



Oral Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The oral examination was divided into seven minutes of general conversation, a one-minute introduction for the detailed study and seven minutes of discussion on the detailed study.

Most students were generally quite well prepared for the conversation section. They demonstrated very good linguistic skills and typically possessed a sound knowledge of the prescribed topics. Most were able to understand the questions they were asked, elaborated on their opinions and demonstrated great depth of knowledge.

Some performances deteriorated markedly in the discussion section. Other students performed better in the discussion section than in the conversation. Because the general conversation section reflects work studied in previous years, this seems to indicate that there should be more careful and thorough preparation in the years leading up to Year 12. In short, there is still improvement needed in both the general conversation and discussion sections.

It should be noted that although the conversation and the discussion criteria were virtually the same, they assessed two very different tasks. The conversation section was based on very familiar topics. This section was designed to test the student's ability to speak French in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way. On the other hand, the discussion was designed to test the student's skills in **presenting** and **exchanging** ideas, opinions and information. The detailed study required a more objective approach so that the language used was much less predictable.

The criteria assessed students':

- capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively
- 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.

In preparing the oral examination, students should:

- become very familiar with and practise using the criteria
- understand that the conversation is an exchange and should not be approached as a question-answer interchange
- keep in mind that they should answer each question asked by **responding** to the question, **adding** information and **expressing** an opinion
- know techniques and appropriate language to enable them to engage in a **discussion**
- be willing to go beyond a simple response and be able to build on comments made by the assessor(s) by expressing opinions and by elaborating on ideas
- be able to justify what they said spontaneously in unrehearsed situations
- be able to respond to questions and comments without resorting to pre-learned information
- be aware that the same information may be questioned in a variety of ways, as most students were well-prepared but seemed to flounder when questions were phrased differently
- appreciate that there are copious ways of answering a question
- be able to respond to questions with **breadth** and **depth** and express opinions to build on comments made by the assessors
- acquire a good collection of key vocabulary and structures that allow them to be able to make comparisons and comments
- have a working knowledge of basic tenses (present, future, perfect, imperfect and conditional)
- be able to self-correct and ask for clarification if necessary



- develop repair strategies to avoid lengthy pauses
- know how to refer and link opinions to texts studied
- be aware that their responses will often lead the assessors to ask questions about what they have just said.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

This task consisted of a seven-minute conversation about the student's personal world, which included school and home life, family and friends, interests, and future aspirations. Good performances clearly reflected meticulous preparation. The most successful students provided extensive responses to the questions asked, confidently moving the exchange forward while simultaneously using accurate language, a sophisticated range of vocabulary and 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 from one tense to another with ease by using a wide variety of connectives. They rarely hesitated and maintained a consistent pace without unnatural pauses throughout the assessment. Moreover, it was evident that they had practised gap-filling techniques and strategies for linking with the assessors.

Conversely, weaker students tended to struggle even with the simplest questions, often making false starts and offering simplistic responses. Their pronunciation, stress and tempo were often awkward. Many students at this level were satisfied giving basic answers. Their responses contained insufficient content, and their answers were frequently minimal, mediocre, rote-learned and memorised at the proverbial 'last minute'. Some students seemed to rely on rote-learned material and were often unsettled when they were asked questions they were not anticipating. Moreover, they were unable to advance the conversation and rarely used connectives. They often resorted to anglicisms and pre-learned material in order to compensate for their lack of preparation or for gaps in their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. They frequently 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. Furthermore, they repeatedly experienced difficulty in expanding on or justifying opinions.

Section 2 – Discussion

It is essential that students are very careful when choosing the sub-topic for the detailed study. It should be stipulated that any topic selected is acceptable as long as it:

- follows the guidelines given in the French Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design
- relates to French-speaking communities
- can be discussed with assessors
- contains an issue
- allows the student to express opinions.

It is the **manner** in which the topic is handled that is crucial. No topic is good if it is not prepared appropriately, and no topic is bad if it is designed and prepared effectively. The topic should suit the students' language capacity, promote a discussion of the resources studied, and allow the student to express their opinions and generate new ideas. Students should be inspired and enthusiastic about their choice of topic. The discussion needs structure and should not be ambiguous. Furthermore, the texts selected should be appropriate for the cohort of students and the sub-topic should also include a question/issue that needs to be answered so that the students can focus on specific information. The texts need to be based on the sub-topic studied and should be in **French**. The students should analyse all the texts in detail, and be prepared to answer any questions generated from the texts.

