2024 VCE Serbian oral external assessment report

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

Section 1: Conversation

What students did well

In the 2024 examination, students:

* engaged in a general conversation about their personal world, for example, school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations. Students were able to connect with the assessors and carry forward the conversation on topics such as family life, hobbies and future plans, demonstrating how well they had prepared. Their primary focus was on the origins of their parents and grandparents, as well as travelling experiences to those places. They also provided excellent information about what they do in their spare time, highlighting the importance of physical activities, folk dancing, travelling and spending time with their friends
* provided a range of relevant information, ideas and opinions with an appropriate depth. When discussing their involvement and participation in the folk dancing events and festivals (especially the Bonnyrigg annual festival), students highlighted the importance of preserving the culture, and commented on the impact it has in maintaining their Serbian culture and identity
* clarified, elaborated on and defended ideas and opinions. When discussing their future aspirations, students were able to elaborate on why they chose to study a particular course at university by referring to its strengths and the interests they had in that area. Some students expanded further by justifying their choice of course with their desire to contribute to society, especially those who were seeing their future career in health services
* demonstrated an excellent level of understanding by responding readily and communicating confidently, and carrying the conversation forward with spontaneity. When talking about their holidays and trips to Serbia or the places their parents come from, students were able to make comparisons between these places and Australia, and could provide suggestions on the benefits of those visits
* responded confidently and were able to advance the conversation, including the use of appropriate repair strategies as needed. Most students responded confidently and advanced the conversation using appropriate repair strategies as needed, such as correcting themselves if they mispronounced or misused a word or used an English word instead, for example, тржни центар (shopping centre), филм (movie), биологија (biology)
* used appropriate vocabulary. Students confidently used everyday vocabulary relevant to family, free time, hobbies and future plans. They also used correct vocabulary when listing the subjects they are studying and the courses they are interested in undertaking in the future
* used appropriate grammar and sentence structures. Students used appropriate grammar and sentence structures, such as the use of subject+verb+object structures and a range of compound sentences
* used appropriate expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. Students used appropriate expressions with a good choice of vocabulary, including using appropriate pronunciation, accurate intonation, stress and tempo.

Areas for improvement

In preparation for the examination, students could:

* ensure adequate preparation for the conversation with relevance, depth and range of information, ideas and opinions. Some students were prepared to elaborate on their personal world but needed to develop more interesting and in-depth ideas and opinions about their interactions with the Serbian language and culture. Some students were limited in their responses; for example, when a description of their family did not extend beyond mentioning who the members of the family are, or when a question about interests was restricted to a sentence or two about one particular sport, music genre or movie genre
* practise answering a range of questions to be able to advance the conversation. Instead of practising answers only for Које предмете радиш ове године у школи (‘What subjects are you studying this year?’), students could practise answering the question Зашто си изабрао/-ла ове предмете, који су разлози? (‘For what reason did you choose these subjects this year?’), so that they become familiar with explaining and justifying why they chose the subjects instead of simply naming them
* build confidence through practising interactions in the language assessed. Where possible, students should be visiting places where Serbian is spoken, speaking in Serbian with different people, watching Serbian movies and news, using accessible online resources in Serbian, and taking the opportunity to be exposed to the language to gain confidence using it
* practise using more complex sentence structures and syntax. Vocabulary and syntax in this section of the examination frequently lacked complexity, and in some cases it was restricted to a basic level. For example, Ја волим да играм фудбал и имам доста другара у тиму. Ја тренирам два пута недељно и онда играм недељом (‘I play football and I have many friends in the team. I train twice a week and play on Sundays’). Students should endeavour to make this more complex, for example, Ја заиста уживам у фудбалу и тренирам често и пошто је то тимски спорт пружа ми прилику да стекнем пријатеље. Од моје осме године, када сам почео да се бавим фудбалом ја уживам у овом спорту (‘I really enjoy playing football often because, as a team sport, this sport gives me the opportunity to make friends. Since I started playing football at the age of 8, I have really enjoyed the sport’)
* practise using repair strategies to advance the conversation when needed. Students need to be equipped with strategies for seeking clarification. Rather than asking an assessor to repeat a question, students should ask them to rephrase it. Repeating a question one has not understood may not resolve the issue
* revise grammar. Students should focus on gaining better understanding of word agreement (article, adjective, noun, etc.) and the use of nouns, pronouns and adjectives in different cases
* build vocabulary specific to the student’s personal world and their interactions with the language and culture as learners. During the examination students could be asked about their favourite subject at school or a holiday they enjoyed most. They should be able to use words such as Ја волим, посетио/-ла сам ..., Учим ... предмети ..., Путујем, путовао сам (‘Ι like’, ‘Ι went’, ‘Ι study’, ‘the subjects’, ‘I travel’, ‘I travelled’) correctly in different sentence structures. Students should also learn the correct words for the subjects they are studying, for example, психологија not сајкологија (‘psychology’), and истоија not хисторија (‘history’)
* practise pronunciation, intonation and stress and tempo. If students speak too fast, assessors may not hear and understand word endings. During the oral examination, clarity of expression is important.

