



Oral Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The oral examination has two sections: a Conversation (approximately seven minutes) and a Discussion (approximately seven minutes).

In the Conversation section, most students were quite well prepared. They demonstrated very good linguistic skills and generally possessed a solid knowledge of the content related to the prescribed topics. Most demonstrated a working understanding of the questions they were asked and were able to elaborate on their opinions. The best students showed great insight, developed their responses, provided opinions and additional information, and were generally able to lead the examination in the direction that was most favourable for them.

It is essential to note that while the criteria for the two sections are virtually the same, they assess two very different tasks. The Conversation section relates to the student's personal world in areas such as school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations. This section is designed to test the student's ability to speak French in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way. The Discussion, on the other hand, is designed to test the student's skills in presenting and exchanging ideas, opinions and information. The Detailed Study requires a more objective approach.

The Criteria

The criteria assessed the:

- student's capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively
- 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
- relevance, range, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas
- capacity to support or elaborate on information, ideas and opinions with reasons, examples, evidence and/or new ideas
- accuracy, range, variety and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar to the context, audience and purpose of the task
- clarity of expression.

The suggestions below will assist students to maximise their performance in the oral examination. Students should:

- be familiar with the criteria
- understand that the conversation is an exchange and should not be approached as a question–answer interchange
- be willing to go beyond a simple response and train themselves to build on comments made by the assessors
- keep in mind that they should answer each question asked by responding to the question, adding information and expressing an opinion
- be able to respond to questions in some breadth and depth
- know techniques and be able to use appropriate language to enable them to support the interaction
- be able to express and elaborate on ideas and opinions, and justify what they say spontaneously in unrehearsed situations without resorting to pre-learned information
- realise that there are numerous ways of answering a question and be aware that the same information may be put in a variety of ways (most students were well-prepared but seemed to flounder when questions were phrased differently)
- acquire a good collection of key vocabulary and structures that enable them to make comparisons and comments
- have a thorough working knowledge of basic tenses, such as the present, future, perfect, imperfect and conditional
- be able to self-correct, ask for clarification and develop repair strategies to avoid lengthy pauses
- be aware that the assessors will often ask questions about what they have said.

In preparing for the Discussion section, students should:

- prepare their one-minute introduction meticulously, presenting the focus of the topic and the resources used



- know the selected texts in depth and have a variety of things to say about the topic and issue chosen
- reflect on the selected topic they have studied so that they are able to express opinions
- aim to go beyond basic communication, and practise answering in a variety of ways
- not assume that being a native or near-native speaker will automatically mean the student will receive excellent results; they must prepare the tasks in order to meet the criteria
- be able to link the texts they have studied to their topic
- be prepared to discuss different aspects of the texts studied
- practise throughout the year
- not recite pre-learned material
- avoid generalisations, lists of descriptive comments and stereotypes
- use a variety of structures and vocabulary as they develop their answers
- revise their grammar very carefully
- articulate clearly when they speak
- avoid anglicisms.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Good performances clearly reflected sound preparation. The most successful students provided extensive responses to the questions asked and moved the exchange forward confidently using accurate language and a sophisticated range of vocabulary. These students possessed a sound working knowledge of all the basic tenses and were able to use complex structures, such as causative *faire*, the passive and the subjunctive. These students demonstrated the capacity to respond to and build on comments made by the assessors. They were able to move with ease from one tense to another by using a wide variety of connectives. These students rarely hesitated and maintained a consistent pace without unnatural pauses throughout the conversation. Moreover, it was evident that these students had practised conversation fillers and strategies for linking with the assessors.

Conversely, weaker students tended to struggle with the simplest questions and grammatical structures, often making false starts and offering simplistic responses to the most basic questions. Their pronunciation, stress and tempo were often awkward. Many students at this level were satisfied with standard, basic answers. Moreover, their responses contained insufficient information, with answers frequently being minimal, mediocre and rote-learned. In fact, some students seemed to rely heavily on rote-learned material and seemed quite unnerved when they were asked questions that either they were not anticipating or that were not in the order they were expecting. They were unable to advance the conversation and rarely used connectives. They often resorted to anglicisms and pre-learned material to compensate for their lack of preparation and gaps in their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. To further illustrate, they often confused genders, were unable to make subject–verb or noun–adjective agreements, and had very confused notions of tenses, often being unable to switch through the range of basic tenses that are required at this level (present, perfect, imperfect, future and conditional). In addition, they repeatedly experienced difficulty in expanding on or justifying opinions.

