



Oral Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The oral examination is divided into a seven-minute Conversation and an eight-minute Discussion of a Detailed Study. The Discussion includes a one-minute introduction. Teachers and students should follow the instructions and recommendations provided in the *French VCE Study Design*.

It is essential to note that although the criteria for the Conversation and the Discussion are virtually the same, they apply to two very different tasks. The Conversation section is designed to test the student's ability to speak French in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way. The Discussion, on the other hand, tests the student's skills in **presenting** and **exchanging** ideas, opinions and information. The discussion of the Detailed Study requires a more objective approach.

Most students were better prepared for the Conversation section this year than in previous years. The best students were able to develop their responses and advance the exchange, provide opinions and additional information, and **they** led the examination in the direction that was most favorable for them. Capable students generally demonstrated very good linguistic skills and possessed excellent knowledge of the content related to the prescribed topics. Most students demonstrated a working understanding of the questions they were asked and were able to elaborate commendably on their opinions. Some performances deteriorated markedly in the Discussion section; however, other students performed to a higher standard in the Discussion than in the Conversation. Because the Conversation section also reflects work studied in previous years, students should meticulously and thoroughly prepare in the years leading up to Year 12.

The French oral examination requires students to respond with an appropriate level of maturity in keeping with the language expectations at this level. Also, thorough preparation for the examination situation, beyond the ability to use language in an oral context, is essential to ensure successful results.

The criteria for the oral examination assess the:

- 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.

There are a number of areas that should be addressed in order for students to maximise their performance during the oral examination. Students should:

- be **very** familiar with, and practise using, the criteria as part of their examination preparation
- understand that the conversation is an **exchange** and should not be approached as a question–answer interchange
- anticipate the types of questions that may be asked and be aware that questions will be asked in a variety of ways
- be aware that what they say will often lead the assessors to ask questions about what they have said
- listen to the questions asked and provide appropriate answers
- be willing to go beyond simple responses and respond to questions in some **breadth and depth**
- build on comments made by the assessor(s)
- attempt to answer each question asked by **responding** to the question, **adding** information and **expressing** an opinion
- be able to justify what they say spontaneously in unrehearsed situations
- realise that there are copious ways of answering a question and be aware that the same information and questions may be elicited in a variety of ways



- learn techniques that cater for their own personal learning styles
- use language and other techniques (including eye contact) to effectively engage in a **discussion**
- acquire a good collection of key vocabulary and grammatical structures that allow them to be able to make comparisons and comments
- be able to converse in basic tenses such as the present, future, perfect, imperfect and conditional
- listen to the tense of the verb asked in the question, and answer questions using the correct tense
- be able to self-correct, ask for clarification if necessary and develop repair strategies to avoid lengthy pauses
- practise throughout the year
- not recite pre-learned material
- avoid generalisations, lists of descriptive comments and stereotypes
- articulate clearly
- avoid anglicisms.

Other factors that can affect students' overall performance include:

- examination nerves. Students should seek help and strategies to overcome this
- the need for 'special consideration' because of visual, speech or hearing impediments. Students must apply for special arrangements through their school using the appropriate forms, processes and deadlines
- chewing gum during the examination. This tends to interfere with the student's clarity of speech, enunciation and articulation.

Sensible, smart casual dress is recommended for the oral examination.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

The Conversation section consists of a seven-minute conversation about the student's personal world, including school and home life, family and friends, interests and future aspirations. Good performances once again clearly reflected students' sound preparation. The most successful students provided extensive responses to the questions asked, confidently moving the exchange forward while simultaneously displaying a command of accurate language and a sophisticated range of vocabulary. These students possessed a sound working knowledge and mastery of all the basic tenses, and were able to use complex structures such as *si* clauses, causative *faire*, the passive and the subjunctive. High-scoring students demonstrated the capacity to respond to and build on comments made by the assessors. They moved with ease from one tense or topic to another by using a wide variety of connectives. These students rarely hesitated and maintained a consistent pace throughout the assessment without unnatural pauses. Moreover, they were able to 'lead' the assessors so that it was evident that these students had practised gap-filling and self-correction techniques as well as strategies for linking with the assessors.

