



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit**  
**State Examinations Commission**

**LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2010**

**RUSSIAN**

**ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT**  
**HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT**

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## 1. General Introduction

### 1.1 The syllabus

The present Russian syllabus was examined for the first time in 2003. The syllabus is modelled on the Leaving Certificate syllabuses for other modern languages within the Irish post-primary curriculum. The Leaving Certificate in Russian is a two- to three-year *ab initio* course in Senior Cycle. It assumes a preliminary module in Transition Year. The syllabus and examinations are designed for learners of Russian as a foreign language.

The Oral Examination consists of a 15 minute interview which is divided into three sections as follows: General Conversation: narrative; General Conversation: discursive and Discussion of a Project or Picture Sequence. In 2010, the Oral Examinations were conducted between April 12th and 23rd.

The Reading Comprehension and Written Production sections are examined in a two and a half hour examination in June and followed, after a short break, by the Listening Comprehension Test.

This report should be read in conjunction with the examination paper(s) and the published marking scheme(s). These are available on the State Examination Commission website [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie)

### 1.2 Candidature

Table 1 shows the number of candidates sitting Leaving Certificate Russian in the period 2008-2010.

Year	LC candidates	Candidates taking Russian	Percentage of total Leaving Certificate cohort	Ordinary Level candidates	Percentage of total Russian cohort	Higher Level candidates	%
2008	56,023	245	0.4%	15	6%	230	94%
2009	55,557	233	0.4%	19	8%	214	92%
<b>2010</b>	<b>54,481</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>95%</b>

Table 1: Participation in Leaving Certificate Russian (Higher and Ordinary Levels) 2008-2010.

As in previous years the candidates presenting for the Leaving Certificate examination in Russian would appear to fall into four categories:

1. Heritage-speakers from the Russian Federation who speak Russian at home as their language of communication.
2. So-called ethnic Russians, who lived in countries of the former Soviet Union before coming to Ireland (mainly Russian-speaking minorities from the Baltic States, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and the Central Asian States)

3. Candidates mainly from the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and some other countries of the former Soviet Union (Moldova, Georgia, Armenia) for whom Russian is the second or third language.

4. A very small group of Irish candidates or candidates from mixed Irish/ Russian families.

There is no evidence of candidates presenting for the Leaving Certificate in Russian who have learned Russian *ab initio* in the Irish post-primary sector.

This profile plays out in a number of ways. It accounts for the exceptionally high level of attainment in receptive skills: listening comprehension is the skill with the highest level of proficiency, closely followed by reading comprehension. Oral skills are considerably more developed than writing skills. Candidates' levels of attainment in cultural awareness are more than satisfactory; their ability to manipulate the language appropriately (using number and case; tense and aspect) is good; whereas their language awareness – and understanding of metalinguistic terms, such as parts of speech – is almost universally weak.

## 2. Oral Examination

### 2.1 Introduction

The Leaving Certificate Russian Oral Examination is in its present format since 2003. The examination is common to Higher and Ordinary Level candidates, and carries 25% of the overall total for Higher Level candidates and 20% for Ordinary Level candidates.

There are **3 sections** to the oral examination, in the following order:

Section 1:	General Conversation: narrative	(4-5 minutes)	(40 marks)
Section 2:	General Conversation: discursive	(4-5 minutes)	(30 marks)
Section 3:	One of the options below:	(4-5 minutes)	(30 marks)
	(a) Project		
	(b) Picture Sequence.		

#### **Section 1: General Conversation: narrative and descriptive**

The first section focuses on general conversation about the candidate's life and interests. Typically, candidates are asked to answer at least 7 questions about subjects such as their family home, their neighbourhood, their school, their leisure pursuits, holidays, and plans for the future.

#### **Section 2: General Conversation: discursive**

The second section focuses on the candidate's awareness of Russian culture. Candidates are presented with a list of topics related to Russian culture, history, or contemporary life. They must choose one of these subjects for discussion. The list

includes subjects such as a Russian book or film, a favourite Russian artist, musician, or famous personality. Candidates are also given an option to present a comparative analysis of everyday life in Ireland and Russia. Again, candidates are asked approximately 7 questions relating to the chosen topic.

### **Section 3: Project/ Picture Sequence**

In the third section candidates are given two options. They may choose to present a written project or they may opt for a picture sequence.

Candidates who choose to do an oral presentation of their project are asked to talk about the project without interruption for 2-3 minutes. The examiner will then ask the candidate up to 3 questions relating to the content of their project or ask for an explanation of the process involved in doing the project. The examiner will also invite the candidate to explore some general points arising from the presentation of the project.

