HSC examinations in Extension language courses – advice for students

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# Context

Note: This document provides generic advice only. It is the responsibility of individual teachers to ensure their students are adequately prepared for the HSC examinations.

The advice applies to modern languages only and is current as at 1 August 2019.

Where you see [language], replace this with the language you are studying, for example French or Japanese.

Where text is written in *italics*, this represents text in the language you are studying.

# How to approach the oral examination

## General information

The oral examinations take place in August or September each year. All languages oral examinations (except for Modern Hebrew) are held on a Saturday. Specific information about your examination will be made available to you approximately 3 weeks before the examination date. You can access the HSC languages oral examinations timetable on the [NESA website](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/hsc/key-dates-exam-timetables/hsc-languages-oral-examinations).

The Languages Oral Online Examination Scheduling Function allows your school to schedule the time and venue for your HSC oral examinations. Once you have been scheduled, your school will be able to print a copy of your confirmation sheet from Schools Online. You should also download your confirmation sheet and relevant venue location maps through [Students Online](https://studentsonline.nesa.nsw.edu.au/go/login/).

The oral examination relates to Objective 1 in the Extension Stage 6 syllabus. It is designed to assess your knowledge and skill in using spoken [language] to present and support a point of view.

| Objectives | Outcomes |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Present and discuss opinions, ideas and points of view in [language] | 1.1 discusses attitudes, opinions and ideas in [language]  1.2 formulates and justifies a written or spoken argument in [language] |

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## Examination specifications

The oral examination is worth 10 marks. You will choose 1 question from a choice of 2 questions. You are required to present a spoken monologue of approximately 3 minutes, related to the prescribed issues.

The questions will be written in both English and in [language], for a response in [language].

The examination is approximately 10 minutes long, which includes 7 minutes preparation time.

Ensure that you write your Centre Number and Student Number on the examination paper, as you will be required to hand it in at the conclusion of the oral examination.

During the preparation time, you may make brief notes in the spaces provided on the examination paper. You may refer to these notes during the examination but you must not read directly from them.

The use of dictionaries is not permitted during the oral examination.

## Criteria for judging performance

In your answers you will be assessed on how well you:

* present and support a point of view
* communicate in spoken [language] with clarity and accuracy of expression
* structure and sequence information, opinions and ideas within the time allocation
* demonstrate control of a range of language structures and vocabulary in [language].

Responses which create a positive impression demonstrate a good understanding of the issues and present a sophisticated, coherent argument to support a point of view. These responses will:

* remain relevant to the question at all times
* reflect a depth of understanding of the issue/s involved
* be delivered with confidence, correct pronunciation and intonation, and a high level of grammatical accuracy.

A student who has well-developed speaking skills will:

* demonstrate a degree of authenticity, formulating ideas in [language], rather than translating directly from English
* demonstrate breadth and sophistication in the use of vocabulary, expressions and sentence structures.

## Before the examination

It is important to familiarise yourself with the prescribed issues.

The oral examination is related to the prescribed issues and NOT directly to the prescribed text(s). (Your knowledge of the prescribed texts will be assessed in the written examination,   
Section I: Response to prescribed text.)

The issues which have been set for study are broad and can be explored from a number of different perspectives (which are not prescribed), allowing you a degree of flexibility in the sub-topics you wish to pursue. While the prescribed issues are mandatory, the dot points included under each issue are suggestions only, designed to give a sense of the scope of the prescribed issues. Ensure you study the prescribed issues across a range of contexts, through related texts.

Reading widely in [language] on the issues will introduce you to a range of material and ideas and help you build a bank of appropriate vocabulary and expressions, which are likely to have application across a number of sub-topics. This will ensure you have a sound knowledge base, allowing you to speak on any topic, including the unexpected.

When considering your response you should remember that it is not the particular viewpoint you take which is important, but rather your ability to build a relevant and well-balanced argument and to support it logically and coherently.

Remember, it is important to support the point of view you present in your response. The following advice may be helpful.

