



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The quality and presentation of students in the 2013 Arabic oral examination was very good. It was evident that students were aware of the examination assessment criteria and had prepared well for each section.

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

- Pronunciation: Poor pronunciation affected many students' communication strategies and capacity to link with assessors.
- Some students spoke either very quickly or too slowly. Fast-speaking students do not always communicate better than students who speak more slowly and clearly. Speaking too slowly, however, can disrupt the intonation required in order to communicate effectively.
- Students are encouraged to advance the conversation, but should be careful not to dominate it. On the other hand, some students had little to say unless they were prompted by questions from the assessors. This gave the impression that they may not have adequately prepared for the examination. The *VCE Arabic Study Design* suggests that students be prepared to continue talking on the designated topics and not just provide minimal answers. For example, if a student is asked to describe their school, instead of physically describing their school, they could provide information about aspects of the school that are of interest – for example, an anecdote about a recent incident.
- It was pleasing that many students gave in-depth answers on the various aspects of general conversation. These students were confident and able to use a good range of structures and vocabulary within a viable context.
- While students must learn material for the different sections of the oral examination, it is how well they internalise and master it to present in the examination that contributes to their success. Students who present slabs of pre-learned material and who do not answer the questions asked may not score well for Criterion 1, Communication.
- The topics and sub-topics chosen for the Detailed Study should reflect Arabic life and culture, and should be suited to each student and what is of interest to them. Some students did not have the linguistic ability to cope with some topics. Consequently, these students did not seem to perform as well as they might have, had they studied more appropriate topics. In short, the topic chosen should allow the student to express some personal interest and be appropriate to their level of knowledge.
- Students are reminded that assessors may ask a range of questions for which they may not be as well prepared. Although students are not expected to be 'experts' and be able to answer all questions asked, they are expected to have learnt strategies for handling these types of questions.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

The characteristics of a high-scoring performance included thorough and sophisticated preparation of familiar conversation topics (such as family, studies and plans for the future). Students are encouraged to use anecdotes on various topics as these allow them to express individuality and provide the chance to use a variety of structures and vocabulary, as well as the opportunity to use more sophisticated language.

Many students communicated very effectively but many stopped after providing only one or two sentences. Most students moved easily between topics and displayed a lively interest in communicating with the assessors.

Many students presented content that was of a very high standard. High-achieving students' topics were very interesting, engaging and reflected the sophisticated opinions of the students. These students were able to expand on their comments and often introduced new and pertinent ideas.

Some students used poor sentence structures, omitted verbs or displayed only limited understanding of basic grammatical structures. The most notable errors were students using incorrect verb tenses (past and future). There was often good use of complex grammar, although at times some students mistakenly used pre-learned, overly complex expressions that did not fit well with their true level of language.



Section 2 – Discussion

Students should be very familiar with the information they give in the introduction as assessors are likely to ask questions about information presented. Students should be reminded that anything (resources, ideas, texts, comments, details, etc.) mentioned regarding their Detailed Study topic may be discussed.

There were many confident and well-rehearsed responses. However, the less successful students were often unable to elaborate on or defend their ideas and opinions. It is useful for students to prepare adequately by anticipating questions based on their introduction, and by practising questions and answers, elaborating on their themes. This will allow students to build confidence and to provide responses that contain more than an extension or repetition of a basic response.

The more successful students provided both general and their own opinions, demonstrating their command of the topic. However, some students had only prepared their Detailed Study very superficially; further ideas and detail were needed to explore topics more thoroughly.

Responses ranged from poor to exceptional. Many students used simple and/or predictable language, while others used a variety of structures. A major error this year was that some students did not know how to advance the conversation.

To achieve excellent results, it is essential that students be well prepared for the examination. This includes understanding the structure of the examination so that students are not stressed when the assessment moves from the Conversation to the Discussion.

The following are some general comments related to the Detailed Study.

Some topics presented by students were not sufficiently detailed and did not appear to reflect 15 hours of class time. The use of resources should give students a deeper understanding of some topics. Many students should have included more specific detail and opinions to give the discussion more substance. Many students made good use of excellent resources, often linking them and the topic to their own interests. Strong students were able to summarise their topic and make effective, even interesting, references to their resources.

Weak students repeated information and had little material to discuss. Students and teachers should choose topics that provide the opportunity for depth of study and scope for students to present their opinions.

The complexity of some topics for the Detailed Study challenged the less successful students and affected the language they used. Sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical structures were needed to convey complexity in topics that were beyond them, and consequently they struggled in this section of the examination.

Weaker students tended to list resources but clearly were not familiar with them. Others used resources that were not in Arabic. Students are strongly advised to study resources in the target language as these provide extra opportunities to learn the language.

Good topics this year

- focused on a student's own interests
- generally contained a question where the answer required an opinion
- offered possibilities and lent themselves to a range of questions
- required analysis and offered the opportunity to take a stance on the topic
- often used films that provided a lot of discussion material.

Poor topics included those that

- were purely descriptive
- did not have any Arabic component
- were too technical and did not allow average or weak students to extract meaningful opinions
- were superficial and did not provide students with opportunities to highlight their opinions
- allowed students only to 'present a topic' rather than engage in a discussion.