Candidates who opt for a picture sequence are requested to select one of 5 picture sequence cards. They are given one minute to prepare a story and then are required to tell the story, by talking without interruption for approximately 3 minutes. Following the narration, candidates are asked 2 or 3 questions about the picture story and are invited to express their opinion on wider or more abstract issues arising from the exploration of the picture sequence.

Marks in all three sections are awarded for fluency and ability to engage in and to sustain conversation, for linguistic accuracy, for competence in using a wide range of structures and vocabulary as well as for cultural knowledge.

### **2.2 Performance of candidates**

272 candidates from 172 schools sat the oral examination in Russian in 2010. The number of candidates has increased considerably compared with 2009, when 229 candidates were registered:

As in previous years the majority of the 272 candidates who sat the Russian oral examination in 2010 had native or near-native competence, so the standard of their oral Russian was very high. Candidates performed very well in all three sections of the oral examination with an average 90-95 marks awarded.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Marks</b>	<b>Number of candidates</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>85-100</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>70-84</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>55-69</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>40-55</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>25-39</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 2: Performance in Leaving Certificate Russian Oral Examination 2010.

## **2.3 Analysis of candidate performance**

### **Section 1: General Conversation: narrative**

In general, candidates were at ease and were able to speak freely about themselves and their lives. On the whole they demonstrated the ability to use an impressive range of lexis and idioms. A very small less successful group of candidates tended to be hesitant using numbers (especially in genitive and instrumental cases), correct forms of degrees of comparison and some verbs of motion.

### **Section 2: General Conversation: discursive**

The second part of the examination proved to be the most challenging part of the examination, as some candidates were unprepared to speak on topics related to Russia and to then discuss them with the examiner.

Some candidates, especially from the second and third group referred to under 1.2 above had a very limited and fragmentary knowledge of contemporary Russian life (a society in transition, health and lifestyle, the generation gap, ethnic minorities, the place of Russia on the world stage) and were unable to show any depth of knowledge in relation to those topics. Some candidates were also reluctant to discuss a piece of literature (novel, short story, poem, play or extracts from these) or a film in Russian. They had fairly good understanding of the questions asked by the Examiners but were poorly equipped with a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary as well as a range of abstract language that can be used when talking about general area studies topics. Complexity of response was very basic and sometimes it was very difficult for the Examiners to keep conversation going.

Many candidates felt much more confident and comfortable describing the similarities and contrasts between everyday life and culture in Ireland with their native country (Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) as opposed to Russia.

Recurring mistakes:

- use of English lexicon and idioms
- incorrect stress in some Russian words (place names, personal names)
- some candidates got mixed up with the verbs of motion like *to go, to walk, to move*.

### **Section 3: Picture Sequence/ Project**

Three tasks are required in this section.

- Uninterrupted narration of picture sequence, which can be in present tense.
- Explanation, when the candidates are asked to explain some aspects of the picture sequence which were not clear or not dealt with in the telling of the story.
- Opinion on related wider issue or theme.

The picture sequence section did not pose any serious difficulty. The majority of candidates spoke clearly, demonstrating a firm grasp of a wide range of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy and diversity of grammatical structures.

### **Uptake of project option**

As evident from the table below only 29 candidates of 272 opted for a project in 2010.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total candidate number</b>	<b>Number of candidates taking project option</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>29</b>
2009	229	7
2008	240	13
2007	187	20
2006	179	7

Table 3: Numbers taking project option in Leaving Certificate Russian Oral Examination 2006 - 2010.

There were about 20 projects presented which were directly related to Russian history, culture and modern Russian society. Among the topics chosen were: “Battle at Borodino during the 1812 Russian French war”, “Moscow-Capital of Russia”, “Famous Russian Footballers”, “Sports in Russia”, “Russian traditions”, “Russian car industry”, “Great Patriotic War and my family”, “Lake Baikal in Siberia”, “M. Bulgakov”, “A Griboedov”, “The Fate of the last Russian Tsar’s family”, “Russian national craft - a Dymkovsky toy”.

Some of the project presentations were well prepared and showed candidates’ excellent communication skills.

## **2.4 Conclusions**

- The majority of candidates showed impressive communication skills and the ability to deal with a wide range of issues in general conversation. They demonstrated a wide range of relevant information and opinions and displayed a virtually faultless range of lexis and idioms.
- The Russian of many candidates, though fluent and idiomatic, is being influenced by English lexical items, syntactic structures and idiomatic constructions.

