



## Oral Component

### GENERAL COMMENTS

The oral examination consists of seven minutes of general conversation followed by a one-minute introduction of the student's Detailed Study and seven minutes of discussion on the Detailed Study. The criteria for assessing the Conversation and the Discussion are essentially the same, but the tasks are different.

The Conversation section is based on very familiar topics designed to test the student's ability to speak Russian in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way. Most students were well prepared for the Conversation section, although there was a small minority who had excellent linguistic skills but had not thought about possible responses or the depth of response they could provide.

The Discussion task is designed to test the student's skills in presenting and exchanging ideas, opinions and information. On the whole, students' knowledge of their Detailed Study was excellent. They were prepared to elaborate on and substantiate their views and demonstrated excellent linguistic skills in an unpredictable situation.

### SPECIFIC INFORMATION

#### Section 1 – Conversation

##### Criterion 1: capacity to maintain and advance the exchange

- capacity to link with assessors
- effectiveness of communication and repair strategies
- degree of support necessary to maintain the exchange

This task required a more natural exchange of ideas as it involved a conversation about the student's personal world; for example, school and home life, family and friends, and interests and aspirations. A number of students approached this as a question and answer interchange and a natural conversation could not be established. Students should rehearse ways of establishing a conversation, seeking clarification and even self-correcting, as well as learning to maintain a conversation about the topics above.

##### Criterion 2: relevance, breadth and depth of information, opinions and ideas

- relevance of information and ideas
- range of information and ideas
- capacity to support/elaborate on ideas/opinions with reasons and examples/evidence/new ideas

Students cannot assume that they will be able to respond spontaneously during the examination just because they speak Russian. They need to think about how they are going to respond and be able to build on comments made by the assessors. Students should be willing to go beyond a simple response by elaborating on ideas and arguing, justifying and defending their views. For instance if asked about their pet, students could communicate their emotional ties to their pet rather than just give a description.

##### Criterion 3: accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

A list of common mistakes is included below. Students should learn the correct vocabulary and grammar for these commonly used words and expressions.



<i>Ошибка (Mistake)</i>	<i>Как правильно (Correct vocabulary and grammar)</i>
<i>Я делаю разные предметы</i>	<i>Я изучаю разные предметы</i>
<i>Мне было мало лет, когда я приехала</i>	<i>Я была маленькой, когда я приехала</i>
<i>Мы любим играть с нашими зверями</i>	<i>Мы любим играть с нашими животными</i>
<i>Кошка любит мявкать</i>	<i>Кошка любит мяукать</i>
<i>На читать нет время</i>	<i>На чтение нет времени</i>
<i>Они ходют в кино</i>	<i>Они ходят в кино</i>
<i>Инженер делает разное изобретение в механике</i>	<i>Инженер изобретает различные механизмы</i>
<i>Читать - это легче, чем написать</i>	<i>Читать легче, чем писать</i>
<i>На плане у меня много путешествовать</i>	<i>Я планирую много путешествовать</i>

**Criterion 4: range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar**

- variety of vocabulary and grammar
- appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar to the context, audience and purpose of the task

Students should acquire a good collection of key vocabulary and sentence structures that will allow them to make comparisons and comments. Although most students used appropriate vocabulary and grammar, they should try to extend their range beyond simple, everyday language. Students should not be afraid to self-correct and ask for clarification if necessary.

**Criterion 5: clarity of expression**

- pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo

Many students used English intonation patterns when speaking Russian. Students also need to take more care with stress, as many common words were mispronounced.

**Section 2 – Discussion**

It is important that teachers and students take into account the ability and interests of the student when selecting a Detailed Study and sub-topic. The topic needs to relate to Russian-speaking communities, contain an issue which can be discussed with assessors and also allow students to express opinions.

Each year there are a number of students who present a biography of a famous Russian or describe the town they came from, usually Odessa. These students often base their study on only one factual source and find it difficult to express their opinions or generate new ideas. They could have more to say if they prepared the topic in a way that allowed for a discussion; for example, by speaking about Odessa as a port city, and giving the advantages and disadvantages of living in this city.

**Criterion 6: capacity to maintain and advance the exchange**

- capacity to link with assessors
- effectiveness of communication and repair strategies
- degree of support necessary to maintain the exchange

The topics and texts chosen need to be appropriate to the student’s language level. Some students can skilfully present pre-learnt material, but do not have the language skills to engage in a free discussion with examiners because the concepts presented in their sub-topic are difficult and the language structures unmanageable. Students could learn some introductory phrases which would make the discussion flow more freely.