* Read widely, keep your own bank of useful vocabulary and expressions, and practise regularly to develop your ideas.
* Be familiar with a few expressions which help you link your arguments and give your monologue structure. These need not be long or complex, but will help your response to flow logically.
* Learn a variety of ways of expressing an opinion and avoid obvious repetition of the same structures. Remember it is the quality of your argument which is the most important factor, and over-reliance on rote-learned phrases, which are not particularly relevant, should be avoided.
* Practise monologues and record yourself at home so that you are used to giving your opinion. If possible, practise monologues with other students to assist in the development of ideas and viewpoints.
* Expose yourself to as much [language] as possible. Access the various forms of media available, which relate to the prescribed issues, keeping in mind that some of these resources may be aimed at background speakers of [language]. However, they may assist you in gathering information and opinions to support your point(s) of view. Wide reading and listening in [language] is recommended to establish the habit of thinking in [language]. Your teacher could possibly suggest some other resources available to you.
* If you find it difficult to speak for 3 minutes, you should practise developing your argument by supporting it with more ideas. Responses that clearly fall short of 3 minutes are usually too superficial and lack detail.

## Preparing for the examination

When responding, it is essential that you are prepared to address the question in a relevant and appropriate way, rather than speaking in vague approximations based on pre-learnt material. The ability to present an original, relevant response is essential to creating a favourable impression. It demonstrates to the listener your ability to manipulate the language and present your own thoughts and ideas through a well-developed, logical argument. On the other hand, a response, which may contain sophisticated vocabulary and structures, but is based on pre-learnt material and does not directly address the question, will create a less favourable impression.

### Selecting the question

The wording of the question, given in [language] and English, will provide the key to your responses.

In deciding which question to answer, you should choose the question which allows you to use different arguments, vocabulary and structures.

You should begin by reading the question carefully, ensuring you have correctly understood all elements. Consider:

* What are the implications of this question?
* Will I be able to take a point of view?
* Will I be able to develop an argument? Can I discuss this question from a number of perspectives?
* Will I be limited to only discussing this question from my own personal experience?
* Does this question provide me with the scope to demonstrate a range of vocabulary and structures?
* Can I think of a number of main points from which to develop my argument?
* Will my argument be limited to anecdotal accounts or will I also be able to make a broader comment(s)?

#### Unpacking the question

##### **Activity**

Consider the following question. Read it carefully, without skimming over any of the words. Remember that small words can sometimes have an important impact and should never be overlooked.

**Young people allow themselves to be too strongly influenced by advertising. What is your opinion?**

* What is the focal point of this question?
* What discussion points does the question raise?
* From which perspective would you develop your own argument?
* If you have done this activity in class, compare your responses.

Now consider the following examples. Is the focus:

* that advertising exerts too much influence on young people, compared with other influences such as their parents, peers etc.?
* that young people, more than other members of our society, are too influenced by advertising?
* that the influence of advertising is too strong, leading to possibly negative outcomes?

Where a question is open to interpretation and different analogies can be drawn, as in the above example, any of these approaches would be valid, as long as the response is relevant, the ideas well-supported and the argument well-developed.

### Structuring a well-developed response

It is important that your response is well-structured and does not become long, rambling and repetitive. The guideline of 3 minutes should be the target. Speaking for longer than this rarely adds any quality, and can be detrimental to the overall impression.

Begin with an introduction and, after providing a well-supported argument, draw your monologue to a close with a logical conclusion. You should aim to address the topic in general terms and avoid an over-dependence on personal anecdotes or lists of items. A response consisting largely of anecdotal recounts or listing will often be too superficial to adequately address the question. On the other hand, a more sophisticated, insightful, well-articulated and mature response will make a more positive impression on the listener. If you provide an introduction, followed by 3-4 main ideas, developed with supporting evidence, and finally a conclusion, you should be able to speak for approximately 3 minutes, as specified by the examination requirements.

The keyword box can be of great assistance. You should use your preparation time to brainstorm your own ideas, writing down in note form the points you intend to present in your argument, before organising them in a logical way. This will ensure the response follows a clear line of thought, leading to a relevant conclusion.