## **2.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students**

### **Recommendations to Teachers**

As Russian is not taught in the majority of the schools in Ireland these recommendations are addressed to school Principals:

- Inform candidates well in advance about the exam structure and topic/options for conversation, which they can choose. Many students commented during the Examiner’s *Introduction Session* that they had not been advised of the

examination requirements and were unaware of the examination structure and procedure.

- If it is feasible, try to provide a qualified language teacher who will prepare students to sit their examination in Russian. If not, try to organize at least one mock oral examination with a qualified Russian-speaking teacher from another school.
- If Russian is offered in school, consider investing more time on the Picture Sequence and General Conversation: discursive section.

### **Recommendations for Students:**

It is recommended that students

- familiarise themselves properly with the exam structure. Good and systematic study of Russian language and Russian Area Studies is essential
- equip themselves with a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary as well as a range of structures that can be used with any topic
- watch more Russian films, news and educational programmes (Russian satellite TV channels are widely available in this country) and use a wide range of Russian language internet sources
- speak about general topics at greater length and respond to all questions in as full and detailed a manner as possible. Avoid the use of short, undeveloped answers which restrict communication and which could allow the examination to become a pointless interrogation by the Examiner with monosyllabic answers from students
- take a greater interest in Russian culture and be prepared and willing to discuss a selected topic related to Russian history, culture and the Russian way of life.
- consider availing of the project option in the examination. The project option presents a very good opportunity to demonstrate the depth of a student's knowledge in both cultural awareness and language proficiency.

### 3. Ordinary Level

#### 3.1 Introduction

The Ordinary Level Leaving Certificate Russian examination has been examined since 2003. In 2010 fourteen candidates or just below 5% of the total candidature for Russian sat the Ordinary Level examination.

The Ordinary Level examination has four main components:

Oral production	80 marks =	20%
Listening comprehension	100 marks =	25%
Reading comprehension	160 marks =	40 %
Written production	60 marks =	15%

#### 3.2 Performance of candidates

The following table shows the percentage of candidates achieving each grade in the Ordinary Level Russian examination in the period 2008-2010:

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2008	15	73.3%	26.7%	0.0%	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2009	19	63.2%	15.8%	5.3%	84.2%	10.5%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%
<b>2010</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>35.7%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>71.4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>21.4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>

Table 2: Grade outcomes in Leaving Certificate Russian (Ordinary Level) 2008-2010.

The overall standard of candidates presenting for the Ordinary Level is dropping, as reflected in the decrease in the number obtaining ABC (and As in particular) and the marked increase in the number of candidates obtaining EFNG grades.

#### 3.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

##### 1. Oral Production: 80 marks (20%)

A comprehensive account of the functioning of the oral component appears at the beginning of this report.

##### 2. Listening Comprehension: 100 marks (25%)

All parts are equally weighted (25 marks). The quality of the answers on this section of the paper was significantly better than on the written papers.

Of the thirteen candidates who presented listening papers, nine scored a mark of at least 75 out of 100, demonstrating that on the whole they have very good listening skills. Three candidates scored full marks, and three scored 95 out of 100.

Those candidates who did not perform so well lost marks by not attempting questions or by providing information that was not being elicited in the question.

	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4
Average mark obtained, expressed as %	72%	74%	81%	74%
Maximum marked obtained	25/25	25/25	25/25	25/25
Minimum mark obtained	0	0	0	0
No of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 14)	7 (50%)	5 (36%)	9 (64%)	6 (43%)
No of candidates obtaining minimum marks (N 14)	1	1	1	1

Table 4: Analysis of performance in the Listening Comprehension at OL (2010)

The candidate who obtained 0 did not attempt the paper.

### **Written Language Paper (15%)**

The Written Language paper consisted of two sections. Section I tests the candidates' comprehension skills; Section II tests the candidates' cultural awareness and their ability to express themselves in Russian.

### **Reading Comprehension (40%)**

The comprehension tasks in Section I include reading advertisements and information brochures about a holiday resort and a club in Moscow (A + B); matching school textbook covers with the appropriate publisher's information (C); completing an interview with a young film star by inserting appropriate question words in the spaces (D) and a text about Russian students on working holidays in the USA (E).