Weaker students seemed to struggle even with simple questions and grammatical structures. Their pronunciation was awkward, and their stress and tempo were unaccomplished. They often made false starts and offered simplistic responses. Moreover, their responses consisted of a paucity of content, with answers frequently being minimal, mediocre, rote-learned and memorised, sometimes not well. Some students once again relied too heavily on rote-learned material and became quite perturbed when they were asked questions they were either not anticipating or that were not 'in the order' they were expecting. Weaker students were unable to advance the conversation and rarely used connectives. They frequently resorted to anglicisms and rote-learned material to compensate for a lack of preparation or gaps in their knowledge of linguistic elements. These students often confused genders and pronouns, were unable to make subject-verb or noun-adjective agreements, and were often unable to switch through the range of basic tenses that are required at this level. Furthermore, they experienced difficulty in expanding on or justifying their opinions.

Section 2 – Discussion

The Discussion section consists of a one-minute introduction and a seven-minute discussion of the Detailed Study. It is imperative that students are very careful when choosing the sub-topic for their Detailed Study, as the topic selected must:

- follow the guidelines stipulated in the *French VCE Study Design*
- relate to French-speaking communities
- lead to discussion with assessors
- contain an issue
- allow the student to express opinions.



It is often the **manner** in which the topic is handled that is crucial; no topic is appropriate if it is not adequately prepared and, conversely, no topic is inappropriate if it is designed and prepared effectively. However, informative topics do not tend to lead to an effective discussion. Students were unable to score highly if their Detailed Study did not allow them to express an opinion, as such topics had a tendency to produce no overall discussion but rather resulted in a description of each text. Some topics were superficial, purely factual or descriptive and were handled inappropriately, as there were no viewpoints or ideas expressed. A poor choice of sub-topic tended to inhibit the student's chances of meeting the criterion that assesses relevance, breadth and depth of information. Students need to understand the topic they are studying and be inspired and enthusiastic about it. Furthermore, it is strongly suggested that the sub-topic include a question/issue that needs to be answered, as this lends structure to the student's learning. Additionally, the topic should suit the student's language capacity. The topic should promote a discussion of the resources studied, and allow the student to express their opinions and generate new ideas by expanding on the topic.

The resources chosen to support the Detailed Study are also crucial and these need to be appropriate for the student and the topic selected. Students must ensure that they understand the links between the texts studied and the themes of the topic; sometimes it seemed that the topic chosen was not at all related to the information the student stated they had studied from the texts. Weaker students were often unable to relate information from the texts to the sub-topic they had studied. This resulted in the students being unable to elaborate on their comments or provide opinions, and generally did not lead to a genuine discussion.

The texts should be in **French** and should not be merely downloaded from the Internet; in far too many cases the texts, interviews and films selected as resources were in English or were limited in their scope. While there is no specification that students refer to a specific number of texts in the oral exam, the study design recommends that students explore at least three different kinds of texts in the Detailed Study. A number of students cited only information they had downloaded from the Internet. Students should not resort to listing every text they have studied if they are not able to comment on them.

Students should analyse all the texts in detail, and should be prepared to answer **any** questions based on the texts they have studied. This includes being able to say that they 'aren't quite sure of the answer' but they 'think that...' Students who possessed limited information were unable to present or express their opinions. They did not seem to be able to go beyond the boundaries of the texts but were only able to remain within the topic they had chosen. Consequently, they were unable to speak about or discuss different aspects of their chosen sub-topic.

Examples of problem areas in some of the topics that were selected were as follows.