You are allowed to make brief notes as memory prompts in the spaces provided on the examination paper. You should develop your own preferred way of using the keyword box. You may choose to do this in a variety of ways, for example:

* divide the box into columns representing the two sides of an argument
* write down ideas as they occur, and then order them in a logical sequence by numbering them
* use different coloured pens to indicate the different main points you would like to make and then expand on them
* use the box vertically instead of horizontally
* create a mind-map.

### The introduction

You should always begin with an introduction. This may be relatively brief and does not have to be formulaic although you may find it useful to have some pre-learnt introductory phrases at your disposal. The introduction serves to establish your point of view, preparing the listener for the stance you intend to take. It is usually a general statement, leading to the body of the argument.

#### **Activity**

Consider the following question:

**A major lottery win would bring the greatest happiness.**

Briefly decide the main points you would make in discussing this proposition. What introduction would you make before beginning the main part of your argument?

Suggestions:

* It is the dream of many to be happy and lead a happy life. But whether this is achievable by money alone is very doubtful.
* Although some people don’t agree with these words, I think they make sense. With that amount of money you could have everything and achieve everything without any difficulty. Is money the way to great happiness? Regardless of what others think, I think it is.
* A major lottery win would be great, but it could also lead to unhappy consequences and disappointment. Whether you could or would stay happy in the following months and years is questionable.
* I think a major lottery win sounds good. Think of what you could buy with so much money. Wouldn’t it be great to have no money worries! But there is something important that shouldn’t be forgotten: you don’t need a lot of money to be happy. Even a millionaire can lead an empty life if he or she has no real friends.
* In my opinion, a major lottery win would not mean the greatest happiness. Quite the opposite. Good friends, health and a good outlook on life bring the greatest happiness. A whole lot of money could never replace these important things.

### Developing an argument

In developing a well-rounded argument, you should identify the main points you wish to make, and then draw on a range of examples to support these. It is important to realise that the breadth and depth of an argument will affect the quality of your response. Take the opportunity to read widely on the prescribed issues and develop opinions. You should attempt to explore the issues raised by the question you are attempting to answer without limiting yourselves to the simplistic and obvious.

Taking a wider, more global view when identifying these main points can often open up greater possibilities for discussion, rather than limiting responses to a more personalised view only. A personal reflection or anecdote can be one way of illustrating or supporting a main point and can add interest to your argument.

In developing an argument, you may wish to consider a number of different perspectives, for example the advantages versus the disadvantages, agreement versus disagreement, the pros versus the cons, or the reasons for versus the reasons against. This is not essential, and the opposing aspects do not have to be explored in equal measure, but an argument can be very one-sided without any mention of a differing point of view.

#### **Activity**

How would you approach the following question:

**Young people have never had it so good. What is your opinion?**

Although it may not be immediately obvious, this question allows for a number of different interpretations, all resulting in a well-developed argument – one which can also present more than one point of view. For this reason, a response that is restricted to a discussion of the good life had by young people today will not result in a well-developed argument.

In the case of this question, the focus could be on ‘never’. This would allow a comparison between the life enjoyed by the youth of today with that of their parents or previous generations.

On the other hand, it could focus on ‘so good’, allowing for a discussion of the negative aspects of life for young people in today’s more materialistic, stressful and more impersonal society. It could be argued that there were other aspects, rather than material ones which made life much better in former generations.

Alternatively, it could be possible to focus on ‘young people’, making the point that young people are not the same the world over. The young people in undeveloped countries do not enjoy the same benefits experienced by those in western societies.

All of these approaches allow for a number of perspectives to be presented. This would result in a much more sophisticated response than one which, for example, simply talked about all the presents received by the speaker and his or her friends, and the benefits enjoyed by them as young people in the 21st century.

##### **Activity**

Consider the speaking skills questions in the Extension past papers from 2001 onwards. Choose the questions that are most relevant to the current issues. What interpretation would you place on these? Do some questions allow for more than one interpretation?

### Supporting an argument

In the time available, you should aim to make 3 or 4 main points and then support them with plausible evidence. A number of main points should ensure a varied and interesting argument. The supporting evidence you provide can be general, but may also be personal and anecdotal. It would be inadvisable, however, to limit all arguments to a discussion taken from your own personal experience.

