2023 VCE Bengali oral external assessment report

Refer to the relevant [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx) and [examination criteria and specifications](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Languages-index.aspx) for full details on this study and how it is assessed.

Section 1: Conversation

What students did well

In 2023, students:

* engaged in a general conversation about their personal world, for example, school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations
* provided a range of relevant information, ideas and opinions with an appropriate depth. Students who scored highly in the conversation engaged enthusiastically with assessors and were able to support and elaborate on their ideas and opinions, using appropriate Bengali vocabulary.
* clarified, elaborated on and defended ideas and opinions. Students who scored highly were able to express their opinions clearly and support them with appropriate examples. These students started with some form of polite greeting, maintained eye contact with the assessors, listened carefully to the questions or comments made during assessment, and responded appropriately maintaining an effective interaction with the assessors.
* demonstrated an excellent level of understanding by responding readily and communicating confidently, and carrying the conversation forward with spontaneity
* responded confidently and were able to advance the conversation, including using appropriate repair strategies when needed. Students who scored highly responded actively to questions asked of them by the assessors, demonstrating a very good level of understanding and an ability to carry the conversation forward. Their answers reflected extensive preparation.
* used appropriate vocabulary. Students who scored highly used suitable sentence structures and appropriate vocabulary. In some cases, if they uttered English words, they immediately realised and self-corrected in Bengali.
* used appropriate expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. Students generally pronounced Bengali words well. Some students had a slight accent; however, it did not hinder the meaning of the ideas and opinions that they were presenting. Students who had very good intonation, tempo and pronunciation scored highly. They spoke spontaneously and responded well to questions asked.

Areas for improvement

Students should:

* ensure adequate preparation for the conversation with relevance, depth and range of information, ideas and opinions. Some students answered very briefly when asked questions and did not engage with the assessors spontaneously; some needed repeated probing to elicit an answer. These students did not score highly. Students may note that the factual accuracy of the responses is less important than the use of appropriate vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures.
* practise pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. It should be noted that it is not appropriate to use colloquial language, particularly the less common colloquialisms. Some wrong pronunciations were noticed, e.g. সংস্কৃতি (culture) pronounced as সাংস্কৃতি, and প্রকৃতি (nature) pronounced as প্রাকৃতি. Use of these words is great for conversation, but the wrong pronunciation diminishes their value.

Section 2: Discussion

What students did well

In 2023 students:

* clearly introduced the focus of their subtopic, alerting assessors to any objects brought to support the discussion of the subtopic
* demonstrated in-depth knowledge of their subtopic. Most students chose a subtopic related to the migrant Bengali-speaking communities in Australia, such as their educational priorities, cultural events and festivals, marriage, employment situations, the preservation of the Bengali culture, and the process of school education and teaching. Most students carried out surveys and conducted interviews with members of the Bangladeshi community in Melbourne, and summarised their findings using pie charts and bar graphs, and then used this information appropriately in the discussion.
* used the image to support the discussion on the subtopic. A few students also provided assessors with objects, such as photographs, maps or diagrams.
* communicated effectively with assessors throughout the discussion. Students who scored highly had prepared well for their discussion on their subtopic. They spoke without hesitation and used properly framed words and phrases to elaborate on their ideas and opinions in their chosen subtopic. They maintained eye contact with the assessors, spoke spontaneously and responded to the questions and comments of the assessors with appropriate reasons and examples.
* used appropriate vocabulary. Students who scored highly in the discussion used sophisticated and appropriate vocabulary, and good sentence structures to describe their findings and views. Some pleasant words and idiomatic phrases used by students included: মন্ত্রমুগ্ধ (spellbound), হাতের পাঁচ (the last possession), and ঘড়ি ধরে (right on time).

Areas for improvement

Students should:

* make reference to the sources or texts studied for the detailed study. The discussion was an opportunity to explore aspects of the language and culture of communities in which Bengali is spoken, and the students are expected to make reference to the texts studied, as suggested in the study design. In 2023, not many students referred to any form of text.
* prepare with an appropriate number of quality sources, for example a combination of aural and visual, as well as written texts, to explore the subtopic in sufficient depth. In addition, it is useful, although not mandatory, for students to bring in an object to support the discussion – very few actually brought such objects this year.
* avoid listing facts without expressing a point of view or presenting general knowledge as research. While students’ preparation was adequate and most of the students presented the information and ideas logically and in an interesting manner, it would perhaps be better to have a wider variety of information on their chosen subtopics. Students could focus on different aspects of the subtopic in order to hold a wider discussion and have the opportunity to elaborate on a range of information.
* build vocabulary specific to the subtopic selected for the detailed study. Colloquial Bengali words/phrases that are not very common should be avoided. Use of regional dialect words, meaning words that are specific to a region, should also be avoided, if possible.