Examples of successful topics that produced enthusiastic responses from students are as follows:

- *La Résistance et la deuxième guerre mondiale du point de vue d'une mère française*
- *La place des immigrants en France*
- *Le contraste de l'humour dans la société française*
- *L'intolérance et le racisme*
- *La nouvelle vague du cinéma.*

Detailed studies that did not allow students to have an opinion had a tendency to produce no overall discussion, but rather resulted in a description of each text, thereby penalising the student. Informative topics, for instance, did not lead to discussion.



Some topics were descriptive, superficial or purely factual and were handled inappropriately as there were no opinions and ideas. Indeed, some of the topics chosen were not at all related to the information the students had stated they used from the texts. Furthermore, some students were unable to relate information from the texts to the sub-topic they had studied. In far too many cases, the texts, pictures, interviews, and films selected were either limited or were in English. This resulted in the students being unable to expand or to provide opinions, and generally did not lead to discussion.

Following are some examples of problem areas that arose in certain topics.

- *La Bretagne* – there was often no issue introduced
- *La Seconde Guerre Mondiale* – in some cases students stated too many sources and were then unable to talk in depth about the sources they had stated
- *La Déforestation* – this was often inappropriate, as students were unable to speak in depth about the situation in French-speaking communities but spoke more in global terms
- *La ville artistique de Paris* – the texts used by the student were minimal and were often inappropriate for in-depth discussion and for eliciting opinions
- *Les secrets de Paris* – this was very poorly presented because of the lack of information and the inadequate resources used by the students
- *L'Alsace* – students had prepared very little to say on this topic
- *Les films français* – the students had watched six films to cater for the 15 hours of study and had clearly not met the requirements in the French Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design. Moreover, they had not learnt vocabulary or grammatical structures, had not analysed any of the films and had only studied one text type – film.

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 students and inspired the student to be willing and able to respond with opinions.

A number of students were not prepared and seemed oblivious of the stipulations for the detailed study in the Study Design. With limited information, they were unable to expand or to present and express their opinions. They did not seem able to go beyond the boundaries of the texts, but stayed within the topic area they had chosen. Consequently, they were unable to speak about or 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 those texts by showing the links between the topics and the texts. A number of students quoted only two resources or no written resources, citing only information they had downloaded from the Internet. Discussion topics need to be significantly related to the language and culture of French-speaking communities.

The very weak students needed much support, and often found their topics too difficult. On the occasions that they were able to express opinions, they were generally unable to substantiate them or the information they presented in order to develop their responses. Many weak students were unable to diverge from pre-learned materials, thereby demonstrating that they lacked the skills needed to engage in a sustained, meaningful discussion.

Good students outlined the sub-topic within the one-minute time limit, and stated whether the topic was Text or VET. 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 they had brought any support material with them. Some students went beyond the one-minute limit, launching into a presentation rather than giving an introduction. It is strongly advised that students structure their introduction tightly, and direct assessors to their preferred areas of discussion by including one or more questions they have addressed while preparing their detailed study.

The good students were able to demonstrate an excellent knowledge of their topic, citing three or more varied resources in different text types. They were thoroughly conversant with the content of their detailed study, and highly skilled in expressing and elaborating on ideas and opinions, substantiating them with highly relevant evidence. At this level, students were able to demonstrate their capacity to use an extensive range of vocabulary and a range of complex structures and accurate language.

It should be reiterated that it was the **manner** in which these topics were presented that generally produced very good outcomes for the students.

When preparing for the detailed study, students should:

- carefully and tightly prepare their introduction so they can present both the topic and the resources used carefully and clearly



- limit the texts they study and know them **in depth**
- reflect on the topic they have studied and have a variety of things to say about the topic and issue they have chosen
- be able to link the texts they have studied to their topic
- prepare and be able to express their **own** opinion
- be prepared to discuss **any** aspect of the texts and any visuals they bring
- practise oral work throughout the year
- avoid reciting pre-learned material
- articulate clearly when speaking
- avoid anglicisms
- avoid generalisations and stereotypes
- avoid lists of descriptive comments
- not assume that being a native or near-native speaker will automatically result in excellent results, unless they have prepared the tasks and exhibit signs of having met the criteria
- answer in a variety of ways and use at least two or three sentences rather than being satisfied with basic communication
- use a variety of structures and vocabulary in their answers
- revise their grammar very carefully.