In supporting your argument, you should attempt to use a range of appropriate vocabulary and expressions, as well as a variety of language structures. This will add depth and breadth to your argument and help to impress the listener. However, only use vocabulary you are familiar with and which you can pronounce with confidence. The examination is not the time to start experimenting with new structures and vocabulary.

#### **Activity**

Consider the following question from a past HSC examination paper:

**It requires courage to be different from the majority. What do you think?**

What main points would you make, and then support in response to this question? Remember that your response will stem from your own thoughts and opinions, and the points you make will not necessarily be the same as those made by others in your class. Note – the points given below are not made in note form. Notes are a form of shorthand, which is often only understood by the writer.

Suggestion:

* What does ‘different from the majority’ mean?
* In reality we are all ‘different’, and have our own ideas and points of view.
* There would be no inventions or discoveries without people with interesting approaches and/or different talents. Some people are loners, they need no courage to be different and see it as an advantage. Examples/discussion.
* Others are shut out by the majority and are laughed at. The majority thinks it is the others’ fault that they cannot fit in. Life can be very difficult for them. Why is it a worldwide problem that minorities are not accepted? Bullying? Examples/discussion.
* To be different often requires courage. The tyranny of the majority. Everyone has the right to be different. What could we all do to create a tolerant society so that others don’t need courage to be themselves? Discussion/examples.

### The conclusion

A well-developed argument will progress logically and lead automatically to a relevant conclusion. A conclusion will signal to the listener that the discussion is complete and the threads of the argument have been drawn together, often reaffirming the stance taken in the introduction. You can achieve this in just a few sentences and should re-assert the overall point of view taken. It could even raise a further question for consideration. Note however, that simply repeating the question itself is not an adequate substitute for a well-expressed conclusion.

Other students may discuss their own responses with you after the examination. You should not be alarmed if they have taken a different approach in answering a question. The nature of the monologue question invites a variety of opinions and approaches. All justified interpretations, which are relevant to the question, are acceptable.

## During the examination

Remember to relax. If you take a moment to think and plan your approach, without rushing to provide a response, you will be able to adapt what you know to answer a range of questions.

You will have 7 minutes preparation time.

Remember that the examiners will have access to your notes, although these notes are not marked. You are not permitted to write out your monologue in whole sentences and then simply read this out. The brief notes you write are to be used as a guide or as a prompt only, to assist you in presenting your argument. When selecting a question, you should make sure you understand exactly what the question requires.

# How to approach the written examination

## General information

You will have 2 hours (including 10 minutes reading time) to complete the written examination. You will be required to complete 2 sections:

* Section I: Response to prescribed text Part A and Part B
* Section II: Writing in [language].

You should consider the allocation of marks and organise your time accordingly.

Suggested approach:

* Section I: Response to prescribed text (Part A) is worth 15 marks. Allow 45 minutes for this section.
* Section I: Response to prescribed text (Part B) is worth 10 marks. Allow 30 minutes for this section.
* Section II: Writing in [language] is worth 15 marks. Allow 45 minutes for this section.

Make sure you allow sufficient time to:

* plan your answers before you commence
* revise your work and check the quality of your responses, ensuring your intention is clear and there are no ambiguities.

To ensure that you are fully prepared for the Extension examination paper, you could ask yourself the following questions:

* Do I have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the prescribed text?
* Am I able to discuss questions in English relating to the issues, for example characterisation, language features, style, context and issues?
* Am I able to respond personally and creatively in [language] to the prescribed text, using the required text types (letter, diary entry, narrative account, script of a conversation, speech, monologue or interview)?
* Do I have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the prescribed issues?
* Have I developed the skills required to present, explain or justify opinions, ideas and points of view in [language], by writing a short essay, article, script of a talk, formal letter or report?

Remember, you may use monolingual and/or bilingual print dictionaries in the written examination.