Section 2 – Discussion

It is essential to be very careful when choosing the sub-topic for the Detailed Study. Subject matter that is acceptable:

- follows the guidelines stipulated in the *French VCE Study Design*
- relates to French-speaking communities
- leads to discussion with the assessors
- provides an issue for discussion
- allows the student to express opinions.

It is the manner in which the sub-topic is handled that is crucial – no topic is appropriate if it is not adequately prepared. The Detailed Study needs structure and the title should be unambiguous. The texts selected should be appropriate for the cohort of students and should lend themselves to discussion.

This year it was very encouraging to notice that a number of students prepared gender appropriate topics for their students. Consequently, it was very evident that the students had enjoyed their Detailed Study, which in turn tended to lead them towards achieving better results. The choice of resources chosen to support the Detailed Study is very important and those chosen need to be appropriate for the students and the topic studied. The students should be enthusiastic about the topic they are studying. Furthermore, it is strongly suggested that the sub-topic include a



question/issue that needs to be answered, as this lends structure to the student's learning. In addition, the topic should suit the student's language capacity, promote the discussion of the resources studied and allow the students to express their opinions and generate new ideas. The texts should be in French and not haphazardly downloaded from the Internet. The students should analyse all the texts in detail, and should be prepared to answer a range of questions based on the texts they have studied. This includes being able to say that they 'aren't quite sure of the answer' but they 'think that...' Moreover, they should not resort to listing every text they studied if they are not able to comment on them.

A poor choice of sub-topic tended to inhibit the student's chances of meeting the criterion that assessed relevance, breadth and depth of information. Good choices of topics reflected the interests of the student and inspired the students to elaborate on information and to respond with opinions.

Some topics were superficial, purely factual, or descriptive and were handled inappropriately, as there were no viewpoints and ideas to put forward. Indeed, some of the topics chosen were not at all related to the information the students stated they had studied in the texts. Some students were unable to relate information from the texts to the sub-topic they had studied. Moreover, in far too many cases, the texts, interviews and films selected as resources were in English or were limited in their scope. The students were therefore unable to expand on ideas or provide opinions, and these texts generally did not lead to an adequate discussion.

Topic areas that proved problematic included:

- topics with very limited information that contained no issue, so that the topic did not tend to lead to a discussion
- topics which were too ambitious and sophisticated, so that students often resorted to anglicised versions of difficult vocabulary
- topics that were too descriptive. The lack of depth in the way that students presented the topic made it very difficult to fill seven minutes of discussion.

Sub-topics that work well stimulate the teacher and student alike. They 'should engage the student to explore and compare aspects of language and culture of the French-speaking community through a range of oral and written texts in French related to the selected sub-topic' (*French VCE Study Design*, page 24).

Good students outlined the sub-topic within the one-minute time limit and stated which option they had selected. In their introduction they provided the title of the sub-topic; gave a very brief elaboration of the sub-topic, highlighting the issue they had considered; and let the assessors know whether any supporting material had been brought in. Some students went beyond the one-minute limit, effectively launching into a presentation rather than giving an introduction. Other students cited too many resources and were then unable to discuss the content of these documents in depth. It is strongly advised that students structure their introduction tightly, and then direct assessors to their preferred areas of discussion by including one or two questions they had addressed while preparing their Detailed Study.

Strong students were able to demonstrate an excellent knowledge of their topic, citing resources that consisted of different text types. Not only were they thoroughly conversant with the content of their Detailed Study, they were also highly skilled in expressing and elaborating on ideas and opinions, and substantiated them with highly relevant evidence. At this level, students were able to demonstrate the capacity to use an extensive range of vocabulary, connectives, complex structures and accurate language.

Below are some successful topics that produced enthusiastic responses from students.

