

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students were confident and well prepared for the 2014 Russian written examination. In the Listening and Responding section of the examination, students' well-developed aural and written skills enabled them to identify specific details and descriptive language in order to address the questions. Students also performed well in the Reading and Responding section of the examination.

Students should practise the five kinds of writing (personal, imaginative, persuasive, evaluative and informative) to improve their ability to express themselves coherently. For some students, underdeveloped writing skills prevented them from expressing their ideas and opinions clearly, particularly in Section 3 of the examination.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A – Answer in English

Text 1

Most students received high marks for the questions on Text 1.

Question 1a.

Because the first reader to complete the crossword will win a trip on the Volga River.

Question 1b.

Because Vova has been working hard anyway.

Not all students were able to explain whether the meaning of grandma's proverb *Сделал дело-гуляй смело* is appropriate advice for Vova.

Question 1c.

Both of:

- it is free admission for the students at the university cinema on this day
- *War and Peace* is a homework assignment for Vova.

Text 2

Question 2a.

Both of:

- to learn about Russian traditions and customs
- to see winter and snow.

Most students answered this question correctly.

Question 2b.

All of:

- in Russia, flowers are given to teachers on 8 March and 1 September
- in Russia, New Year's Eve is celebrated more than Christmas
- in Australia, Mother's Day is celebrated.

Question 2c.

Both of:

- primary, middle and high school are usually in one school and one campus in Russia
- Russian students do not know about upcoming tests in advance.

Most students received full marks for this question. Students demonstrated knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary, which helped them to understand the information in the text.

Text 3

Question 3a.

- to deepen mutual understanding
- to learn the culture of human relationships

Question 3b.

Any two of:

- leaders have already met four times during the last few years
- relationships are being developed quite successfully
- communication between Russia and Japan is being intensified.

Part B – Answer in Russian

Text 4

Question 4

Content:

- our restaurant specialises in Russian-style weddings/it gives people the opportunity to celebrate Russian customs and traditions
- the restaurant offers discounts
- the restaurant offers gifts that match the jubilee; for example, Golden, Cotton, etc.
- it appeals to all ages.

Language:

- ‘Come and celebrate with us’ would appeal to the audience as the advertisement language indicates a home-like, friendly and sharing environment.
- it has humour; for example, ‘The longer you live the more expensive the wedding would be.’
- it will be a hit. It would appeal to the audience as it promises that the wedding would be the most successful as the restaurant specialises and is experienced in running similar functions. It will be at a considerable discount, there will be giveaways and will cater for all ages.

This question appeared to be quite challenging for students. Many were unable to explain why the advertisement would appeal to listeners.

Text 5

Question 5a.

One of:

- Baikal is the deepest lake on Earth
- there is more water in it than in the Great Lakes in North America.

Most students received full marks for this question.

Question 5b.

- there are numerous species of plants and animals
- there are lots of fish
- the smallest deer in the world lives there
- it is under threat from poisonous chemical pollution
- the plant was supposed to be closed in 2013
- tourists may have a better understanding of the value of life and beauty on our planet

Most students received full marks for this question by noting why Lake Baikal is of interest to both biologists and environmentalists.

Text 6

Question 6a.

Both of:

- it is a tribute to traditions
- there is a revised new calendar.

Question 6b.

All of:

- visit neighbours
- wish neighbours luck and prosperity
- receive sweets or money.

Most students attempted this question and scored full marks.

Section 2 – Reading and Responding Part A – Answer in English

Text 7

Question 7a.

Consumers regard bread as:

- wealth/prosperity/welcome visitors with bread, easy to obtain, security against hunger, supported life in World War II.

For producers bread is:

- hard/physical/mental work
- the farmer's pride and joy.

Question 7b.

Bread means a top priority; the most important food that supports life.

Students struggled to understand the meaning of the proverb.

Text 8

Question 8

- classical type: they need to be useful, to be loved and respected, to help others, personality lacks confidence, they don't expect a high salary
- boss type: they need to control, egotistical/always want to be number one, have perhaps dreamt about it since childhood
- third type: they cannot delegate, distrustful of others, want to do work themselves because nobody else can do it as well
- advice given: make changes, rest, take up a hobby, work to live rather than live to work

Many students achieved high marks for this question.

Part B – Answer in Russian

The criteria to assess students' performance in this section are:

- understand general and specific aspects of a text by identifying, analysing and responding to information
- convey information coherently (structure, sequence, accuracy and variety of vocabulary, sentence structure) and appropriately (relevance, use of conventions of the text type).

Text 9

Question 9

Students were asked to write a text of a speech, evaluating the positive and negative role of language in human communication. Most students addressed the task successfully, responding to the information and ideas of the text and demonstrating depth in the treatment of the task through the development of relevant information and ideas relating to the text. They demonstrated extensive knowledge and understanding of vocabulary and sentence structure, as well as

the conventions of a speech. Low-scoring students simply copied large amounts of the text, without showing understanding of the question.

Verbs should be taught explicitly so that students do not get confused by English verbs that interfere with the Russian ones. For example, a native speaker would say *следите за тем, что вы говорите* rather than ... *контролируйте, что говорите и вы увидите результаты*.

Suggested answers included:

- the significance of language in communication between people
- the significance of language in learning about different cultures
- language helps people to learn different aspects of life – language can help people communicate, thus helping them to learn more about each other’s life, culture and customs
- language may harm human relationships by cheating and manipulating people – if language is used for manipulation, cheating or betrayal it may harm human relationships
- language may destroy towns, people and civilisation – language may be used for different reasons, not always good ones; for example, declaring war.

Section 3 – Writing in Russian

The criteria to assess students’ performance in this section are:

- relevance and depth of treatment of ideas, information, or opinions
- accuracy and range of vocabulary and sentence structures
- the capacity to structure and sequence response and the capacity to use conventions of the text type.

Question 10

For this question, students had to write an imaginative piece about the adventures of a girl who encountered a black cat on the way to school. Though this was the least popular question, students who attempted it demonstrated their ability to produce a correctly structured response in the form of an imaginative story and showed good understanding of register and style.

Possible points:

- tells a story of the girl’s day
- met a black cat
- at the crossing was splashed by a passing car
- was late to school
- there was no school (the teacher was sick) and everyone went to a cinema except the girl.

Question 11

Students were asked to write a formal letter to the Russian Embassy in Canberra to persuade them that they are the best candidate to receive a particular scholarship. This question was one of the most popular. Students who attempted it generally produced a well-argued letter with considerable depth. The arguments were supported with evidence. Formal letter-writing conventions were observed.

Possible points:

- my great-grandmother was Russian
- in my childhood I read many Russian fairytales
- I am interested in Russian culture
- I dream of visiting Russia
- I would like to have as many friends in Russia as possible in order to learn more about Russian lifestyles
- I will write in my diary regularly about student life in Russia.

Question 12

This question asked students to write a diary entry reflecting on one of the events in their life that contributed to their personal formation and development.

This question was one of the most popular questions. Students generally managed the task well.