## Section I: Response to prescribed text

### General examination specifications for Section I

Section I relates to Objective 2 and is designed to assess your knowledge and understanding of the prescribed text and the relationship of the text to the issues, as well as your ability to respond to the prescribed text through the production of an original text.

| Objectives | Outcomes |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Evaluate, analyse and respond to the text that is in [language] and that reflects the culture of [language]-speaking communities | 2.1 evaluates and responds to text personally, creatively and critically  2.2 analyses how meaning is conveyed  2.3 analyses the social, political, cultural and/or literary contexts of text that is in [language] |

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### Section I: Part A

Part A is worth 15 marks and is designed to assess your ability to respond critically to the prescribed text. You will be required to analyse and evaluate aspects of the prescribed text and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of language features, content, context, how meaning is conveyed, and the relationship between the prescribed text and issues.

You will be given a short extract from the prescribed text. There will be 4-6 questions on the text. Questions will be phrased in English, for responses in English.

#### Criteria for judging performance

In your answers you will be assessed on how well you:

* respond critically to the prescribed text
* analyse how meaning is conveyed
* demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the prescribed text and prescribed issues
* communicate information and ideas in comprehensible English.

You may be required, for example, to:

* identify and explain the plight of a character
* analyse a character
* evaluate the impact of events on one or more of the characters
* comment on a character’s ability to deal with a situation
* comment on the significance of particular linguistic features
* comment on the relationship between an aspect of the text and the prescribed issues
* analyse a character's involvement in an incident in the text
* show an understanding of the linguistic features employed by the author and their impact on the reader
* comment on the style and structure of the text
* comment on a quotation(s) from the text
* evaluate the significance of a character’s words and/or actions
* identify and comment on symbolism within the text
* express and support a point of view
* identify and describe a mood or atmosphere
* comment on the attitude of a character
* show an understanding of how humour is employed
* compare and contrast aspects of one or more prescribed extracts
* comment on the effectiveness of the text in delivering its message
* comment on the impact of the title
* discuss how mood or tone is conveyed through language
* compare and/or contrast the way an issue is dealt with in the text.

#### Preparing for the examination

You should have a thorough understanding of all aspects of each extract of the prescribed text. Familiarise yourself with the content and issues, and consider the message the author/director wishes to convey.

The following are among the questions which may assist you in gaining an insightful understanding of the prescribed text.

For example:

* How do the prescribed issues relate to the prescribed text?
* What message/s does the author/director want to convey? Has the message been conveyed successfully?
* How do the language features and structure of the prescribed text help to deliver the message?
* Why has the title been chosen?
* What is the nature of the relationship between each of the characters?
* How does the author/director make you feel about the characters and what devices do they employ to invoke these feelings?
* How would you describe each of the characters?
* How do the characters react to the situations in which they find themselves?
* Is there any character development in the protagonists? Is the development (or lack of it) significant?
* If you could ask each character five questions, what would they be?
* Does the prescribed text have a climax? Is it effective?
* Are any issues left unresolved at the end of the story?
* What has been the impact on you?

#### During the examination

During the 10 minutes reading time at the start of the examination, you should familiarise yourself with the questions and estimate how much time you will need to give full responses.

During the examination, read each question carefully to ensure your answer is relevant. Be certain to establish whether the question refers to the extract, or to the prescribed text as a whole. Highlighting or underlining keywords may be useful in ensuring your response correctly targets the question.

The questions may require you to show an in-depth understanding which is more than a simple retelling of events. Remember that the prescribed text will have 1 or more key messages and you will need to show that you have formed an interpretation or opinion which you can discuss and support.

If you are asked a question related to the use of language features you should comment on their impact, rather than simply listing them without any explanation.

Use the number of lines as a guide – this is intended to indicate to you the length of a complete response, succinctly expressed. It is important that valuable time is not wasted by repeating the question or giving responses which are longer and more involved than necessary. However, if you do need to write more than the lines allow, you can use the remaining space on the paper or ask for an additional examination booklet.

In determining the depth of your response, you should consider the number of marks allocated to the question. A question worth 5 or 6 marks is likely to require a more perceptive and insightful response, with supporting evidence from the prescribed text.

It is important to remember that this part of the examination must be answered in English. You should take time to review your answers to ensure they are unambiguous and your intention is clear.