Tasks include understanding explicitly stated information, scanning to locate specifically required information on a single point or more than one point and interpreting the text by using knowledge of the world (A); skimming to obtain the gist of the text and distinguishing the main idea from supporting details (B); understanding/expressing relations between part of the text through lexical and grammatical cohesion devices (C) and extracting salient points to summarise an idea/topic in a text and interpreting text by making inferences and integrating information within the text with candidates' own experience (D). In Section 1 candidates' language awareness was also tested: they were asked to find examples of various parts of speech and words of specified gender and number.

(a) Information retrieval

On the whole candidates scored very well on this section. Marks were usually only lost when questions were not attempted at all. When questions were attempted, most candidates showed a very good ability to retrieve and present the necessary information.

(b) Mix and match

The results of this question were generally very good, with candidates once again demonstrating that they have highly developed receptive skills. Six out of the twelve candidates who presented written papers scored full marks in this section. Another four candidates scored between 32 and 38 out of 40.

(c) Comprehension

The comprehension section which tests receptive skills was generally very well answered. The quality of the candidates' English was occasionally an issue here, as candidates could not quite express what they needed to in a comprehensible enough manner. Marks were also lost where candidates failed to provide enough details in their answers, or when certain questions were not attempted at all.

	<b>Information retrieval (Advertisements and information brochures)</b>	<b>Mix and Match (textbook covers and publishers blurb)</b>	<b>Comprehension: working holidays in the USA</b>
Average mark obtained, expressed as %	70%	72%	66%
Maximum marked obtained	59/60	40/40	40/40
No of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 14)	1	6	3

Table 5: Analysis of performance in reading comprehension tasks, Ordinary Level, 2010

As can be seen from the table above, candidates demonstrated a good understanding of written Russian. The more the Russian is contextualized with visual prompts or provided in short nominal phrases, the better the performance. The longer sections of continuous prose in the comprehension question were more challenging. Three candidates, nonetheless, obtained maximum marks.

(d) Structuring discourse

The structuring discourse section was less well answered, with only two candidates receiving full marks. It is difficult to know why this section was answered so poorly, as the candidates on the whole showed very good receptive skills in previous questions. It could be that they did not read each question carefully enough and therefore concluded that in most questions there was only one question word that would be suitable.

Average mark obtained, expressed as %	53%
Maximum marked obtained	20
No of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 14)	2

Table 6: Analysis of performance in structuring discourse, Ordinary Level, 2010

In Section II (A) candidates were required to supply three details in 3-5 sentences on two of eight topics. Candidates were permitted to choose whether to reply in English, Irish or Russian. Marks are awarded for relevant content and textual coherence. The topics were very general and were loosely based on material from Section I.

### Cultural awareness

The results of this section were quite varied. Some candidates showed an excellent knowledge of the particular topics and an ability to present the facts clearly and logically, whereas others wrote very short pieces that contained very few facts but many value judgments, for which it was not possible to award marks. For example, when answering on Russian music or Russian cinema, some candidates answered ‘I love Russian music’ or ‘Russian cinema is the best’, statements which cannot be regarded as factual details in a cultural awareness topic. It could be that the candidates did not read the English instructions to this question carefully enough.

The most popular topics selected by candidates were ‘Russian music’, ‘How Russians like to spend their free time’, and ‘Moscow yesterday and today’.

Candidates selected the following cultural awareness topics.

Как россияне проводят свободное время (How Russians spend their free time)	5
Где и как россияне любят проводить отпуск (Where and how Russians like to spend their holidays)	3
Москва вчера и сегодня (Moscow yesterday and today)	4
Система школьного образования в РФ (Primary and/or post-primary education in the Russian Federation)	1
Российское кино (Russian cinema)	2
Российский театр (Russian theatre)	0
Российская музыка (Russian music)	6

Table 7: Selection of Cultural Awareness topics, Ordinary Level, 2010.

Four candidates answered this question in Russian; seven candidates answered this question in English; three candidates did not attempt the question.

#### 4. Written Production

In Section II (B) candidates had to choose one of three topics on which to write an essay in Russian. One was an interview, one a letter to a friend, one a review of a book of their choice. Marks are awarded for content, expression and textual coherence.

Writing is the most challenging component of the Ordinary Level papers. As the table below indicates, the average mark obtained by the 14 candidates was 47%; if, however, one discounts the 5 non-responses the average mark rises to 72%.