To conclude on a practical level, it is also very important that teachers understand their students' individual needs as these affect their students' overall performance. If students require special consideration because of speech or hearing impediments, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the student is assisted. Moreover, many students suffer from examination nerves and they should be referred to student counsellors to master some relaxation techniques to enable them to perform at their best.

Written component

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A

The tasks were designed to assess the students' capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts. Most students handled this part of the listening and responding section quite well. The majority of students experienced little difficulty with questions on texts 1 and 2, although many students still confused *cinq* and *quinze*! A number of students also heard *riz long* as one word *-rillons*, hence responding that the first step in the recipe was to cook the veal, or, in a few rare cases, cook the sweetbread. Questions 7 and 8 proved to be the most challenging, although the more able students scored full marks in this part.

Possible Answers

Text 1

Question 1

- 30 minutes
- cook the rice

Question 2

- five minutes

One of:

- fry
- sauté
- cook in butter
- on a high heat

Question 3

Parsley/garnished with parsley

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Text 2

Question 4

- she's on exchange (for a year)/to study (for a year)

One of:

- to find a flatmate
- looking for a flat mate
- looking for someone to share an apartment

Question 5

One of:

- it's in the centre of the city
- ten minutes from the university on foot
- within walking distance

Question 6

Three of:

- French-speaking/French
- easy to live with
- tidy/organised
- someone who doesn't party every night

Question 7

- lower rent/a discount on the rent
- it must be someone who can teach her the finer points/subtleties of French

Text 3

Question 8

Germany

One of:

- wind energy/renewable wind energy/Aeolian energy/wind power energy/wind energy conversion
- giving children the right of way/priority over cars

One of:

- gardening in exchange for minding the children
- doing one job/task in exchange for another
- offering your time in exchange for someone else's time

Three of:

- try the same experiments in their country
- compare daily life/lifestyles in European countries/different countries
- keep the best ideas
- put pressure on/lobby their governments

Part B

In this part of the task, students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts and to convey information accurately and appropriately. The more able students understood the passages and conveyed the required information in near-perfect French. However, in many instances students were able to select the required information but the level of their French detracted from their performance. Common errors included leaving the subject and verb inverted in the answers to Questions 11, 12 and 16; frequent spelling errors; and an inability to rephrase language.

Possible Answers

Text 4

Question 9

One of:

- *Ils parlent d'un défilé de mode (organisé par la marque Freddie)*
- *Ils parlent d'une présentation des nouveaux modèles de la ligne 'Jeune Relax'*
- *Ils parlent d'une présentation de mode*

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Question 10

One of:

- *parce que les vêtements sont décontractés*
- *(un peu) sportifs*
- *très colorés*
- *faciles à entretenir*
- *tout à fait son genre/style*

Question 11

Elle lui dit (explique) que c'est une bonne cause/ la marque 'Freddie' donne une partie de ses bénéfices à la recherche médicale.

Text 5

Question 12

One of:

- *pour faire la promotion de trois activités de plein air*
- *parce qu'il est directeur du Centre de Loisirs local*
- *pour parler du programme spécial-vacances*
- *pour faire de la publicité sur les activités de la région*

Question 13

One of:

- *un équipement ultramoderne*
- *l'équipement très moderne*
- *des moniteurs diplômés*
- *des moniteurs qualifiés*

Question 14

One of:

- *Il y a toujours un guide expérimenté (une personne entraînée/expérimentée) pour expliquer comment manoeuvrer le raft*
- *Il y a toujours un guide pour expliquer comment manoeuvrer le raft avant le départ/pendant la descente*

Question 15

le VTT/vélo tout terrain

Question 16

Two of:

- *On peut la faire tout seul/en compagnie/en famille/ou avec des amis*
- *On peut la faire en n'importe quelle condition physique*
- *On a l'occasion d'admirer la nature*
- *C'est un sport à portée de tous*
- *C'est un sport moins effrayant/moins difficile*
- *Il ne faut pas un entraînement spécial*

When preparing for Section 1, 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
- perfect the necessary skills by listening regularly to spoken French in films or on the news on SBS
- spend their ten minutes of preparation time reading the 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
- have a sound knowledge of basic tenses and grammar



- acquire a range of vocabulary from the Themes and Topics table in the French Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design (p.13).

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Part A

This section was designed to assess the 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 this year only a very small number answered in French.

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
- check the meaning of key words during the second reading of the text in the examination.

