



**2006**

**LOTE: Hebrew GA3: Examination**

## **Oral Component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

The overall results of the oral examination were pleasing. Students' speaking ability varied from satisfactory to nearly flawless. In general, students were able to converse successfully with the assessors and to maintain an effective discussion of their topic, although the responses of some students were too brief.

Students' performances were affected by numerous grammatical and lexical mistakes. As in previous years, the weaker students were prone to making basic linguistic errors, such as using incorrect gender forms, nouns, adjectives and tenses. Students should be coached to pay greater attention to grammatical structures.

Sometimes a student chose a sophisticated word that was not appropriate, which suggested that the knowledge of its meaning was rather poor. It is important for students to have a rich vocabulary, but they should avoid inappropriate usage. They should be made aware that, depending on the context, words may have different meanings.

Another recurrent problem was the tendency of some students to recite pre-learned responses instead of conversing spontaneously. This adversely affects the student's ability to communicate with the assessors, which is one of the key marking criteria.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

#### **Section 1 – Conversation**

Most students were well prepared and participated confidently and effectively in a conversation with assessors. A few students were outstanding. The students found it relatively easy to conduct a general conversation on everyday topics such as family, school, work, leisure and personal interests and aspirations. However, even when discussing a well-prepared topic, some students had difficulty in recalling the proper words when faced with an unexpected question. Some students gave only short or basic answers, and even prompting and encouragement from the assessors could not draw them into a free flowing conversation.

The best performing students coped well with the syntax of complex sentences and used a rich vocabulary. Lower-scoring students made grammatical and syntactic errors. Some students used phrases translated from English or ones unsuitable for an oral expression. However, the assessors could usually understand what the students were trying to say and this did not greatly affect the communication between the student and the assessors. Nevertheless, such odd sounding sentences highlighted the student's insufficient knowledge of the spoken language.

#### **Section 2 – Discussion**

The sub-topics chosen for the Detailed Study included: absorption of immigrants, Jerusalem, leadership, various modes of living and lifestyle, and communities in Israel and their contributions to the Israeli culture. The choice of topic is very important, and the subject should interest and motivate the student. When asked 'Why did you choose the subject?' it was disappointing to hear a student reply 'I don't know, the teacher chose it'. Some students were not even able to explain the meaning of the title of the topic.

The scope of some sub-topics was very limited. It is important to choose a sub-topic which will not be difficult to expand upon and which assists the student to express opinions and ideas sufficient for a seven to eight minute discussion. Many good sub-topics dealt with the various Israeli communities and their contribution to Israeli culture. Some students admitted that the topic became close to their heart, and that they enjoyed exploring their roots.

Most students had learnt their topics well and cited at least three resources. Even the less successful students usually demonstrated sufficient knowledge of their sub-topics. Some students had chosen three resources such as film, cartoon, photo or interview, but did not cite any written texts. Although students may use visual resources, it is desirable to use written material also. This would enable students to develop a better working vocabulary necessary for expressing themselves on their particular topic.

Less confident students were often hesitant and slow to find appropriate expressions. They sometimes did not understand the assessors' questions, which had to be repeated in a simplified form. Many students struggled to express an original thought or to respond to a question for which they were not prepared. On occasion, to sustain the discussion,



the assessors had to assist by expanding on the chosen sub-topic. It is important for students to know their topics well, and to acquire a vocabulary adequate for discussing related matters.

## **Written Component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

Most students attempted all sections of the written examination and the overall results were satisfactory. The responses were in the appropriate language and well thought out, but the instructions were not always followed. When the responses were to be written in Hebrew, the students' vocabulary was adequate but their language skills, particularly the grammar and the sentence structure, were often poor. The good students had a rich vocabulary, which they used correctly to good effect. However, some students resorted to anglicisms or used words and expressions that were inappropriate to the idea they were trying to convey.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

#### **Section 1 – Listening and Responding**

##### **Part A – Respond in English**

Students' comprehension of the spoken texts was mostly satisfactory, and they were able to identify and analyse relevant information. However, some students used information not provided in the texts and seemed to be unaware that the aim of this part is to assess their ability to understand and to convey general and specific information from the text(s) to which they have **listened**. When students prepare for the Hebrew assessment, they should be specifically instructed not to use any extraneous information in their answers.