- *L'Enfance dans la littérature française*
- *La Résistance et la deuxième guerre mondiale du point de vue d'une mère française*
- *La place des immigrés en France*
- *Le contraste de l'humour dans la société française*
- *L'intolérance et le racisme*
- *L'injustice du racisme*
- *La Révolution française et la prise de la Bastille*
- *La Résistance*
- *Une Comparaison de Jeanne d'Arc, Madame Bovary et Simone de Beauvoir*
- *La Nouvelle vague et le cinéma des années '90*

It should be reiterated that it was the manner in which a topic was presented that distinguished between good and bad outcomes for students. A number of students were not prepared and seemed oblivious to the stipulations of the Detailed



Study in the *French VCE Study Design*. When a student possessed limited information, they were unable to present and express their opinions. They were only able to remain within the topic they had chosen and seemed unable to go beyond the boundaries of the texts. Consequently, they were not able to discuss different aspects of their chosen sub-topic.

Some students alleged that they had studied a number of texts, but were then unable to demonstrate adequate knowledge of these texts by showing the links between the topics and the texts. A number of students had no written resources, citing only information they had downloaded from the Internet. A small number of students presented unsuitable topics that had no obvious links to French-speaking communities. Discussion topics need to be related to French-speaking communities in a significant manner.

The very weak students needed much support, especially with topics that did not interest them or that were too difficult for them. Consequently, they could not express opinions and, if they did, they were generally unable to develop their responses by substantiating the opinions or information they did present. Many weak students were unable to diverge from pre-learned materials, thereby demonstrating that they lacked the skills to engage in a sustained and meaningful discussion.

To conclude on a practical level, it is also very important that teachers understand their students' needs, as these affect the students' overall performance. Firstly, if students require special examination arrangements because of sight, speech or hearing impediments, it is the responsibility of the student to ask the teacher to ensure that an application is made in time. Secondly, if a student suffers from examination nerves they should be referred to a student counsellor to address this prior to the examination. Thirdly, it is strongly recommended that students avoid chewing gum during the examination, as this tended to interfere with their clarity of speech, enunciation and articulation. Finally, although no dress code is prescribed, sensible, smart casual dress is recommended.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students demonstrated effective time management in completing the revised two-hour VCE French examination. The majority of students completed all sections of the examination, with many producing correct answers to most questions in Sections 1 and 2 and high quality pieces of writing of between 200 and 300 words in Section 3.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding

When preparing for Section 1, students should:

- practise sound-discrimination exercises
- listen to a range of varied text types
- listen regularly to spoken French in films or the news on SBS
- practise picking out key points in French listening texts
- ensure they have a sound knowledge of basic tenses and grammar
- acquire a range of vocabulary from the Themes and Topics table on page 13 of the *French VCE Study Design*.

During the examination, students should:

- ensure that in their 15 minutes of reading time they read all questions in Section 1 to determine what kind of information is required
- make notes in French 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
- write answers in the space provided below the question. No credit will be given for answers written in the note-taking space.

Part A

The task was designed to assess the students' capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts. This part of the Listening and responding section was handled quite well. The majority of students handled the questions on Text 1 well. Question 2 proved more difficult. Students seemed to find Questions 5a. and 5b. the most challenging, frequently reversing the order of their answers. Nevertheless more capable students scored full marks in this part.

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Text 1

Question 1

Accommodation in the Saint-Michel area is mainly in (one of)

- flats
- high rise apartments
- apartments
- HLMs
- housing commission flats.

The Association hopes today's events will (one of)

- make people mix
- give people the opportunity to mix
- help people to meet
- help people get to know their neighbours.

Three activities taking place in this area are

- bringing/sharing/eating a favourite dish/meal
- playing soccer/football
- playing bowls/pétanque.

Two pieces of evidence that the event is a success a

- a warm/friendly atmosphere
- people are already thinking about next year's celebration/festival
- the speaker says what a magnificent/wonderful/fantastic day it is
- people had fun.

Text 2

Question 2

One of:

- missing your family
- being away from home
- being away from your family.

Question 3

- He's the most gifted/talented/smarter student in the class.
- His results/marks are good.

Question 4

Three of:

- have a balanced/healthy diet
- eat well/properly
- go to bed before/by 10 pm
- have a timetable which includes time for relaxation
- have a balanced schedule.

Question 5

5a.

Either of:

- he says he's exhausted
- he emphasises the word exhausted (*épuisé*).

5b.

Any of:

- he's in a sports-academic school
- he gets up at 5 am and gets back to the boarding school at 7 pm
- he has six classes and three sports lessons a day.



