



Oral component

GENERAL COMMENTS

The ability of students to converse in Hebrew varied considerably, from quite poor to very good. The overall standard was satisfactory and students were able to adequately discuss their topics with the assessors. However, on some occasions students were too brief and were unable to maintain the conversation without continuous prompting by the assessors.

Some of the weaker students made numerous grammatical errors, such as inappropriate use of gender forms, nouns, adjectives and tenses. More attention should be paid to the teaching of Hebrew grammar.

Some students seemed to rely on reciting pre-learned answers, which makes the conversation less spontaneous. This practice should be discouraged because it adversely affects the student's ability to communicate appropriately, which is one of the key assessment criteria.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Conversation

Most students conversed competently with the assessors. The students were well prepared but, sometimes, even with assessors' encouragement, they struggled to expand the conversation beyond a basic pattern of questions and answers. When the conversation revolved around a familiar topic such as family, school, work, leisure and personal interests and aspirations, it was usually free flowing. However, when faced with unexpected questions some students had difficulty in answering, which indicated an undue reliance on pre-learned responses.

The grammar and syntax used by the best performing students was good, but low-scoring students were prone to lexical errors, some of which were quite basic. Some students used odd-sounding expressions, which were usually translated from English or not suitable for oral expression.

Generally, students' vocabulary was adequate, and that of the best performing students was quite extensive, albeit not always accurately used. Naturally, having a rich vocabulary is desirable, but students should be aware that some Hebrew words have several meanings. Using a sophisticated word in a wrong context is not likely to impress an assessor and elevate the mark.

Section 2 – Discussion

The overall standard in 2007 was satisfactory and students performed well. The high-performing students engaged in the discussion enthusiastically and spoke Hebrew fluently. The sub-topics chosen for the Detailed Study included: Israel – The Land of Immigration and Absorption; The Holocaust; The Six Day War; Freedom; Israeli Songs; Youth in the State of Israel; and A Comparison of Youth in Australia to Those in Israel.

Most students understood and researched their sub-topic well, gathering information from various resources such as articles, poems, films and other documents. It is essential that the sub-topic chosen for the Detailed Study complies with the requirement in the *Hebrew VCE Study Design* that it should relate to the Hebrew-speaking community. Some of the chosen topics had little relevance to a Hebrew-speaking community.

To increase the chance of a successful assessment, the difficulty of the chosen topic should not exceed the student's linguistic capability. Sometimes when a student was asked to comment on the chosen topic the answer was mainly a recitation of the material researched. Although recitation may be used to make a point or to support a view, it should not be a substitute for conducting a competent discussion. Students' working knowledge of Hebrew is being assessed, not their recollection of the researched material.

The study design states that students should start with a brief introduction of their sub-topic, at most one minute long; however, the introduction of some students was too detailed and too long. Such introductions lost focus and exceeded the one-minute limit, thus shortening the time available for the discussion. Insufficient discussion time makes it difficult to demonstrate knowledge of the sub-topic and may lead to a lower mark.



The linguistic errors were quite similar to those in the previous section. Students who scored well in the Conversation section usually also scored well in discussing their chosen sub-topic. The low-scoring students were hesitant, slow in finding appropriate expressions and sometimes did not understand the assessors' questions. To do well in the Discussion, students should not only know the topic well, but also have an active knowledge of the relevant vocabulary.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students attempted all sections of the written examination and the results were satisfactory. The marks obtained in Part A of Sections 1 and 2, in which students were asked to respond in English, were higher than in the other parts of the written examination. This indicates that students' comprehension of Hebrew is better developed than their ability to write in Hebrew.

Some students did not follow the instructions and responded in the wrong language. The vocabulary of most students was adequate, but their language skills, particularly grammar and sentence structures, were often lacking. When students consult a dictionary they should keep in mind that a Hebrew word may have several meanings and that the appropriate choice depends on the context of the sentence. In some instances inappropriate words or expressions were used, or a student tried to literally translate a phrase from English into Hebrew.

Students should be aware that illegible handwriting may adversely affect their mark. Assessors cannot award marks to responses that cannot be read.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A – Answer in English

In this section students were asked to listen to three texts and then to answer 12 questions. Most students comprehended and analysed the information in the texts well and gave relevant and accurate answers. The overall score for this section was higher than any other section.

Text 1

Question 1a.

The Council of Prague wanted to honour its sister city, the city of Rosh HaAin.

Question 1b.

Because they found it difficult to pronounce 'Rosh HaAin'.

Question 1c.

They asked to rename the park.

Question 1d.

The Council members are sure that the people of Prague will eventually learn to pronounce the name Rosh-HaAin.

Text 2

Question 2a.

Because they are:

- fashionable
- comfortable
- light
- pleasant to wear in the hot Israeli summer.

Students needed to provide three of the above answers.

Question 2b.

Because they are:

- open at the back, prone to the foot slipping out

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- unsafe for running and play.

Question 2c.

Either

- if the fashion changes
- they are not suitable for winter.

Text 3

Question 3a.

On an airplane

Question 3b.

Any three of:

- to visit family
- to attend a Bar-Mitzvah
- for sightseeing in Israel
- Steven wants to show Israel to his wife.

Question 3c.

Any three of:

- you won't recognise the country
- the country has developed and changed very fast
- you will have many pleasant surprises
- the airport terminal is ultra modern
- you will be astonished by the advances made.

Question 3d.

Either of:

- at the Bar-Mitzva
- next to the Kotel.

Question 3e.

- Yitzchak and Yael studied together at school.
- Yitzchak's wife is Yael's cousin.