**Criterion 7: capacity to present information, ideas and opinions on a chosen topic**

- capacity to support/elaborate on ideas/opinions with reasons/examples /evidence/new ideas

Some students still presented long lists of sources in their introductory statement and some were not even sure of the issues raised in their reading. The introductory statement should be carefully prepared in advance and the students need to articulate their specific focus.

There were still students who had only read one source and, while this is allowed, it is very limiting as it means the students do not usually have sufficient information to discuss two sides of the issue. The Detailed Study results



depended on a good analysis of texts and reflection about issues that could be discussed, incorporating the student's opinions with reasons/examples/evidence/new ideas.

Brainstorming possible questions is important. This allows the student not only to respond with specific answers based on a single source but also to incorporate similar or contrary issues from other sources.

Students still need more practice in comparing and juxtaposing information from various sources, and answering questions such as:

- *Что Вы знали об этом вопросе до того, как начали работать над вашими источниками? И если «да» (что Да??), то как изменилось Ваше мнение? Может быть: И если Вы что-то знали раньше по этому вопросу, то как знакомство с новыми источниками повлияло на Ваше мнение.*
- *Чем различаются эти два (три) источника?*
- *Как эти источники дополняют друг друга?*
- *Чем различаются эти источники?*
- *Какой источник дал вам самую ценную информацию? Обоснуйте.*
- *К каким выводам вы пришли в процессе работы над этим (этими) источником (источниками)?*

### Criterion 8: accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Basic mistakes in grammar should not be made in the introductory statement as this should be pre-prepared. Students often have factual knowledge well prepared; however, they make a lot of mistakes and use inappropriate language when initiating their responses and making comparisons.

Students should look at last year's Assessment Report, as they continue to make the same fundamental mistakes.

<b>Ошибка (Mistake)</b>	<b>Как правильно (Correct vocabulary and grammar)</b>
<i>Аврора стрелнула, но промахнула во дворец</i>	<i>Аврора выстрелила, но промахнулась и не попала во дворец</i>
<i>Видно, что они не имеют поестъ</i>	<i>Видно, что у них нечего есть</i>

### Criterion 9: range and appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar

- variety of vocabulary and grammar
- appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar to the context, audience and purpose of the task

Most students used a very good range of vocabulary, structures and expressions with both simple and complex grammatical constructions. A few grammatical mistakes were made.

### Criterion 10: clarity of expression

Students need to understand that many topics chosen are very complex and there might be differing points of view. The Russian Revolution is still a subject of serious historic research and is controversial. This cannot be explained as 'those blokes were good and the others were bad'. If students do not have the language or the analytical ability to explain such issues, then teachers need to consider selecting simpler and more straightforward topics.

Some of the topics chosen by students this year were:

- *'Детские слезы'. Жизнь бедных детей до революции в России.*
- *Проблемы молодежи в России: наркотики, самоубийства, беспризорничество.*
- *Октябрьская революция: первые дни после революции.*
- *Октябрьская революция: корниловский мятеж.*
- *Майя Плисецкая. Жизнь и творчество.*
- *Октябрьская революция: Троцкий и его соратники.*

When preparing for the oral examination students should:

- clearly identify the similarities or differences of opinion presented in resources chosen for the sub-topic
- select a topic that has varied resources and which allow for various views
- not simplify content to a degree where it cannot be presented in depth
- study a few texts in depth rather than many superficially
- focus on the topic and brainstorm issues that can be raised and discussed with supporting evidence.



Teachers should also examine the marking criteria with their students and draw their attention to the fact that native fluency will not help them attain high grades if they have not met other criteria.

## **Written component**

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

Overall a high standard was achieved by the majority of students, reflecting thorough preparation for the written examination. However, there were more students than usual who misread some questions and answered incorrectly. The handwriting of many students was illegible in both English and Russian. Students have adequate time and space to present clearly written, coherent answers, which is essential to obtaining a high score.

There were still a number of students who ignored instructions and answered in the wrong language. Students need to be encouraged to highlight the words 'answer in RUSSIAN' or 'answer in ENGLISH' on their examination paper. If students ignore these instructions they will not gain any marks for that question.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

#### **Section 1: Listening and Responding**

##### **Part A – Answer in English**

###### **Question 1a.**

- food and diet
- the pros and cons of avocado versus margarine

Not all students realised that this was a two part question and many just gave the answer 'weight loss'.

###### **Question 1b.**

Any three of:

- it's full of vitamins and good fats
- it makes you slimmer, not fatter
- it tastes delicious
- margarine is bad.