- *Le vie en rose*: the information was generally very limited, there was often no issue introduced and the topic did not tend to lead to a genuine discussion.
- *La nouvelle vague*: this topic was too ambitious and sophisticated, with students often resorting to anglicised versions of difficult vocabulary.
- *Paris et la Tour Eiffel, Le français la langue du sport, Les Monuments de Paris, Jules Verne, La Provence, La Tour de France* and *L'Art et le Divertissement*: students often took a descriptive approach to these topics, which did not lead to opinions. There was no issue offered, which resulted in students often being unable to provide opinions.
- *L'esclavage*: this was treated as a global topic rather than emphasising how associated issues relate to French-speaking communities.
- *La ville artistique de Paris*: the texts used by students were minimal and were often inappropriate for an in-depth discussion or for eliciting opinions.
- *Les secrets de Paris*: this topic was generally very poorly presented because of a lack of information and inadequate resources used by the students.
- *L'injustice humaine*: this topic was too broad and students struggled to understand it because the texts they had used were inappropriate.
- *Le Surréalisme*: this topic seemed to be too difficult for students.

A small number of students presented topics that had no obvious links to French-speaking communities, such as *La Déforestation*. Similarly, a topic such as *L'Environnement* that included a tiny segment referring to Senegal was barely in accordance with the guidelines stipulated in the *French VCE Study Design*. Discussion topics need to be related significantly to **French-speaking communities**.

The very weak students presented very little or only superficial information in the Discussion and needed a great deal of support, especially those who had chosen topics in which they were uninterested or that were too difficult for them. These students were consequently unable to express opinions, or, if they did, were generally unable to develop their



responses by substantiating the opinions or the information they presented. Many students were unable to diverge from pre-learned materials, thereby demonstrating that they lacked the skills to engage in a sustained and meaningful discussion.

It is strongly advised that students structure their introduction tightly and direct assessors to **their** preferred areas of discussion by including one or two of the questions they addressed while researching their Detailed Study. Good students outlined the sub-topic within the required one-minute time limit and stated which option they had selected. In their introduction 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 any support material had been brought in. Some students went beyond the one-minute limit, effectively launching into a presentation rather than giving an introduction, and were unnerved when assessors interrupted their monologue. Other students cited too many resources and were then unable to discuss the content of these documents in depth.

Strong students demonstrated excellent knowledge of their topic and used resources that consisted of different text types. Not only were these students thoroughly conversant with the content of their Detailed Study, they were also highly skilled in expressing and elaborating on ideas and opinions, and substantiated them with highly relevant evidence. At this level, students demonstrated the capacity to use an extensive range of vocabulary, connectives and a range of complex structures and accurate language.

Below are some successful topics that produced enthusiastic responses from students.

- *La persécution des Juifs dans les films*
- *L'esprit révolutionnaire et la contestation en France*
- *L'importance de la devise 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité'*
- *Le monde vu par les yeux d'un enfant*
- *L'enfance dans la littérature française*
- *La Résistance et la deuxième guerre mondiale du point de vue d'une mère française*
- *La place des immigrés en France*
- *Le contraste de l'humour dans la société française*
- *L'injustice du racisme*
- *La révolution française et la prise de la Bastille*
- *La Résistance*
- *Picasso: La guerre et l'amour*
- *Problèmes sociaux en France – SDF, Le Chômage*
- *La France: Un pays d'accueil?*

When preparing for the Discussion, students should:

- prepare their one-minute introduction carefully and tightly, clearly presenting both the topic and the resources used
- be aware that they will be interrupted by the assessors if they exceed the one-minute time limit for the introduction
- limit the texts they study, know them **in depth**, and have a **variety** of things to say about the sub-topic and issue they have chosen
- know how to refer to texts studied, link their opinions to texts studied, and relate the texts they have studied to each other
- understand the content that they have studied
- **reflect** on the topic they have studied and be able to express their own opinion
- answer in a variety of ways and use at least two or three sentences
- be prepared to discuss **any** aspect of the resources they bring.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

This year the majority of students completed all sections of the examination, and only a very small proportion responded in the wrong language in Sections 1 and 2. The most successful students performed at a consistently high level in the listening, reading and writing sections of the examination, demonstrating an excellent knowledge and command of all aspects of French.