It is not usually necessary to supply extensive quotes from the text, unless specifically required by the question. If the question asks you to comment on a quote, you should show that you have a clear understanding of its meaning, by translating or paraphrasing it, or including its meaning in your response. This will ensure your response is clear and to the point, rather than vague and general.

### Section I: Part B

Part B is worth 10 marks and is designed to assess your ability to respond personally and creatively in [language] to the prescribed text.

You will be given a short extract from the prescribed text. The extract will be different from the extract provided in Part A. You will be required to respond to an aspect of the prescribed text by, for example:

* taking the role of a character in the prescribed text
* imagining a hypothetical situation in relation to the prescribed text
* writing a description of an event in the prescribed text from a different perspective.

You will be expected to write a letter, diary entry, narrative account, script of a conversation, speech, monologue or interview of approximately 200 words in [language], or 250 characters in Chinese or 400 *ji* in Japanese.

The task will be phrased in English and in [language], for a response in [language].

Remember, you may use monolingual and/or bilingual print dictionaries in the written examination.

#### Criteria for judging performance

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

* write from a particular perspective in a specified context
* demonstrate an understanding of the prescribed text
* communicate information and ideas clearly and accurately in [language].

A high-level response will demonstrate a perceptive understanding of the prescribed text. The approach taken will demonstrate flair and creativity and will not be a simple retelling of the story.

The response will demonstrate the ability to manipulate language authentically and creatively to meet the requirements of the task.

#### Preparing for the examination

Familiarise yourself with the aspects of the prescribed text, the issues raised and the message the author/director wishes to convey. The response to this question requires you to demonstrate a sound understanding of the prescribed text. A response which is purely creative and does not relate to events in the extract will not fulfil all the criteria.

Consider the viewpoint which could be taken by different characters in response to a variety of situations. In responding to a hypothetical situation, it is important to ensure that this remains consistent with the personalities and actions in the text.

Practise writing a variety of text types. For example, a narrative account might be used to write an alternative ending to a story, a diary entry might allow for the reflections of one of the characters, an interview might allow for a witness to comment on what he/she has seen or experienced, a report may be used to present the viewpoint from an onlooker, and so on.

Attempt as many practice questions as possible. This should increase your confidence and enable you to cope with any question in the examination. Thorough preparation is the key to success.

#### During the examination

You should:

* read the question carefully and plan your response to ensure that you directly address the question
* remember that, although this question requires creative writing, your response must also reflect a good understanding of the story and the characters involved
* ensure that your response flows logically and does not use lengthy quotations from the original text
* write on alternate lines (this is not mandatory, but allows you to review and amend your work legibly)
* avoid the temptation to re-word the question into another question you would prefer – you must address the question as printed on the paper
* allow sufficient time to review what you have written – this is an important part of the writing process and enables errors to be corrected and additions to be made.

Respond personally and creatively, remaining relevant to the question. It is important to avoid including slabs of pre-learned material which may not be relevant and may not fit with the language level in the rest of your response. This can result in a response which is disjointed and difficult to understand.

## Section II: Writing in [language]

Section II relates to Objective 1 and is designed primarily to assess your ability to present and support a point of view about the prescribed issues through the production of an original text in [language].

| Objectives | Outcomes |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Present and discuss opinions, ideas and points of view in [language] | 1.1 discusses attitudes, opinions and ideas in [language]  1.2 formulates and justifies a written or spoken argument in [language] |

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The advice for Section II of the HSC examination for the Stage 6 [Language] Extension course is similar to the advice for the oral section. However, the language used will be more complex and there will be more time to explore and support an argument. Therefore the depth and breadth of the argument in the written section will be greater than for the spoken section.

### Examination specifications

This section is worth 15 marks.

You will be required to give an evaluative response, by presenting and explaining or justifying a point of view. You will select 1 question from a choice of 2 questions. Each question will specify an audience and/or a purpose and/or a context. The questions will be related to the prescribed issues. Both questions will require the same text type.

You will be expected to write a short essay, article, script of a talk, formal letter or report of approximately 300 words in [language], or 350 characters in Chinese or 600 *ji* in Japanese. (Source: [Assessment and Reporting in Extension Stage 6](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/3323c401-be41-41ee-b241-4e79f8a01d02/assessment-and-reporting-in-extension-stage-6.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=))

The tasks will be phrased in English and [language] for a response in [language].