There was a lot of variation in how candidates performed in this section. Some candidates provided all the required information in accurate, fluent and idiomatic Russian, as evidenced in the following extract. (Indeed this candidate, though his/her writing is not flawless, could have presented for the Higher Level and would have achieved a high grade)

*e-mail*

*Привет дорогая моя,*

*Решила написать тебе про мой вчерашний вечер. Помнишь я тебе рассказывала про новых однокурсников? Ну, вот с ними вчера провели замечательный вечер. Они пригласили меня и моих друзей пойти с ними поиграть бильярд и так просто посидеть за столиком. В целом я рада что я вышла с ними, скучно не было совсем. Мы поиграли, посидели и разошлись по домам с мыслью повторить этот вечер. Мне очень понравилось и в следующий раз приглашу тебя сюда и сама убедишься что с ними очень весело. Довстречи, К\**

*Content: 26*

*Textual cohesion: 6*

Some candidates struggled to express the required information but displayed that they had read the question, and others wrote answers that were too short and could not be given many marks for content, expression or textual coherence.

The following extract illustrates an attempt at writing where the candidate fails to fulfill the task as required. Only one of the tasks is attempted and, despite the fact that the candidate did write 38 words, the content mark is necessarily low.

1. Write an interview (4-5 questions and answers) with a person you admire.

Include:

- where he/she is from
- when and where you met him/her
- what he/she does
- why you admire him/her

*— Здравствуйте меня зовут К\**

- *Привет меня зовут А\*. Мы будем говорить о тебе хорошо?*
- *У меня 20 лет и я иду школе.*
- *У тебе нада сказать с какой страной ты родился? [C3]*
- *Нет проблем я из Бразил. [C2]*

Average mark obtained, expressed as %	47%
Maximum marked obtained	30
Minimum mark obtained	0
No of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 14)	2
No of candidates obtaining minimum marks (N 14)	5

Table 8: Analysis of performance in Guided Writing, Ordinary Level, 2010.

### Selection of topics/genres

Write an interview (4-5 questions and answers) with a person you admire.	3
Write a card, letter or e-mail to a friend telling them about an evening out with a group of friends.	4
Write a review of a book you have read.	2

Table 9: Selection of topics in Guided Writing, Ordinary Level, 2010.

Five candidates did not attempt this section.

### 3.4 Conclusions

- The standard at Ordinary Level is varied. Several candidates who scored high Bs or As would probably have been able to do well on the Higher Level paper, whereas other candidates did not attempt enough questions to pass the paper, or did not present either the listening or the written component.
- On the whole, candidates performed better at the questions which require receptive skills than those involving production, suggesting that they have been exposed to quite a large amount of written and spoken Russian, but may not have learned how to write the language. Others have not yet achieved a good enough level of English to answer some questions satisfactorily.

### 3.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

To teachers:

- The best advice teachers can give to students is that they should attempt every question. In most cases where candidates left certain questions blank, they showed in the questions that they did answer that they have a relatively good

knowledge of Russian and therefore would be able to get more marks elsewhere if they even attempted to answer.

- Students should be encouraged to read the questions carefully to ensure that they are providing the required information and enough details.
- Teachers could also suggest to their students who have some experience in writing Russian that they attempt a Higher Level paper from a previous year (available on [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie)) in order to check if they have sufficient knowledge to take the examination at Higher Level.

To students:

- As above, students should attempt every question, read each question carefully, and familiarize themselves with both Higher Level and Ordinary Level papers from previous years to ensure that they are sitting the most appropriate level for their ability in the language. Several candidates showed superb receptive skills, in both the listening and reading sections, which suggests that they have been exposed to a lot of spoken and written Russian during their lives.
- Students should request native speaker family members or friends to help them practice writing even basic texts, so as to help improve their grades significantly. Examples of the type of texts required in the Russian examination can be accessed on the website of the State Examinations Commission [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie).

## 4. Higher Level

### 4.1 Introduction

The Leaving Certificate Higher Level syllabus was examined for the first time in 2003. The Higher Level examination has four main components as follows:

- Oral production 100 marks = 25%
- Listening comprehension 80 marks = 20 %
- Reading comprehension 120 marks = 30 %
- Written production 100 marks = 25%

### 4.2 Performance of candidates

The percentage of candidates achieving each grade in the Leaving Certificate Higher Level Russian examination from 2008 to 2010 is indicated on the following table:

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2008	230	78.7%	12.2%	6.5%	97.4%	2.2%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
2009	214	77.6%	12.6%	4.2%	94.4%	2.3%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%
<b>2010</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>72.4%</b>	<b>16.2%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>97.1%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>

Table 10: Grade outcomes in Leaving Certificate Russian (Higher Level) 2008-2010. (Grade data represent percentages.)