Part B

In this part of the examination students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts and convey information accurately and appropriately. The more able students understood the content of the passage and conveyed the required information in near-perfect French. However, less able students, although able to convey much of the required information, made basic grammatical errors such as *'cherche pour'* (in Question 6) and could not correctly use *'chez eux'* when rephrasing the response to Question 11. Spelling mistakes in frequently used words such as *'bouteilles'* and *'boîtes'* were common, and many students wrote *'plasma de cinéma'* instead of *'place de cinéma'*.

Text 3

Question 6

Une poubelle

Question 7

One of:

- *des bouteilles*
- *des boîtes en aluminium*
- *des can(n)ettes.*

Question 8

(Les étudiantes)/Elles ont inventé une machine (à sous) un collecteur de can(n)ettes. Dans laquelle/où il faut mettre des boîtes (en aluminium)/des can(n)ettes.

Students needed to answer in a full sentence.

Question 9

One of:

- *une place*
- *un billet de cinéma*
- *un bon d'achat (pour un magasin audiovisuel).*

Question 10

- *des filtres de cigarettes/des mégots*
- *des sacs en plastique*

Question 11

One of:

- *ils respectent l'environnement parce qu'ils décident de mettre leurs déchets dans la poubelle chez eux/à la maison*
- *ils décident de ne pas laisser leurs déchets.*

Students needed to answer in a complete sentence.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

When preparing for Section 2, students should:

- read extensively in French, including a wide range of texts in different text types
- practise identifying the main ideas in short texts
- practise summarising the main points/ideas in texts
- practise expressing these points/ideas in their own words.

During the examination, students should:

- try to understand the gist of the passage without looking up every word
- check the meaning of key words in their dictionary during their second reading of the text
- write all answers in the space provided below each question. No credit will be given for answers written in the note-taking margin
- use connectives to ensure that one idea flows logically to the next.

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Part A

This section was designed to assess the students' capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspects of texts. Many students achieved good scores in this section of the examination. For less able students, Questions 12, 15, 16a., 18a. and 18b. presented the most difficulty. It was particularly pleasing that the number of students who answered in French rather than English (as is required for this section) was significantly lower than in previous years.

Text 4

Question 12

One of:

- inaccessible terrain
- inaccessible valleys/deep valleys
- rivers in deep valleys.

Question 13

Two of:

- unsuited to heavy traffic
- dangerous during floods
- flimsy/fragile wooden bridges.

Question 14

In contrast to earlier ones, 13th century bridges were	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• solid/strong• stone/made of stone
What increased as a result?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• movement/traffic of people• movement/traffic of goods

Question 15

They have been classified as historical monuments.

Question 16

16a.

The coming/arrival of the railways.

16b.

Gustave Eiffel

16c.

- elevated/high
- metal/iron

Question 17

- the Millau viaduct/*Viaduc de Millau*
- concrete
- steel
- traffic jams/bottlenecks

Question 18

18a.

The outstanding/prestigious metal creation/structure.

18b.

One of:

- this miracle/marvel in concrete and steel that soars over a river
- calls it a wonder/marvel.

Question 19

- Europe
- the Millau viaduct/network of freeways/auto routes/major roadways



Part B

In this section of the examination students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts and their ability to convey information accurately and appropriately. The majority of students handled this task well, identifying most of the relevant information.

The best students were skilled in manipulating language and summarised in their own words the reasons why the cinema was not dead. They used appropriate connectives to ensure that their ideas flowed logically from one sentence to the next. They got straight to the point and did not waste words repeating the question in their answer. Weaker students lacked the skill to express ideas in their own words, often quoting directly from the text.

Question 20

Two of:

- *l'entrée des films dans toutes les maisons*
- *la possibilité de regarder des films chez soi*
- *une baisse du nombre d'entrées dans les salles de cinéma.*

Question 21

Four of:

- *les gens aiment le grand écran*
- *ils aiment regarder les bandes-annonces*
- *ils aiment l'aspect social/sortir en groupe*
- *ils aiment les réactions du public*
- *regarder un film dans une salle de cinéma est quelque chose de spécial que la technologie ne pourra remplacer*
- *en 2004 les entrées dans les salles de cinéma françaises ont augmenté pour la première fois depuis 1984.*

A possible response to this question is:

On peut conclure que les cinémas vont survivre parce que les gens aiment le grand écran/l'aspect social/les réactions du public. Ils aiment aussi regarder les bandes-annonces. Regarder un film dans une salle de cinéma est quelque chose de spécial que la technologie ne pourra remplacer. En 2004 les entrées dans les salles de cinéma françaises ont augmenté pour la première fois depuis 1984.