Students must ensure that their written responses are legible. Even when answers are crossed out or corrected, responses written in pen are generally clearer for assessors than those in pencil.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A: Answer in English

This task was designed to assess students' capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts. This part of the Listening and responding section was competently handled by the majority of students. In Question 1 some students were unable to distinguish between 'DVD' and 'vide' and in Question 2 a number wrote 'a trip to New York' rather than '(two) tickets to New York'. Nevertheless, many students scored two out of three marks for this question. In Text 2 students found Questions 7 and 9 the most challenging. In Question 7 most students referred to the colour of the lighting, but failed to mention the lighting itself. Responses to Question 9 revealed students' unfamiliarity with common prepositions such as 'devant' and 'en face de'.

To ensure that they are fully prepared for this section, students should:

- practise sound discrimination exercises
- listen to a range of passages in varied text types
- take every opportunity to listen to spoken French in films or the news on SBS
- listen to texts for global understanding first and then practise picking out specific points
- ensure that they have a sound knowledge of all tenses and grammar listed on pages 14–17 of the *French VCE Study Design*
- acquire a wide range of vocabulary related to the Themes and Topics on page 13 of the *French VCE Study Design*.

To improve performance during the examination, students should:

- use their 15 minutes' reading time wisely and carefully read all questions in Section 1 to determine the kind of information required
- make notes in French in the margin of the paper while the listening section is in progress
- look up unknown key words during the pauses between the first and second readings of texts
- write their answers in the space provided below the question, as no credit will be given for answers written in the note-taking space.

Text 1

Question 1

- nothing/empty
- (two) tickets to New York

Question 2

- she says she is trembling
- she says she has palpitations/her heart is beating
- the presenter tells her to calm down

Question 3

- he asks her if she has made her decision
- he asks her if she wants to change her mind
- he asks her if she's sure it isn't in the right hand box

Text 2

Question 4

By coach/bus

Question 5

- one
- on the beach

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Question 6

Either of:

- he's a drummer
- he's a percussionist.

Question 7

Any of:

- technicolour lighting/rhythmic lighting
- strobe lights
- a light show.

Question 8

- a gift pack/gift bag/show bag

And any two of:

- a bottle of mineral water
- a site map
- a card with emergency numbers on it
- one of Yasmina's CDs.

Question 9

Either of:

- outside exit 2
- opposite the Golden Sand (*Sable Doré*)/opposite the kiosk.

Part B: Answer in French

In this part of the examination students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts and convey information accurately and appropriately. The more competent students understood the content of the passage and conveyed the required information in excellent French. Questions 13 and 14 proved to be the most difficult. A number of students failed to read these questions carefully and in their responses included irrelevancies or relied on general knowledge. Areas which need improvement include sentence structure, the agreement of subject and verb, the use of the passive voice and the agreement of past participles.

Text 3

Question 10

La discipline de l'historien du climat est née pendant les années soixante-dix/date des années soixante-dix.

Students needed to answer in a full sentence.

Question 11

Any two of:

- *glaciers/archives de glaciers*
- *troncs d'arbres/arbres*
- *analyses au carbone/carbone.*

Question 12

Any three of:

- *les terres ont été inondées*
- *le prix du blé a été multiplié/a augmenté*
- *la population a souffert de la famine/des épidémies/des maladies*
- *la population a été décimée/a diminué.*

Students needed to write in full sentences.

Question 13

Any two of:

Les grands refroidissements ont été causés par:

- *la variation de l'inclinaison de la terre*

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- *la chute de météorites*
- *des quantités de poussières rejetées par les volcans/les poussières des volcans/la quantité des poussières.*

Students needed to write in full sentences.

Question 14

Either of:

- *ces changements s'effectuent 50 à 100 fois plus rapidement que la norme historique*
- *ces changements sont plus rapides et auront des conséquences (considérables) sur l'histoire de l'humanité.*

Students needed to write in a full sentence.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

When preparing for this section students should:

- read a wide range of texts in different text types throughout the year
- practise identifying the main ideas in short texts
- practise summarising the main points/ideas in longer texts
- become skilled in dictionary use (a skill which should have been perfected by VCE)
- consult the dictionary for unknown words
- practise expressing ideas in their own words.