It is significant to note the percentage of candidates obtaining grade A is slowly decreasing, whilst the percentage obtaining grades B and C is increasing. The overall percentage obtaining ABC is reasonably stable across the above three years.

The percentage of students obtaining grade D remains very low and constant.

The percentage obtaining EFNG is so small as to be statistically of no significance.

### 4.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

#### **Oral Production: 100 marks (25%)**

A comprehensive report on the oral component appears at the beginning of this report.

#### **Listening Comprehension: 80 marks (20%)**

The Listening Comprehension examination consisted of four parts. All parts had to be attempted and answered in English. There was no penalty where candidates answered correctly in Russian.

The standard of the listening comprehension answers remains extremely high. Numbers pose difficulties in some cases. Many candidates did not read the question properly and supplied correct but irrelevant information (which could not be awarded marks). Fewer candidates than in previous years answered in Russian.

The average mark for each of the sections was as follows:

Section I	Section II	Section III	Section IV
News in brief	Interview	Interview	Advertisement
92.71%	93.89%	93.25%	93.14%

Table 11: Performance in Listening Comprehension, Higher Level, 2010.

The number of candidates obtaining full marks was particularly high (N=272)

	Section I	Section II	Section III	Section IV
	News in brief	Interview	Interview	Advertisement
No of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 272)	155	168	154	186
% of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 272)	57%	62%	57%	68%

Table 12: Candidates obtaining maximum marks in the Listening Comprehension, Higher Level, 2010.

This high level of achievement in listening skills is further evidence of the very high level of proficiency in language skills which do not necessarily translate into literacy skills.

### Written Language paper

The Written Language paper consists of two sections. Section I tests the candidates comprehension skills; Section II tests the candidates knowledge and understanding of grammar and their language use in extended writing. One of the writing exercises also tests cultural awareness.

### Reading Comprehension: 120 marks (30%)

All candidates attempted the reading comprehension parts of questions 1 and 2, with generally very good results. Candidates showed an excellent ability to retrieve information and express it in English. The quality of English was at times relatively poor, but only on rare occasions did it impede communication.

	<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Section 2</b>
Average mark obtained, expressed as %	90%	92%
Maximum marked obtained	38/38	40/40
Minimum mark obtained	0/38	0/40
No of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 272)	113 (42 %)	143 (53%)
No of candidates obtaining minimum marks (N 272)	1	3

Table 13: Performance in Reading Comprehension, Higher Level, 2010.

As the above table indicates, more candidates perform slightly better in Section 2 when they are asked to obtain the gist of the text, to distinguish the main idea from supporting details and to follow the thread of a text, extracting salient points to summarise/ synthesise an idea/topic in the narrative. In Section 1 candidates are required to scan to locate specifically required information on a single point or more than one point.

#### Section 1

Some candidates did not give 3 details where required.

#### 2.i

Only a small number of candidates gave 'a hare' in their answer, most gave 'rabbit' or 'bunny'; 'donkey' caused problems for some who gave 'horse' in their answer.

A few candidates included the information that 'the heroine met a wolf on the way to her granny's', in addition to other animals. One candidate answered 2.ii about her reaction to meeting the wolf.

#### 2.ii and 2.iii

There was some overlapping of information from some candidates but most candidates had little difficulty scoring full marks and gave plenty of detail.

#### 3.i and 3.ii

These questions posed no major problems and were generally well answered.

#### 4.

Candidates had no difficulty scoring 6 marks here. Most gave more detail than required and, as a result, had difficulty finding space to write the information.

The cultural awareness part of Question 1 proved difficult for many candidates. These candidates did not interpret the question correctly and instead of presenting details from the text for which they could get marks, they included elements from the traditional version of 'Red Riding Hood' that were not present in this newer version. It was difficult to award marks for this. A very small number of candidates seemed to notice the indefinite article in the question. Candidates were asked to say what details of the

text reminded them of a traditional fairy tale, but the vast majority of candidates answered referring to ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ only.

### Language awareness

The language awareness sections of both questions 1 and 2 were where many otherwise excellent candidates lost marks. Several candidates did not even attempt to provide the nouns, adjectives and verbs required by the question.

	Language awareness Question 1	Language awareness Question 2
Average mark obtained, expressed as %	34%	75%
Maximum marked obtained	12/12	10/10
Minimum mark obtained	2/12	0/10
No of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 272)	6 (2%)	19 (7%)
No of candidates obtaining minimum marks (N 272)	144 (53%)	4 (1%)

Table 14: Performance in Language Awareness, Higher Level, 2010.