Remember, you may use monolingual and/or bilingual print dictionaries in the written examination.

### Criteria for judging performance

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

* present and explain or justify a point of view
* write text appropriate to context and/or purpose and/or audience
* structure and sequence information, opinions and ideas
* demonstrate control of a range of language structures and vocabulary in [language].

A high-level response will present and develop a sophisticated, coherent argument, discussion or explanation, and be written effectively and perceptively for a specific audience, purpose and context. The response will demonstrate breadth and depth in the treatment of relevant ideas. It will be written with a high level of grammatical accuracy and breadth and sophistication of vocabulary and sentence structure.

### Preparing for the examination

You should familiarise yourself with the prescribed issues. Reading widely on various aspects of the prescribed issues will assist you to increase your range of vocabulary and develop the skills required to present your views. The best responses include sophisticated ideas reflecting a broad understanding of the prescribed issues drawn from a wide knowledge base, rather than a response, which relies on pre-prepared material. Resources such as online magazines, newspapers and blogs will provide access to a variety of up-to-date information and vocabulary.

As in the oral response, you should construct your response by presenting, explaining and/or justifying a point of view. Begin with a brief introduction. This should lead to the body of the text, where the argument is developed and end with a logical, relevant and convincing conclusion. Ensure you practise linking your arguments back to the question at various stages of your response. This is an excellent way of keeping your points relevant, guiding the reader through the development of your ideas. This also prevents your response from becoming long-winded, random or sporadic.

Use language appropriate to text type and audience. For example, in writing a speech, aim to engage the audience and hold their attention using persuasive techniques such as rhetorical questions to connect with the audience and endeavour to make the arguments more interesting by using emotive language.

You should aim to ensure your writing is authentic. The variety of language and expressions you use will reflect the scope of your knowledge and indicate your fluency. A translation from English may be disjointed and is perceived in a negative light.

Aspire to have a sound command of all aspects of the language, as prescribed in the Extension syllabus. A good command of grammatical structures will underpin a good response, ensuring your ideas are well articulated. Creating your own list of vocabulary and expressions will also help give your writing structure and flow.

In preparing for the examination, you should attempt as many practice questions as possible, covering a wide range of topics. This will increase your confidence and enable you to cope with any questions in the examination. Thorough preparation is the key to success to ensure you are able to address any question in the exam. It is important to read your teacher's comments and take on board any advice when your practice essays are marked.

### During the examination

* Read the 2 questions carefully and then choose the question which allows you the most scope.
* Avoid any temptation to take the question and re-model it into another question you prefer – you must address the question as printed on the paper.
* Reflect on the topic you have chosen – make a plan, even if rough, to ensure you keep your answer focused and relevant to the question.
* Write a draft or mind-map to assist you.
* Remain unflustered if faced with a topic you have not anticipated – remember that the questions will be based on the issues you have studied and that, with calm thought, a clear head and planning, you will be able to respond to any question.
* Keep your arguments logical and to the point – do not be tempted to write more complicated [language] than your skills allow as this will not promote good communication and is likely to create a poor impression. The argument presented should be clear and logical, with well-developed ideas and clearly linked examples.
* Know your capabilities – do not include large slabs of pre-learned, complicated [language] which do not address the question or fit with your own level of language.
* Keep your answer relevant – an answer which directly addresses the question will be more impressive.
* Stay calm and don’t change the plan of approach you have practised throughout the year – thorough preparation is the key to success and will hold you in good stead on the day.
* Allow sufficient time to review what you have written – read over your work and check your spelling, language and structures; reflect critically on what you have written and ask yourself if it makes sense – this is an important part of the writing process and enables errors to be corrected and additions to be made.
* Aim for authenticity and use the dictionary judiciously. Avoid the use of anglicisms, and ensure that terminology and idiomatic expressions are relevant to your answers.
* Adhere to the suggested word limit of about 300 words to ensure that the response is neither superficial – too short – nor loosely structured, long-winded or repetitive – too long.