Possible Answers

Text 6

Question 17

One of:

- vulgar Latin
- Latin spoken by ordinary people/Roman soldiers
- popular Latin
- Latin spoken in Gaul

Text 7

Question 18

One of:

- the pronunciation of 'yes'
- the word for 'yes' in inverted commas '*oui*'

and

- In the north and south (of France)

Question 19

One of:

- it was a language of culture/refinement
- spread by entertainers of the time/minstrels/troubadours/lyric poets

and

- an academy was established (in Toulouse in 1323)

Question 20

One of:

- gastronomy
- food
- cuisine
- gourmet cooking

Text 7

Question 21

Two of:

- three million copies
- published in 75 languages
- distributed in about 50 countries

Question 22

Töpffer:

- combined (mixed/married) text and drawing

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- created the essential core of its language
- and Outcault introduced two of:
- boxes (squares/frames)
 - speech bubbles
 - succession (sequences) of pictures

Question 23

Two of:

- it was despised
- it was censured/censored/criticised
- it was accused of making children stupid/dumbing them down/turning them into morons

and two of:

- it belongs to a specialised branch of French literature
- it has become a legitimate art (form)
- form of accepted/recognised legitimate art

Question 24

Two of:

- history
- little known (unknown) civilisations
- other civilisations
- new civilisations/cultures
- it is given a (prominent) place/pride of place in museums

Question 25

Three of:

- it covers different kinds/genres (all) BD/comics for children/science fiction/adults
- it keeps up to date/covers current themes/topics
- it appeals to all age groups
- it's more diversified in its presentation/more and more diversified in presentation

Part B

In this section of the examination students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of a text and their ability to convey information accurately and appropriately. The task was to write a formal letter about the proposed site of a retirement home.

Students were to respond to the following points:

- the proposed site of the retirement home
- an ecologist argued against the reduction of the owls' habitat
- are owls more important than the elderly?
- nothing has been done for the elderly for twenty years
- why not build the retirement home on the other side of the river?
- how is a bridge to be financed, given the limited funds available?
- M.Fouille criticises the style of architecture
- are we going to remain forever in the past?
- the elderly deserve modern comforts with easy access
- the little old streets make it difficult for the elderly to get around
- the owls will still have their local forest.

This task was competently handled by many students; however, a small proportion found it difficult to determine which issues related to the owls and which applied to the elderly. Generally, the conventions of formal letter writing were observed, although there were some minor slips in the beginnings and endings of letters, or the date or place were omitted. Better students skilfully synthesised points and produced cohesive writing within the prescribed word limit. Many pieces were either too short or too long, and some students failed to address the issues altogether, going off on a personal tangent.

Students should:



- make a plan before writing
- combine points where possible
- avoid irrelevant details
- use paragraphs and topic sentences, ensuring that they 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 of the examination is designed to assess the students' ability to express ideas through the creation of an original text in French. Students were required to write 200-250 words on one of four topics. The most popular topic was Question 29, followed by Questions 28 and 30.

Students should:

- practise writing regularly in French on a variety of themes and topics
- observe time and word constraints
- read pieces written by their classmates, exchanging pieces to correct errors
- plan their response before attempting to write
- be familiar with styles of writing and common text types in the French Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design (pp.48-50)
- acquire a thorough knowledge of the grammatical concepts listed in the Study Design (pp.14-17).

Question 27

This topic was generally well handled by the better students. There were imaginative scenarios of murder, loss or adventure. These pieces were characterised by vivid descriptions, the ability to create an atmosphere, interesting characters, unusual events leading to a suspenseful climax and the skillful use of appropriate language. By contrast, less able students lacked the imagination to create a credible storyline or an atmosphere of tension, humour or shock.

Question 28

The majority of students who chose this topic capably evaluated the content, but a common defect was to present an unbalanced analysis in which only one side of the argument was addressed. Weaker students reworked detailed study topics or texts; for example, brochures on Provence, a synopsis of a film, or an evaluation of a library book. In such cases the writing style was informative rather than evaluative. Some pieces went over the word limit and many were marred by inaccurate spelling and grammar.

Question 29

The best students treated all aspects of this topic. They chose an unusual memento and gave their reactions to their unexpected find and the memories that were evoked. Less able students were unable to handle both past and present tenses and their language was not sufficiently emotive.

Question 30

Good students adopted the appropriate informative approach to this topic, while weaker students often included pre-learned material on whether technology and science had benefited mankind. Capable students provided a title for their article and measured the degree of change brought about by scientific discoveries.