Very few candidates got full marks (2%) in this question. Candidates often provided verbs when asked for nouns, and nouns when asked for adjectives, suggesting that they are not familiar with these terms in English and that they have not had any practice identifying them in Russian.

The following sample answer illustrates the challenges candidates are having with this question: this candidate is able to identify nouns (as a part of speech), but not verbs or adjectives; he/she has a poor understanding of gender and case.

Task	Word supplied	Description of word supplied
Give an example of a feminine noun in the instrumental case:	<i>бабушке</i>	Feminine noun in dative singular form
Give an example of a feminine noun in the dative case	<i>волков</i>	Masculine noun in genitive plural form
Give an example of a reflexive verb	<i>она</i>	Personal pronoun (feminine)
Give an example of a masculine noun in the genitive case	<i>кепоцкы</i>	Incorrectly transcribed feminine noun in genitive case
Give an example of a	<i>сказал</i>	Past tense verb

feminine adjective in the accusative case		
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Table 15: Exemplar of Language Awareness, Higher Level, 2010.

The language awareness part of question 2 proved less challenging, though very few candidates provided the correct infinitives of *выбрались* and *создалось* because they omitted the reflexive particles at the end. Fewer candidates than in previous years supplied the infinitives in the wrong aspect, however. When it came to providing words related to swimming, most candidates performed well. Because it was not actually specified that the words had to come from the text which candidates had just read, examiners were instructed to accept any word that conceivably belonged to an appropriate semantic group.

### Structuring discourse

Candidates were asked to match questions with appropriate answers from an interview with the organizers of an English-language summer camp.

Overall the results for this were excellent. The majority of candidates (71%) got full marks.

Average mark obtained, expressed as %	91%
Maximum marked obtained	20/20
Minimum mark obtained	0/20
No of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 272)	194 (71%)
No of candidates obtaining minimum marks (N 272)	4 (1%)

Table 16: Performance in Structuring Discourse, Higher Level, 2010.

### Grammar

Candidates were required to put words into the correct form. On the whole this exercise was answered relatively well, though few candidates got full marks because they spelt *месяцев* as *месяцов*.

Average mark obtained, expressed as %	79.93%
Maximum marked obtained	30/30
Minimum mark obtained	0/30
No of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 272)	86 (32%)
No of candidates obtaining minimum marks (N 272)	4 (1%)

Table 17: Performance in Grammar, Higher Level, 2010.

### Written production

In general the standard of the writing exercises was extremely high. Even in cases where there were frequent spelling errors, the Russian used was generally very idiomatic and fluent, and it was clear that most, if not all of the candidates, were either people for whom Russian is their mother tongue (L1) or had grown up in a context where Russian was often heard and who have therefore reached an advanced level of proficiency in Russian as an L2.

	<b>Cultural awareness</b>	<b>Guided writing</b>
Average mark obtained, expressed as %	89%	86.30%
Maximum marked obtained	30/30	40
Minimum mark obtained	0/30	0
No of candidates obtaining maximum marks (N 272)	138 (51%)	132 (49%)
No of candidates obtaining minimum marks (N 272)	11 (4%)	21 (8%)

Table 18: Performance in Written production, Higher Level, 2010.

A significant number of candidates did not attempt the writing exercises:

	<b>Cultural awareness</b>	<b>Guided writing</b>
Number of candidates who did not attempt the writing question	11 (4%)	21 (8%)

Table 19: Non-participation rates in Written Production, Higher Level, 2010.

The most popular cultural awareness questions were 'How Russian schoolchildren spend their summer holidays' and 'The Russian language in Ireland'; the most popular guided writing questions were the narrative topics 'Write an account of a dream that came true' and 'Write about an episode from your childhood when you went to visit a relative' (see following table).

The number of candidates answering each of the cultural awareness questions:

Как русские школьники проводят летние каникулы (How Russian schoolchildren spend their summer holidays)	45%
Русская народная культура (Russian folk culture)	4%
Пионерская организация (The Pioneer organisation)	0
Иностранные языки в Российской Федерации (Foreign languages in the Russian Federation)	3
Вузы в Российской Федерации (Third level education in the Russian Federation)	1
Спорт в Российской Федерации (Sport in the Russian Federation)	14%
Отдых в Российской Федерации (Leisure in the Russian Federation)	7%

Русский язык в Ирландии (The Russian language in Ireland)	25%
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Table 20: Selection of Cultural Awareness Topics, Higher Level, 2010.