Section 2: Discussion

What students did well

In the 2024 examination, students:

* clearly introduced the focus of their subtopic, alerting assessors to any objects brought to support the discussion of the subtopic. Students were able to clearly introduce their subtopic in one minute when prompted by the assessors to indicate the subtopic of their detailed study and could reference the resources they used. Students discussed topics relevant to history and historical figures, film and places of significance (such as a monastery), with reference to the texts studied
* demonstrated in-depth knowledge of their subtopic. Many students demonstrated a thorough knowledge of their chosen topic, at times going well beyond its immediate scope and thus being able to open the discussion to wider perspectives. Some students impressed assessors with an unprompted and highly relevant comparison of (some aspects of) the subtopic to their own personal world
* used the image to support the discussion on the subtopic. Well-chosen images or artefacts were used to stress points students were making and even to advance the discussion by offering another layer of the subtopic. Students who scored highly would come back to the image once or twice to exploit it at different stages of the discussion and explore as many of its aspects as possible
* engaged in a discussion using relevant information, ideas and opinions. A number of students who scored highly used information from their personal world or experience to introduce their subtopic, and/or frequently related elements of their discussion to their own opinion and ideas. The most impressive performances came from students who demonstrated a passionate engagement with their subtopic and thus engaged the assessors in a meaningful discussion for the full duration of this section
* clarified, elaborated on and defended opinions and ideas. Students who scored highly were able to express a variety of views and clearly justify their opinions with reasons, examples and evidence.

Areas for improvement

In preparation for the examination, students could:

* choose an appropriate subtopic to suit their ability and interests. A subtopic on science and technology or historical events may be more suitable for a student with sound language skills, whereas a subtopic on Serbian-speaking communities might be more accessible for other students. Also, sensitive subtopics should be avoided because they may have an emotional impact on the student as well as the assessors during the examination. In addition, choosing a subtopic with limited access to any resources (such as books, articles or research material) and basing it on students’ own experiences is not appropriate because it does not allow for in-depth discussion; for example, choosing a film and relying only on the film itself without any background on how or why it was made. Students should avoid topics where there is limited access to information they could explore and research
* 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. Students need to research a variety of resources so that they can compare information, reach conclusions and propose solutions, rather than just stating facts. Researching only one resource does not provide students with enough information on which to build their own opinions and ideas or enable them to demonstrate an ability to combine and build on concepts and ideas. When students did not have sufficient resources to draw upon, they relied too much on the prompts from the assessors to carry the conversation forward. Some students thought that a genuine interest in the topic without consulting sources (including online, printed and visual sources) was sufficient
* convey information learnt from sources but also express an opinion with an original perspective on the subtopic. Students should practise expressing opinions in class and not only focus on studying factual information, so that they can respond to questions relevant to their subtopic. For example, when asked ‘how’, ‘if’ and ‘why’ questions as well as ‘what would you do’ questions in relation to their subtopics, they should avoid reverting to less relevant fact-based responses
* use the image to support the discussion on the subtopic. The use of an image relevant to the subtopic is highly recommended. The image should be large enough for assessors to see it easily. It must be clear and, where possible, A4 size (unless it is an authentic photo), obviously representing something that contains enough detail to enable the student to make connections to the subtopic and enhance the discussion
* avoid relying on pre-learnt responses that do not address an assessor’s question. Some students commenced with an introduction learnt by heart that was fluent and contained accurate and appropriate language and structures, but then were unable to effectively address follow-up questions from the assessors. These students often tried to revert to pre-learnt content and were unable to extrapolate information or further elaborate on the subtopic
* revise grammar. Students need to deviate from English grammar rules, especially when using dates, and avoid direct application of prepositions from English language. For example, Рођен је **на** 26 октобар, 1786.године (He was born **on** 26 October 1876) instead of Рођен је 20-ог октобра, 1876.године (without the literal translation of the English preposition ‘on’)
* build vocabulary specific to the subtopic selected for the detailed study. As this section is a discussion of a researched subtopic, students are expected to use more complex language and more specialised vocabulary than they would in conversation
* practise pronunciation, intonation, and stress and tempo. Students need to practise the correct pronunciation of Serbian words if those words are similar to their English equivalent. For example, jуниверсити (university) instead of универзитет, and хисторија (history) instead of историја.