forms, e.g. '*on mortira avec les maladies*'.

Question 36

This topic gave more successful students the opportunity to display their creative talent. Their writing was characterised by original, often, humorous ideas and descriptive language. However, a number of students were ill-advised to choose this topic as they failed to capture the reader's interest by creating the desired atmosphere and they were unable to use descriptive language and the *passé composé*.

Question 37

This topic was well handled by those who attempted it. Students began their speeches with a clear outline of the problems and ended with suggestions for resolution of these problems. They used a suitable form of address and included persuasive techniques and language to convince their audience of the need for action. Less successful students were also familiar with the conventions of speech writing but fell down by concentrating on only one problem or not offering solutions. Such students often lacked the skills and/or the vocabulary to persuade their audience of the extent of the inequalities.