###### **Question 1c.**

Any two of:

- joking ('I'll kill you')
- trusting ('right I trust you')
- caring (friend wants to help with dieting)
- colloquial words ('come on').

This question, involving a response to the actual language, proved the most difficult for many students. Few students explained the language adequately. Just writing 'I'll kill you' did not meet the requirements.

###### **Question 2a.**

- Because they may be unreliable/not give an accurate account or (can be true or untrue).
- It can increase your stress/make you more nervous.

###### **Question 2b.**

To advise students on how to cope with/manage stress during examinations.

###### **Question 2c.**

Repeating words such as, 'I can do it. I will do it well.'

Students had to indicate that the positive reinforcement needed to be said repeatedly.



**Question 2d.**

People can imagine themselves in a place where they would feel calm and comfortable; for example, either at the beach or on the grass under a tree in a park.

One of these places needed to be mentioned.

**Question 3**

**Russian Film Festival 2004**

**a) Name your favourite film in the current Russian Film Festival.**

Saturday Fever

**b) What is the theme of this film?**

Teenagers

**c) How did you hear about the festival?**

From Natasha Rostova

**d) Where was the festival advertised?**

On the Internet

**e) Membership number (if appropriate)**

1978

**f) Your full name**

Tanya Nikolaeva

**g) Telephone number**

9557-7755

Common errors included writing Saturday Night Fever in answer to part a., and using the patronymic Nikolaevna for part f.

**Part B – Answer in Russian**

**Question 4a.**

The mother emphasises the words 'today' and 'immediately'.

**Question 4b.**

- take meat out of freezer for dinner
- buy vegetables and make salad

Quite a number of students listed all the things the mother had said rather than focusing on dinner preparation.

**Question 5a.**

She asks to be woken up as she feels as if she is in a dream/asleep. The whole experience is so overwhelming she can not believe it is really happening to her.

A few students did not attempt to answer this question.

**Question 5b.**

Maria is emphasising her right to privacy/discretion.

**Question 5c.**

- She missed her parents, who she did not see for two years.
- She felt socially isolated. The other girls living at the academy were much older than her; she was only seven years old.
- She had nothing in common with the older girls, who were interested in boys while she was still playing with dolls.



**Question 5d.**

- She was extremely competitive, and trained very hard.
- She always wanted to win at all costs\she fights to win.

Students need to be prepared to provide details, for instance: 'Maria may have had the desire to win but without training she could not have been a champion.'

## Section 2: Reading and Responding

### Part A – Answer in English

**Question 6a.**

Three of:

- raised hand for attention or question
- thumb up or down – agreeing or disagreeing
- index finger to one's lips indicates silence
- lowering a head in sadness.

A number of students listed all gestures, whereas they were required to list gestures **other than** greetings.

**Question 6b.**

- Russians – shake hands on meeting
- Chinese – clasp their own hands while greeting others
- Eskimos – knock/tap lightly on the other person's head and shoulder

Diverse and often humorous answers were given for Chinese, usually because students were not specific in their use of language.

**Question 7a.**

If people forget their password, or do not have their password, they only have to laugh or speak in order to log on.

**Question 7b.**

- Microphones pick up a person's voice.
- Software recognises and calculates where the person is by their steps.
- Email access is available anywhere, without people logging on.

**Question 7c.**

The manager would be able to walk anywhere in the building/does not need to be in his office.

Many students provided general answers and did not refer to management.

**Question 7d.**

They are not inclined to laugh as their problems in space are a serious matter of life and death (or extremely serious).

**Question 7e.**

Either of:

- leaked email
- information which is supposed to be confidential and must not be made public.

**Question 7f.**

NASA is forbidden by the US government to pay for Russian support.

Students need to be specific in explaining why NASA's hands were tied.

**Question 7g.**

- The American astronauts do not have the necessary equipment/spacesuits to carry out their duties/repairs.
- The Americans lost a space shuttle, Columbia, and cannot return to earth without using the Russian space shuttle.



- Russia now has a monopoly on transport back to earth and can hold the Americans to ransom; they can demand as much payment in hours worked as they like.
- The Russians have the upper hand in the negotiations which are continuing regarding payment for the loan of their spacesuits.

#### Question 7h.

NASA has many more urgent problems to solve.

Many students gave one word answers where an explanation was required. English still posed a problem for many students, in that they did not grasp the question and were also unable to answer comprehensively. Tasks should be set in class that require English answers. The English and Russian questions should be used when phrasing answers as this focuses the student's answer. Teachers have to train students to underline the key words of a sentence and use these words in their answer.

