



## **Oral component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

The oral examination has two sections: a Conversation (approximately seven minutes) and a Discussion (approximately eight minutes). The examination assesses the students' ability to communicate using spoken Macedonian. In 2011 the overall standard in both sections was pleasing. A wide range of proficiencies was noted throughout the examination.

Most students were familiar with the expectations of the oral examination. They were able to engage with the assessors in the Conversation and demonstrated a good level of preparation for the Discussion. However, a small number of students was not fully aware of the expectations for Section 2 – Discussion. It is important that all teachers and students be familiar with the specific requirements of the oral examination, as outlined in the *VCE Macedonian Study Design*, page 30.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

#### **Section 1 – Conversation**

This section focuses on the student's personal world; for example, school and home life, family and friends, interests and aspirations.

Students were assessed against the following criteria:

- capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively
- relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas
- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar
- clarity of expression.

Generally, students performed well in this section. Students were often keen to engage in conversation and to share their experiences and interests. Students' speaking skills were quite good, and their listening skills were well developed. Students are again reminded that during the examination they should not give their name, their teacher's name, the names of their family members or their school name.

Students spoke readily about their future plans and aspirations. However, some students hesitated; for example, when having to pronounce the names of their school subjects. Wherever a Macedonian equivalent to the English is possible, it should be used.

The key to performing well in this section of the examination is good preparation. Students are encouraged to use the Macedonian language whenever they can. They can listen to radio and television programs in Macedonian to gain exposure to the language. Students can also engage with friends and family members on internet chat sites to practise their language skills.

Students were able to draw on their own experiences and a good level of preparation was evident. Most students responded readily to assessors' questions and were able to maintain a conversation. Generally, they had good pronunciation, although some showed the influence of English.

The most successful students spoke fluently, provided relevant, extensive responses to questions, and kept the conversation flowing. They were able to present an excellent range of information about themselves and elaborate on opinions or ideas using accurate language, appropriate sentence structures and sophisticated vocabulary. Few students needed to be prompted by assessors or waited to be asked questions.

The main grammatical errors included the incorrect use of tenses, prepositions and inappropriate vocabulary. Anglicisms were evident at times and the influence of the English language interfered with some students' pronunciation.

Most students were able to talk in Macedonian about their family, schooling and future aspirations. Students must be encouraged to give more than a monosyllabic answer. They should go beyond simple responses and give extended



answers that provide interesting information about themselves, keeping in mind that the assessors might ask further questions about what they have said. They should be able to justify what they say with some spontaneity. Students need to understand that the conversation is an exchange of ideas and opinions and should try to build on comments made by the assessors.

Students are advised that this is not a presentation but an interactive conversation. A simple phrase showing agreement or reassurance is often all that is needed; for example, *A ha* (Oh, yes); *Da taka* (Yes, of course); *Da, no jas mislam* (Yes, however I think ...). Such language and conversation fillers need to be practised throughout the study. This kind of language enhances the flow of the conversation and contributes greatly to the students' performance.

## Section 2 – Discussion

The focus of the Discussion is to explore aspects of the language and culture of communities in which Macedonian is spoken. Students are expected to refer to the texts studied in class. They may support the Discussion with objects such as photographs, diagrams and maps. Cue cards and notes are not permitted.

The students were assessed against the following criteria:

- capacity to maintain and advance the exchange appropriately and effectively
- capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic
- accuracy of vocabulary and grammar
- range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar
- clarity of expression.

It is essential that teachers and students take into account students' interests and abilities when selecting the Detailed Study sub-topic. Page 23 of the *VCE Macedonian Study Design* states that 'One sub-topic may be selected for a whole class or different sub-topics may be selected for individuals or groups of students. In the former case, it will be important to select a sub-topic that is sufficiently broad to accommodate a range of interests and perspectives, so that each student can provide an individual response ...' The choice of resources used to support the Detailed Study is also very important and these resources must be in Macedonian.

The sub-topic selected for the Detailed Study should be of interest to students, as this will enable them to express and elaborate on ideas and to defend their own opinions confidently. Thorough preparation is necessary for a successful result. An introduction of no more than one minute is required before the discussion begins; however, some students did not prepare this. The introduction should refer to the sub-topic of the Detailed Study and include its main focus. If students have chosen to use any material to support their discussion, they should alert the assessors to this during the introduction. Students need to research information and practise outside the classroom for this part of the exam.

The majority of students were well prepared. High-scoring students demonstrated an excellent knowledge of their chosen topic, referring to resources that consisted of different text types. They knew their texts very well and spoke fluently, elaborating on their ideas and opinions. These students carried the discussion forward with some original input and provided highly relevant, in-depth responses. They used appropriate vocabulary, a range of grammatical structures and displayed accurate pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. Students tended to struggle with gender and are encouraged to revise further in this area.

Students need to be able to field spontaneous questions and give appropriate responses during the oral examination. Less reliance on rote-learned material and more thorough preparation would assist. Insufficiently prepared students relied on questions from assessors and often needed to be prompted. Students should practise leading a discussion on their chosen topic as part of their examination preparation.

Students are encouraged to prepare concluding statements. At the end of the examination, assessors often ask if there is anything else the student would like to say. This gives students the opportunity to discuss areas that have not been raised and to provide an appropriate conclusion/ending. By doing this, students show confidence as well as their ability to use the language at a high standard.