



Oral Component

GENERAL COMMENTS

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

The Conversation section is based on familiar topics designed to test the student's ability to speak Russian in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way. A very high standard was achieved, and students demonstrated thorough preparation for the examination.

The Discussion section tests the students' skills in presenting and exchanging ideas, opinions and information on the sub-topic chosen for detailed study. This year most students were well prepared, able to carry on the discussion and present their ideas and opinions.

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

The task required a natural exchange of ideas as it involved a conversation about familiar situations, for example, family, school, friends, interests and aspirations. The majority of students demonstrated good capacity to link with assessors, kept the conversation flowing, used effective repair strategies and required minimal support. Some students limited themselves to yes/no or very short answers that made it difficult for them to be involved in the conversation.

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

The majority of students had thoroughly prepared themselves for possible questions and answers and could express their point of view confidently and elaborate on the given topic. Some students relied heavily on rote-learned material and therefore were unable to demonstrate breadth and depth of information.

Criterion 3: accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Overall, students expressed themselves using appropriate grammar and vocabulary. Most students conveyed meanings using the correct style and register and were able to self-correct when necessary. Common mistakes included the following.

Anglicisms, use of English sentence structures

- Фантазия (как жанр книги)
- Как больше она плакала, так больше понимала
- Могу идти в магазин
- Имеем русские традиции
- Тяжело сказать

Endings

- Стать актеры
- По иностранных стран
- Друзья смеяться надо мной
- Я люблю язык моих предки

2008 Assessment Report



- Я смотрю фильмы без переводы

Agreement

- Поиграть в спорт
- Научиться русский язык
- Было день рождение
- Увлекаюсь многих предметов
- Едим на столе
- В этих летних каникулах

Style

- Ложит (Кладет)

Register

- По магазинам болтаемся
- Есть свои мозги (Своя голова на плечах)

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

Most students demonstrated a good knowledge of style and register and a good range of vocabulary, using structures and expressions accurately and appropriately. A few students responded using very basic language.

Criterion 5: clarity of expression

- pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo

As in previous years, many students tended to use English intonation patterns when speaking Russian, for instance, using rising intonation at the end of affirmative sentences. Students experienced minor problems with pronunciation, stress and tempo.

Section 2 – Discussion

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

This year the range of topics chosen by students and teachers was considerably wider. It helped students to express a good range of ideas and opinions as they had researched their topics thoroughly. Individual approach and involvement was also of great benefit. Students were able to address the assessors' questions, come to their own conclusions, draw comparisons and evaluate the situation, and were therefore able to be fully engaged in the discussion.

Some of the topics and sub-topics chosen by students this year were:

Environment

- Загрязнение Байкала
- Авария на Чернобыльской АЭС

Art

- Роль Глинки в развитии передовой музыки
- Анна Павлова - гордость русского балета

Social issues

- Эвтаназия
- Наркотики среди молодежи



Russian history and traditions

- Кухонная утварь
Таков ли русский народ каким его показывают в сказках?
- Почему русские считают Новый Год самым большим праздником?
- Русские традиции: Брак по любви или по расчету?

A number of students were disadvantaged due to the choice of topics. Teachers should advise students against factual and descriptive material and topics that limit discussion. Students who selected topics such as biography, historical monuments, etc. were unable to link with assessors, maintain the exchange, express their personal opinion or present a range of ideas. Even though the topics were thoroughly researched, students did not have the opportunity to scaffold a discussion.

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

As in previous years, the majority of topics for discussion were appropriate to the students' language level. A number of students skilfully presented the material and successfully engaged in a free discussion with the assessors. Only a few students struggled to effectively participate in the discussion as they relied heavily on rote-learned material.

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

Generally, students confidently presented their introductory statement and their specific focus was clearly articulated. Most students were well prepared and able to support their answers with examples and evidence drawn from resources studied. Many students researched their sub-topics very well and were able to present different aspects of the issue.

A limited number of students had insufficient information, which hindered their ability to discuss a point or aspect. The results for this section depend on a good analysis of texts and reflection on issues that can be discussed, incorporating a student's opinion, supported with reasons/examples/evidence/new ideas. Brainstorming for possible questions is important. This allows students not only to respond with specific answers based on a single resource, but also to incorporate similar or contrary information from other resources. Students still need more practice comparing and juxtaposing information from various sources and answering questions such as:

- Почему Вы выбрали именно эту тему для изучения? Чем она Вас привлекла? Что вызвало Ваш интерес?
- Что Вы знали об этой теме до того, как познакомились с Вашими источниками? Как изменилось Ваше мнение (если изменилось) после работы над источниками?
- Как эти источники дополняют друг друга?
- Какой источник дал Вам самую ценную информацию? Обоснуйте.
- После детального изучения источников, к какому выводу Вы пришли и почему?

Criterion 8: accuracy of vocabulary and grammar

Although introductory statements were well presented and grammatically correct, a number of students made occasional mistakes and used incorrect language structures when responding and making comparisons. Some of the mistakes are given below.

Agreement

- Поют о любви

Word formation

- Созданием (правильно 'созданием)
- Тема меня поинтересовала (правильно 'заинтересовала)

Style

- Женщина легкого мыслия



Stress

- Медвед'ей
- На земл'ю

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, sentence structures and expressions with both simple and complex grammatical structures. A few grammatical mistakes were made. Teachers should draw students' attention to the following categories:

- agreement
- cases
- sentence structure
- word formation.

Criterion 10: clarity of expression

The majority of students were thoroughly prepared for this section and did not experience significant problems with pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. In cases when they had to use challenging words such as newly-coined words, terminology, borrowed words, etc. it was evident that they had practised the correct pronunciation and stress. Only some students struggled with intonation and tempo.