The suggestions below will assist students to maximise their performance during the examination. Students should:

- first try to understand the gist of the passage without looking up every word
- check the meaning of key words in their dictionary during their second reading of the text
- read questions carefully in order to ascertain what information is required
- pay particular attention to the wording of questions in Part B as this gives an indication of the type of information required
- underline key words in the questions
- ensure that they answer in the correct language
- write all answers in the space provided below the question. No credit will be given for answers written in the note-taking margin
- use connectives when responding to questions in Part B to ensure that one idea flows logically to the next.

Part A: Answer in English

This section was designed to assess the students' capacity to understand and convey general and specific aspects of texts. A number of students achieved creditable scores in this section. In Question 17 some students demonstrated a lack of dictionary skills when they wrote 'threads' instead of 'son' for the French word ' *fils* '. Surprisingly, Question 20 presented difficulty for some students despite the fact that they only had to look up the word '*fou*' to get the right answer. Questions 21–23 proved to be the most challenging for students, although many of the more capable students were able to achieve full marks.

Question 15

Bringing people/mankind together/closer

Question 16

Any two of:

- he came from Lyons
- to celebrate his (human) values
- to celebrate his (aeronautical) exploits/achievements.

Question 17

- in a plane crash
- in the sea offshore from Marseilles/off the coast of Marseilles/in the sea near Marseilles

Question 18

Any three of:

- they had no money/had no resources/became poor

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- they were uprooted/were constantly moving
- they had to stay with other family members
- they spent holidays in the family castle (*château*)/visited the family castle.

Question 19

- go to the airfield nearby
- haunt/hang around the hangars/sheds
- question/talk to the mechanics

Question 20

They were a little mad/crazy/foolish.

Question 21

- He convinced a pilot to take him on his first flight/talked a pilot into taking him on his first flight.
- He got special permission to learn to fly during his military service.

Question 22

Any four of:

- his determination/he was determined
- the author describes him as intrepid (adventurous)/he participated in an adventure
- the author says Saint-Exupéry participated in the adventure of the Airmail Service/he took the first post between France and Africa
- he was prepared to fly to Africa
- the author says that aviation was the business of pioneers
- he faced up to life through the dangerous medium of flying
- he forged/created his destiny.

Question 23

- He spent hours (as a pilot) reflecting (on nature)/he spent hours thinking/he spent hours alone.
- He spent hours finding universal truths.

Part B: Answer in French

In this section of the examination students were required to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts and their ability to convey information accurately and appropriately. Most students had little difficulty in selecting the relevant points. However, many were unable to make the connection between '*qualités surhumaines*' and '*création divine*', thus gaining one mark instead of two.

Excellent students presented flowing text in their own words with ideas that were appropriately sequenced and joined by suitable connectives. Less able students tended to quote chunks of text in Question 26 in the hope that the correct answer would lie somewhere in the sentences they had produced.

Question 24

Any three of:

La Citroën a été baptisée révolutionnaire (à sa sortie):

- *parce qu'elle avait des lignes aérodynamiques*
- *à cause de ses phares tournants*
- *à cause de sa direction assistée*
- *à cause de sa suspension.*

Or *La Citroën fut saluée comme un chef d'oeuvre stylistique et technique* and one of the above.

Three of these points could have been included in one or two sentences. Students were required to respond in one or more full sentences.