The correct answer to Question 1a. was 'because he was the greatest pianist of the 20th century'. Some students answered that the competition was named after him because he was an Israeli or the convenor, facts which were not provided in the text and which were incorrect. Question 1c. proved challenging to many students who did not gain the full marks. Most were able to identify the contribution of the competition to Israeli economy, but many could not point out the social and cultural contributions.

The appropriate answers to Question 2b. were 'there is an asteroid named after Newman and Einstein' and 'both dealt in science/were scientists'. However, many students wrote about the contribution of Einstein's theory to mankind; although this information was true, it was not provided in the text and such answers were not given credit as students are instructed to restrict their answers to information provided in the text.

##### **Part B – Respond in Hebrew**

Students' marks in Part B were lower than those for Part A. Students' ability to comprehend the texts appeared to be similar to Part A, but because answers were required in Hebrew, they made linguistic and spelling mistakes. As in previous years, the quality of the Hebrew language of some responses was rather poor.

In Question 4b. several students gave the reasons for the project instead of summing up its results. Students should read the questions carefully and ensure that their answers are relevant to the questions.

#### **Section 2 – Reading and Responding**

##### **Part A – Respond in English**

The aim of this section is to assess students' ability to understand and analyse the content of written Hebrew texts. The majority of students performed satisfactorily, usually better than in Part A of Section 1. Generally, the relevant specific information requested by the question was successfully selected and identified.

In Question 6a, some students merely translated the whole paragraph. To get full marks, the answer needed to include the specific information requested.

The comparison of Texts 6 and 7, with reference to the contrasting styles of writing, was competently carried out.



## **Part B – Respond in Hebrew**

Students were required to write a personal letter to their parents, explaining why they did not wish to rent the flat described in the advertisement. In the letter, students had to refer to at least five main points mentioned in the advertisement.

The high-scoring students wrote well-structured letters and dealt in-depth with the advertisement's main points. Some students, who raised objections to only two or three of the flat's perceived deficiencies, tried to reach the required number of words by repeating arguments about a point they had already made. A few students apparently did not understand the task and wrote letters arguing with their parents against taking in another tenant. These letters, although written in nearly faultless language, did not respond to the question asked.

The high-scoring letters were well structured, had the appropriate format and style and accurately used an extensive vocabulary. Some students brought up interesting and original arguments against renting the advertised flat, but only touched upon two or three points and thus lost marks. Others composed letters of adequate structure and content but the language was poor and marred by linguistic mistakes and poor spelling.

## **Section 3 – Writing in Hebrew**

The difference in language skills between the strong and the weak students was particularly pronounced in Section 3. The propensity to make linguistic errors significantly increased, as students had to write an original piece and compose original sentences without being guided by the content of given texts. Many responses were well written, the structure was good, the content original and vocabulary adequate, but some contained errors in the use of verbs and syntax, particularly when attempting a complex sentence or trying to express an abstract concept. Often students were inconsistent in using tenses and gender, sometimes changing from past to present or from singular feminine to masculine, seemingly without reason.

This year all four questions were attempted by students. Question 9 was the most popular and Question 12 the least popular. Most students complied with the requirements of their chosen text type. A few students exceeded the word limit considerably and lost valuable marks, others were well below the limit.

There were linguistic and grammatical mistakes, particularly in the writing of weaker students. Common mistakes were a lack of agreement between person, number and gender and in the use of prepositions. A few students tended to use anglicisms.

### **Question 9**

The better responses had a captivating introduction followed by a discussion of the book's inherent literary merits. Poorer work tended to try to summarise the book's content, finishing with a recommendation to read the book and giving details of its price and where it might be purchased.

### **Question 10**

The best works argued the merits and shortcomings of the two medical approaches, giving reasons why the student favoured one or the other.

### **Question 11**

Most of the responses on the topic of water use were well written. It appeared that the students who chose this topic were well aware of the problem of water shortage and had given it considerable thought. Some of the suggestions to conserve water, in addition to the simple changes of home use habits, were surprisingly original.

### **Question 12**

Few students chose this question. It appeared that most students preferred to write on a subject which was specific rather than one which called for inventing fictional circumstances. Some students showed great imagination and their work was very interesting to read. The lower scoring works were those which strayed away from the required task. Students should be careful to demonstrate to the required text type.