It was surprising to see students misspell words in their answer when the same word was in the question. Students need to make better use of their dictionaries and be more precise in the use of vocabulary when they need to translate. Colloquial slang, very loose translations and intertwining of English and Russian in an answer are not appropriate.

### Part B – Answer in Russian

The criteria that were used when assessing performance in this section were the students' ability to:

- 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 and sentence structure) and appropriately (relevance, use of conventions of the text type).

The first criterion was handled well by most students. Students who highlighted points and marked them off as they incorporated them generally did better. However, many students found it difficult to demonstrate a range and variety of vocabulary and sentence structures.

Students needed to meet the requirements of a journal entry by indicating a date between 10 and 19 October and using some form of salutation, such as 'Dear Diary'. The journal entry also needed to relate to the letter.

Points to be addressed from the text included:

- commenting on the manager's character; for example:
  - it's synonymous with his name (hard, lack of sympathy)
  - why is he watching TV at work?
- being seen on TV – at the beach and barracking for a beach volleyball team
- responding to:
  - the accusation of collecting sick day money when not sick
  - the statement that you will be sacked
- mentioning tone of letter

Some students wove their responses very cleverly, for example:

*His name describes him well as he is unbending and inflexible...*

*...my twin was at the beach but he will not accept this...*

*How I hate the atmosphere created by my unreasoning boss. I have so much I want to write to him but at the moment I am so upset and angry that I have decided to just write to you my trusted diary...*

Common errors this year included:

- writing the manager a letter, ignoring the instruction to write a journal entry
- not giving a date, or giving an impossible date; for example, a date days or months before the manager's letter had been written
- claiming to be working in Moscow, not Melbourne
- using a formal tone and not addressing the requirement 'express how you feel and how you would respond to your boss if you could be frank with him'.



Much more time needs to be given to the teaching of formal Russian grammar to weaker students. Grammatical errors that were common to Section 2, Part B and Section 3 included:

- using the incorrect form for cases, or completely ignoring case endings
- spelling errors – spelling rules need to be revised, especially following the letters *з, к, х, ж, ш* and *щ*
- incorrectly conjugating reflexive verbs, leaving out soft signs *учиться*
- numerals and the cases they govern – *в этом месяце*
- using the incorrect form of the genitive case after *нет* and *много*
- expressing time with and without prepositions
- adjectival participles *бывшему*
- adjectives of nationality
- punctuation
- incorrectly conjugating common verbs such as ‘to go’ and ‘to travel’
- misspelling basic, commonly used words, such as *теперь, сейчас* and *здесь*.

### Section 3: Writing in Russian

The criteria that were used to assess performance in this section were:

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

Teachers must emphasise the conventions of different kinds of writing and text types and direct students to study the relevant passages in the *Russian VCE Study Design*. Students should be advised to read and underline the requirements of the task—word length, kind of writing, discourse, and content to be addressed—so that they can plan their writing accordingly. Planning not only applies to the structure and tone of the piece as a whole, but also to the structure of sentences. Weaker students should choose topics that lend themselves to simpler sentences.

#### Question 9

Many students chose Question 9, yet very few of these stories were planned or showed the imagination that is required for a story. The desire to be in another place at the same time was attached to a very pedestrian piece of writing. Quite a few students said they had doubled-booked or had ethical dilemmas as to which appointment to abandon or take up. They built up tension because of the difficulty of making a choice and then used the title as the closing phrase.

#### Question 10

Question 10 proved to be a difficult option for some students. Some students showed lack of planning as they presented their personal preference and did not balance an evaluation of the pros and cons for specialised education and general education. In addition, many students omitted an appropriate introduction and conclusion. Some good points mentioned were that:

- a general education: provides a broad world view, allows for more choice in future profession, caters for students who do not know what they want to specialise in, makes a person a better conversationalist, is not required today because students constantly learn from the Internet
- a specialised education: narrows future choices, caters to gifted students who know what they want to be expert in and gives them more depth in their chosen field.

#### Question 11

For Question 11 many students just wrote a descriptive travelogue rather than a speech to persuade fellow students to study Russian and so be in the running to win a scholarship. The tone and the vocabulary chosen to persuade was important for this question. Persuasive arguments that could be used included that knowing another language would provide:

- international links and possibly a well paid job in an international company
- travel opportunities, international friends and business partnerships
- the opportunity of further education opportunities in Russian, where they would be immersed in culture and could fully experience theatre, sport and lifestyle.

Many students wrote a formal report rather than a speech for Question 11.