An excellent response began with, '*La raison principale est que le cinéma est une activité de groupe et une sortie très appréciée et enrichissante*', explained three reasons why people preferred to see a film at the cinema, added the relevant statistics about the increased attendance at cinemas, and summed up the case by concluding with a sentence beginning with '*donc*'.

Section 3 – Writing in French

This section of the examination was designed to assess students' ability to express ideas through the creation of an original text in French. Students were required to write 200–300 words on one of five topics. The most popular topic was Question 25, followed respectively by Questions 22, 26, 24 and 23.

To improve their writing skills students should:

- regularly practise writing in French on a variety of themes and topics
- observe time and word limits
- read pieces by their classmates, exchanging pieces to correct errors
- make a plan in French before attempting to write
- allow time to proofread their writing
- read the article 'Saying what you mean and meaning what you say', which provides examples of kinds of writing and text types (this article can be obtained from the LOTE Curriculum section of the VCAA)
- be familiar with the kinds of writing and text types on pages 58–60 of the *French VCE Study Design*
- acquire a thorough knowledge of the grammatical concepts listed on pages 14–17 of the Study Design.

Question 22

Better students who chose this topic observed the conventions of the text type of a journal entry and the kind of writing required. Their writing included a date, often opened with an evaluative comment, and concentrated on impressions of the job, for example, reactions to co-workers, working conditions, and the animals being treated. These students



handled a range of tenses well, used the subjunctive judiciously and included a wide variety of appropriate vocabulary and structures.

In some diary entries students related how they gave injections to wounded animals, assisted during the birth of a calf or vaccinated a sick cat. The more original pieces told of tending unusual animals.

The writing of less able students was limited to accounts of mundane tasks such as cleaning out the cages of mice or tending to sick cats or dogs. A number of students were so enthused by their work experience that they were inspired to become vets. From that point some digressed from the topic, writing instead about their choice of career and the high marks required to study their chosen course.

Question 23

Few students chose this topic, as this kind of writing seems to be generally unpopular with students. However, imaginative writing should be encouraged because it gives students scope for creativity and the opportunity to adopt different approaches and create an atmosphere of surprise, mystery, and tension.

A number of students who chose this topic described a scenario where they had lost their memory because of an accident and regained their identity when a friend visited them in hospital. Others described awaking from a bad dream after a harrowing experience.

Few students demonstrated the imagination and skills to create atmosphere.

Question 24

Capable students produced some excellent pieces of writing on this topic. They covered aspects of the restaurant such as the décor, menu, service and its suitability for an 18th birthday. Their review included a heading and a fictional name for the author. When assessing the restaurant they adopted a formal style, and used an extensive range of vocabulary to describe and evaluate.

On the other hand, weaker students only described what they liked about the restaurant or failed to evaluate it for the stated purpose.

Question 25

This was obviously a subject close to the hearts of many students as it was by far the most popular choice. It elicited sincere, impassioned pleas to sponsor a child from a Third World country. Good students wrote a plan before beginning their speech. The speech consisted of four or five paragraphs, including an introduction, three or four paragraphs to present their arguments and a concluding paragraph leading to a persuasive exhortation. Their use of persuasive techniques such as imperatives, questions and the use of the subjunctive to drive home the point was very impressive.

The sentences below from one student's writing illustrate the effectiveness of such devices:

N'êtes-vous pas au courant de ce qui se passe? Il faut que tout le monde comprenne cette situation insupportable...Il est grand temps que nous agissions ensemble. Parrainez un enfant d'un pays en voie de développement!

Question 26

Capable students produced excellent writing on this topic. Their formal letters began and ended appropriately, named and described interesting places to visit and provided valuable advice to prospective tourists. In contrast, less competent students failed to observe the conventions of formal letter writing. They simply provided a list of places of little interest to overseas visitors and did not make any recommendations or give any helpful advice.