The number of candidates answering each of the guided writing question:

LETTER	Write a letter to book a place in a summer school.	12%
NARRATIVE	i. Write an account of a dream that came true.	32%
	ii. Write your version of a famous fairy tale.	6%
	iii. Write about an episode from your childhood when you went to visit a relative.	31%
DISCUSSION	i. Is English enough?	3%
	ii. Should animals be kept in confinement for our amusement?	5%
	iii. School holidays are too long!	4%

Table 21: Selection of Guided Writing topics, Higher Level, 2010.

The most frequent spelling errors were confusing и with ы, writing что as што, not leaving a space between не and the verb in negative forms, and mixing up the letters и and у. Soft signs were often left out of infinitives and second person singular verbs, and sometimes inserted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form.

The following extracts from the guided writing exercise illustrate why the category of Lower Accuracy in the marking scheme is useful with this cohort of candidates. This category is applied where expression is very fluent, with a high degree of lexical, syntactic and idiomatic variety but where there are serious problems with basic accuracy (spelling, word boundaries + inflectional morphology)// errors in every 2nd or 3rd word.

*Кагда я был малынькым я зезділ к бабушке в село. Я ездил туда на машине, дарого была очен плахои патамушта никто нечинит ее. Мы ехали тудо окало другиих малинких сел. Ми астанавлівалис штоби набрат чучуть води на дарагу ...*

*Меня завут А. Зеву я в Москве и очен силно овашаю летние коникулы и мне очень хочелос поступит в вашу летнюю школу ... Мне очен хочелос поступи к вам потамухто инцаресно ?овиц в другои строне, виуциц культуру, посмотрец на людеиь. Я оцен ловлу пуццествовац по разим странам. Зная что это школа в Англий даст мне возмазнаст выуциц английски ёзык, которь прегодица мне в школе.*

Content marks were lost when candidates failed to include one or more of the points listed on the examination paper, or where the answer was too short.

In the cultural awareness section it was sometimes difficult to award content marks in the ‘Russian language in Ireland’ option, as candidates spoke only of their own observations and impressions and did not supply factual details, as requested in the question rubric.

The following two answers illustrate the kind of response that is expected and where/how content marks are awarded:

*Как русские школьники проводят летние каникулы?*

*В России школьники всех возрастов выходят на каникулы в конце мая [C1]. Многие из них до лета покупают путевки в лагеря [C2]. Некоторые из школьников едут на дачу [C3] к своим бабушкам и дедушкам. Только единицы остаются в городе на летних каникулах [C4]. В лагере есть возможность найти новых друзей [C5] и так же разные развлечения и мероприятия [C6]. Можно так же и провести хорошее время на даче. Встретиться со своими друзьями, сходить на речку [C7] порыбачить или искупаться.*

*Русский язык в Ирландии*

*Русский язык в Ирландии считается одним из самых широкоиспользуемых [C1]. За последние годы в Ирландию прибыло очень много иностранцев [C2]: большая доля этих иностранцев прибыло из центральной и западной Европы [C3]. Большинство этих стран было когда-то под влиянием СССР [C4]. После распада, которого русский в тех среанах еще помнят [C5]. Поэтому я особых проблем не нахожу при общении с иностранцами.*

#### **4.4 Conclusions**

- The general standard of answering was extremely high, as is reflected in the results.
- The vast majority of candidates grew up hearing and speaking Russian to varying degrees. This does not guarantee that they will have excellent literacy skills, but generally it gives them an excellent ability to understand and process information and, usually, to present it in English.
- The main areas where candidates lost marks were language awareness and grammar, where they were not familiar with grammatical terms, or may not have read and written sufficient Russian to have an adequate knowledge of case endings.
- A significant number of candidates lost marks by not even attempting certain questions – on the whole the language awareness sections or the writing sections.

## **4.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students**

To teachers

- Students should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with past papers so they can see what types of questions are asked.
- Students should be reminded to read every question carefully before beginning to answer, and to attempt both writing questions even if they are not confident in their writing skills. If an attempt is made to provide the information which is required, then some marks can be awarded, and these marks could make the difference between a D and a C, or a C and a B.
- Teachers should ensure that students are familiar with basic grammatical terms in both Russian and English.
- Students should be encouraged to read as much Russian as possible in order to familiarise themselves with correct spelling.

To students

- As above, students should look at past papers, read every question carefully, attempt every question, and familiarise themselves with basic grammatical terms and correct spelling.