Part B – Answer in Hebrew

Students' comprehension of the two texts was satisfactory. In Text 4, the phone message, they were able to extract and process the relevant information. Text 5, which required a comparison of the attitudes of the parents, was more challenging; some students tended to quote the text instead of deducing the difference between the mother's and father's attitudes from the information given in the text. Some answers included extraneous details not provided in the texts.

The Hebrew language used in some responses was rather poor and contained linguistic and spelling mistakes. Students' marks were generally lower in Part B than in Part A.

Text 4

Question 4a.

Any five of:

- reminder about Rinat's end of year evening ballet performance
- the performance venue
- time of the performance
- to arrange for a babysitter
- to arrange bringing Omer home
- meeting time of 5.30 at the entrance to the Hall.



Text 5

Question 5a.

Students' responses needed to include any five of the following:

- the mother is enthusiastic and excited
- the mother enjoys her daughter's performance
- the mother ignores the daughter's mistakes
- the mother thinks that the daughter is a fabulous dancer
- the father is bored and does not enjoy being there
- the father would rather be at a meeting at work
- the father points out the daughter's mistakes
- the father is glad when the show is over.

Example of an appropriate response (English translation):

The mother is enthusiastic and enjoys the performance. She is very excited to see her little daughter performing and ignores her mistakes. She thinks that her daughter is a superb dancer, who dances beautifully and is prima ballerina material. The father does not like such shows, is a bored and unwilling spectator who notices all the daughter's mistakes. He complains about missing his work meeting and is happy when the show is over.

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Part A – Answer in English

Students understood the texts and usually identified and analysed the relevant information well.

Text 6

Question 6a.

Any three of:

- it has holy Jewish sites
- many sages who wrote books central to Jewish faith lived there
- it was a religious and a spiritual Jewish centre
- it is close to Mount Meron, where Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai is buried.

Question 6b.

Any three of:

- both are ancient cities
- Jews regard both as holy cities
- both have picturesque alleys
- special spiritual atmosphere
- like Jerusalem it always has Jewish settlements.

Responses to this question were excellent.

Question 6c.

- Many prominent Rabbis lived there and founded synagogues and yeshivot, which made Tzfat a major Jewish spiritual centre.
- Ha-Ari made Tzfat the centre of Kabala and mysticism.
- Yosef Karo wrote the *Shulchan Aruch*, an important book laying down the rules for the everyday living of Jews.

Some students struggled with this question and were unable to name three important contributions to the religious significance of the city made by rabbis. A few students listed as a contribution the foundation of the first printing house; however, although it was probably used mainly to print religious texts, it couldn't be regarded as having a specific religious significance.

A few students misinterpreted the information provided in the text and incorrectly wrote that the Torah and Hazohar books had been written in Tzefat. Several students did not make a distinction between the reasons for Tzefat being regarded a Holy City and the individual contributions of the various rabbis, which resulted in their responses to Questions 1a. and 6c. being almost identical.



Text 7

Question 7a.

Any eight of:

- pure air
- cool summer weather
- spectacular scenery
- unique atmosphere
- historical sites
- ancient synagogues
- artist quarters
- galleries and exhibition hall
- museums (Printing and Tanach).

Students were asked to name eight tourist attractions. Students usually concentrated on the culturally and economically significant sites and ignored the natural physical attractions of Tzefat mentioned in the text.

Question 7b.

- The name Tzfat, derived from the Hebrew verb/word 'litzpot' (to view), reflects its magnificent views.
- Acronym for Tzizit, Tefilin and Peot reflects the religious nature of the city.
- Acronym of Tzaiarim (painters), pension (boarding house), torah, reflects the current perception of the city as a mixture of the religious and the secular.

This question was answered exceptionally well. Most answers were interesting, logical and displayed great originality.

Part B – Answer in Hebrew

Students were required to respond in Hebrew to a letter written by Erez's parents, convincing them to allow their son to participate in the school's excursion to Europe. In their responses, students had to refer to the following concerns that the parents had expressed in their letter:

- the educational excursion is too intensive
- the fragile state of Erez's health
- the excursion to Europe clashes with a family reunion in the US
- the excursion causes additional financial burden
- it is the first time Erez will travel on an airplane.

Most of the letters of reply were well written and structured, and comprehensively addressed the parents' concerns. Some letters were outstanding and advanced original arguments to convince the parents to let Erez participate in the excursion. The better students used correct language and extensive and appropriate vocabulary, while the less successful students made frequent lexical and grammatical errors and referred to only a few concerns raised in the parents' letter. Students need to ensure that they read the task's instructions carefully; it was important to note that the task was to convince the parents to allow Erez to go on the excursion, not convince them not to let him go on the excursion.

Section 3 – Writing in Hebrew

The overall standard of writing in this section was satisfactory. Most students demonstrated a good knowledge of Hebrew, developed their topic logically and maintained the reader's interest. The pieces written by the most successful students were interesting and nearly error free, while the responses of weaker students were less coherent and contained numerous lexical and grammatical errors. Most students observed the conventions of their chosen text type and adhered to the word limit.

All four questions in this section were attempted, with Questions 10 and 11 the most popular. The highest mark was achieved by a student who chose Question 9, but overall students who elected to do Question 12 performed the best.

The relevance of the written responses to the elected task was not always clear. For example, a piece which was supposed to be an imaginative story was written as an article to encourage tourism to Jerusalem. There were other instances where the written piece only loosely satisfied the criteria for relevance and depth of treatment. It seems likely that in each case the student had attempted to include pre-learned material. Such strategies do not improve students' marks.

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Sometimes a student started the task well, but the writing became less clear as it progressed and more mistakes crept in. The impression was that the student did not properly manage the allocated time and that the second part was written in haste. Students who prepare for the Hebrew examination should be aware of the importance of utilising their time effectively during the examination.