Question 25

Three difficulties faced by the driver included:

- *un commando/fusil-mitrailleur/on tira/a tiré sur la DS/Citroën DS*

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- *on tira/a tiré une grêle de balles sur la DS*
- *le flanc droit fut/a été atteint/abîmé*
- *ses pneus furent/ont été crevés.*

The reflex action of the driver was either of:

- *il eut/a eu/la présence d'esprit de changer de vitesse*
- *il changea/a changé de vitesse.*

A feature of the Citroën DS was any one of:

- *sa capacité de continuer son chemin/tenir la route (malgré ses pneus crevés)*
- *sa suspension*
- *sa direction assistée.*

Sample response:

Pendant l'attentat un fusil-mitrailleur/un commando/on tira/a tiré/ sur la DS. Le flanc droit fut/a été/atteint et ses pneus crevés. Le chauffeur(connaissant bien ce modèle) changea/a changé de vitesse. Grâce à sa suspension et sa direction assistée la voiture put/a pu/ continuer son chemin/tenir la route/ malgré ses pneus crevés.

Question 26

- *déesse*
- *création divine*

Section 3 – Writing in French

This section of the examination was designed to assess students' ability to express ideas through the creation of an original text in French. Students were asked to write 200–300 words on one of five topics. Students were assessed on the relevance, breadth and depth of content of their writing, the appropriateness of its structure and sequence and the accuracy, range and appropriateness of its vocabulary and grammar.

In order to maximise their performance in the writing section, students should:

- regularly practise writing in French on a variety of themes and topics
- make a plan in French before attempting to write
- read pieces by their classmates, exchanging pieces to correct errors
- be familiar with the kinds of writing and text types on pages 58–60 of the *French VCE Study Design*
- acquire a thorough knowledge of the grammatical concepts listed on pages 14–17 of the *French VCE Study Design*
- observe time and word limits
- allow time to proofread their writing in the examination
- resist the temptation to use material from their Detailed Study in the final examination unless it is totally relevant to their chosen topic.

Question 27

The vast majority of students chose this topic and most students were familiar with the conventions of informal letter writing. In their response, most students thanked their grandparents profusely, saying that they would spend the money on 'schoolies week', buy themselves a present or put some aside to finance their tertiary studies. Some, who may have studied world poverty for their Detailed Study, digressed from the topic by relying heavily on apparently pre-learned material of little relevance.

The more competent students were able to handle a range of tenses with accuracy and their writing was characterised by an extensive range of vocabulary and complex structures. Common errors by weaker students included using incorrect pronouns and verbs (for example, '*je tes le promet*'), changing the register from '*tu*' to '*vous*' and using infinitives instead of conjugated verbs.

Question 28

Although the students who tackled this topic were familiar with the features of this text type, a number of students outlined arguments about the health benefits of sport rather than whether competition in sport was beneficial or harmful. The more competent students presented convincing arguments about competition in sport, explaining how this competition equipped them for challenges in their daily life.



Question 29

Few students who chose this topic observed the conventions of the text type, with many tending to write personal, reflective pieces on being famous. Many responses resembled diary entries without the diary entry features. Some outlined the adverse effects of fame, how they were unable to go out without being harassed by photographers or pestered for autographs.

Imaginative writing should be encouraged as it provides an opportunity for students to create an atmosphere of suspense, surprise or mystery and adopt different approaches. Few students demonstrated the imagination and skills to create atmosphere.

Question 30

Capable students produced some excellent pieces of writing on this topic. They gave a title to their writing and signed it with a fictitious name. Their formal reporting style was consistent with review writing and they evaluated two positive and two negative views, discussing them with impartiality. The standard of their language was high and included expressions of cause, consequence, opposition and concession. Less capable students presented only one side of the issue and the level of language was often simplistic.

Question 31

The treatment of this topic was rather disappointing. Many students seemed to ignore the fact that this article was intended to inform their municipality about one of its local heroes or heroines. Instead, a significant number outlined the brave exploits of a famous heroine such as Nancy Wake. In many cases there appeared to be an over-reliance on the Detailed Study which students had learned for their oral examination. This meant that they did not respond appropriately to the question, write in the required style, or observe the conventions of the text type. However, there were some interesting articles describing heroic deeds of citizens who had received awards for rescuing children from dangerous situations, for example. These articles were generally characterised by well-structured writing and a sophisticated range of vocabulary and linguistic structures used with a high degree of accuracy.