Written component

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, the results of the written exam were pleasing. Students were able to analyse texts, arrive at conclusions and summarise. They had developed the skills that are essential to address the demands of the examination paper. Students also demonstrated a solid ability to comprehend diverse and unfamiliar texts and address the questions.

In class teachers should emphasise the conventions of different text types and kinds of writing as students still have difficulties identifying key features relating to these.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Listening and Responding

Part A – Answer in English

Text 1

Question 1a.

Ivanov

Although the text was focused on the surnames of Kuznetsov and Smith, almost all students were able to recognise the correct answer.

Question 1b.

Both of:

- they both will be studying at Moscow University/the same University/the same group
- their surnames mean the same thing but in different languages.

A number of students gave only one answer for this question, whereas it was expected that students gave two answers in order to score two marks.

Question 1c.

Both of:

- it means 'smith'
- it originates from a profession.

2008 Assessment Report



Text 2

Question 2a.

All of:

- the students were divided into two groups
- one group did not sleep at night, the other slept as usual
- both groups were shown 30 words
- a few days later the scientists checked how the students remembered the words.

The majority of students were able to identify all four stages of the experiment.

Question 2b.

All of:

- students in the first group remembered fewer words/students in the second group remembered more words
- negative words were retained better than positive and neutral in the group of students who did not sleep
- one night without sleep is enough to produce a negative impact on the memory.

Quite a few students were unable to provide three answers as expected.

Text 3

Question 3a.

All of:

- sometimes he does not sleep for a few nights in a row
- he once walked 35 km in the snow in Siberia
- sometimes Pavel has to work at night
- sometimes Pavel has to work when everyone else is celebrating.

Though the information was very clear and accessible, not all students were able to comprehend the text and provide all the facts that were expected.

Question 3b.

Urgent/in the next issue

A small number of students were not able to recognise the cultural set phrase 'Срочно в номер!'

Question 3c.

Both of:

- wait and see the fresh newspaper
- to know that millions of people would read your article.

Question 3d.

On the radio/radio studio

Most students provided the correct answer.

Part B – Answer in Russian

Text 4

Question 4a.

All of:

- Pushkin expressed his love for Anna in poems/Pushkin wrote *A Magic Moment I Remember*
- Anna recalled her moments with Pushkin in some detail/as someone observing him closely and knowing him well
- Anna continued to love Pushkin even after he got married/they remained good friends.

Question 4b.

The day when the famous Pushkin monument was being carried to Strastnaya Square, Anna's funeral procession was moving along the same streets.



Although the question was quite challenging, the majority of students handled it very well.

Text 5

Question 5a.

Russian people believe that the motherland begins with a birch growing by your window/close-knit relationship.

One of:

- Sergei Yesenin wrote a famous poem
- artist Arhip Kuingy painted *Birch wood*
- common people compare a young slender girl to a birch.

Question 5b.

They would tie birch branches in a knot.

Most of the students did well in this question.

Question 5c.

Both of:

- three birches to symbolise life
- every fourth person was killed by fascists/symbolised by an eternal flame.

Question 5d.

Russian migrants took young birch plants with them.

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

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

- understand general and/or specific aspects of a text by, for example, comparing, contrasting, summarising, or evaluating and convey(ing) the information accurately and appropriately.

Text 6

Question 6a.

All of:

- it might not be possible to achieve desirable results through official requests/one has to be active, persistent and demanding in Russia
- the lack of a detailed planning habit/Russians believe that it is not possible to foresee everything
- Russian businessmen are known for their loyalty to old connections and partners/Russian businesspeople, unlike their Western partners, take break-ups with old partners badly
- Western businessmen do not hesitate to fire their employees/Russians are often sad when they have to sack their staff
- Russians do not respond to business correspondence.

Most students answered this question correctly, even though it was quite challenging.

Question 6b.

The matter will be delayed or forgotten.

Almost all students were able to understand the meaning of the phrase 'отложить в долгий ящик'.

Question 6c.

To succeed in Eastern-Western business, each must understand the other's ways of dealing.

2008 Assessment Report



Text 7

Question 7a.

Protective

Three of:

- guards house when the family is absent
- scares away thieves
- minds children in parents' absence
- helps find lost animals/members of the family.

Responsive to poor treatment

All of:

- makes noises at night
- drops clothes
- hides things away.

Able to predict the future

All of:

- if the domovoi strokes his master with his furry paw at night the master will be rich
- warm paw means wellbeing
- cold and rough paw means misfortune.

Almost all students performed well, addressing the question confidently.

Question 7b.

Would put old slippers on the floor and say 'here's your sleigh, come with us'

Most students answered this question correctly.

Question 7c.

Magazine article

Two of:

- title
- content
- author
- register (objective third person)
- style
- layout
- illustration/picture.

Following the study design, teachers must instruct their students on how to identify texts types and their features. Though these skills had been tested in previous examinations, it is still a hurdle for a number of students. This year a few students experienced problems addressing the question.

Part B – Answer in Russian

The criteria 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).

All students addressed the task successfully. Almost all students correctly structured the answer in the form of a personal letter.

Section 3 – Writing in Russian

The criteria 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

2008 Assessment Report



- the capacity to structure and sequence responses
- the capacity to use conventions of the text type.

Question 9

Though not many students attempted this question, those who did produced a well-written, informative article.

Question 10

This topic was least popular. Students who attempted the question managed to evaluate positive and negative aspects of computer games and produced well thought-out pieces of writing.

Question 11

This question focused on healthy lifestyle and proved to be the most popular. Almost half of the students attempted this question and performed very well.

Question 12

The imaginative writing on global warming was the second most popular topic, however the average mark was lower than expected. Teachers should allow more time to prepare students for this challenging kind of writing.