



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2016

RUSSIAN

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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1. Introduction

1.1 Syllabus Structure

The current Leaving Certificate Russian syllabus was examined for the first time in 2003. The syllabus shares a common structure, including common aims and objectives, with those of the other modern European language syllabuses.

The syllabus aims to cater for a wide range of pupil ability. Assessment is at two levels: Ordinary and Higher. While the syllabus is the same for both levels, the performance targets involve language use of varying degrees of complexity. Differentiation between the levels is therefore achieved through differing levels of difficulty and complexity of the tasks set on the examination, along with different relative weightings between productive and receptive language skills.

This report should be read in conjunction with the examination papers, the published marking schemes and the syllabus for this subject. The examination papers and marking schemes are available on the State Examination Commission's website www.examinations.ie and the syllabuses are available at www.curriculumonline.ie.

1.2 Assessment Specification

The core assessment objectives reflect the four areas of language use that arise from the productive and receptive use of the oral and written language. These are: understanding the spoken language; understanding the written language; communicating in the spoken language; communicating in the written language. They are often summarised for convenience as listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The assessment objectives are specified more fully in the syllabus.

The relative weightings assigned to the four areas is also specified in the syllabus. These weightings differ for the two levels, in recognition of the fact that, in the ongoing process of acquiring a language, the receptive skills develop earlier and to a greater degree than do the productive skills.

The weightings are as follows:

	Higher level	Ordinary level
Speaking	25%	20%
Listening comprehension	20%	25%
Reading comprehension	30%	40%
Writing	25%	15%

Table 1: mark weightings by level for areas of language use

The examination at each level comprises three components: an oral examination, which is taken at a common level and tests the candidate's ability to communicate in the spoken language, a listening comprehension test (understand the spoken language), and a written paper containing both a reading comprehension section (understand the written language) and a written production section (communicate in the written language). The marks for these components and sections are allocated according to the above table.

1.3 Participation Trends

Table 2 gives the overall participation rates of candidates in Leaving Certificate *Russian* for the last five years.

Year	Russian candidature	Total Leaving Certificate candidature*	<i>Russian</i> as % of total
2012	269	52592	0.51
2013	295	52767	0.56
2014	309	54025	0.57
2015	285	55044	0.52
2016	341	55707	0.61

*Total Leaving Certificate candidature excludes Leaving Certificate Applied candidates.

Table 2: participation in Leaving Certificate *Russian*, 2012 to 2016

The breakdown in terms of participation at Higher and Ordinary levels over the last five years is given in **Table 3**. The breakdown in terms of gender at Higher level and at Ordinary level over the last five years is given in **Table 4** and **Table 5** respectively.

Year	Total <i>Russian</i> candidature	Number at Ordinary level	Number at Higher level	% Ordinary level	% Higher level
2012	269	18	251	7	93
2013	295	10	285	3.4	96.6
2014	309	17	292	5.5	94.5
2015	285	13	272	4.5	95.5
2016	341	8	333	2.3	97.7

Table 3: number and percentage of candidates at each level, 2012 to 2016

Year	Total Higher level	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Female as % of total	Male as % of total
2012	251	127	124	50.6	49.4
2013	285	135	150	47.4	52.6
2014	292	147	145	50.3	49.7
2015	272	148	124	54.4	45.6
2016	333	173	160	52	48

Table 4: gender composition of Higher level cohort, 2012 to 2016

Year	Total Ordinary level	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Female as % of total	Male as % of total
2012	18	9	9	50	50
2013	10	4	6	40	60
2014	17	10	7	59	41
2015	13	6	7	46	54
2016	8	4	4	50	50

Table 5: gender composition of Ordinary level cohort, 2012 to 2016

2. Performance of candidates

2.1 Higher Level Statistics

The distribution of grades awarded over the last five years is given in **Table 6** (lettered grades) and **Table 7** (sub-grades).

Year	A	B	C	A, B, C	D	E	F	NG	E, F, NG
2012	74.9	16.4	4.4	95.7	4.0	0.4	0	0	0.4
2013	79.7	13.7	4.6	98	1.4	0.4	0.4	0	0.8
2014	82.5	9.9	5.1	97.5	1.6	0.7	0	0	0.7
2015	82.0	12.5	3.6	98.1	1.1	0	0	0.7	0.7
2016	82.3	11.1	4.8	98.2	1.5	0.3	0	0	0.3

Table 6 Percentage of candidates awarded each lettered grade in Higher Level *Russian*, 2012 – 2016

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	62.2	12.7	6.0	6.4	4.0	2.0	2.4	0	0.8	1.6	1.6	0.4	0	0
2013	66.7	13.0	5.6	4.6	3.5	1.8	1.4	1.4	0.7	0.7	0	0.4	0.4	0
2014	70.5	12.0	5.1	3.4	1.4	3.8	0.3	1.0	0.3	0.3	1.0	0.7	0	0
2015	72.1	9.9	5.9	4.0	2.6	2.2	0.7	0.7	0.7	0	0.4	0	0	0.7
2016	68.2	14.1	4.5	3.9	2.7	2.4	1.2	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.3	0	0

Table 7 Percentage of candidates awarded each sub-grade in Higher Level *Russian*, 2012 – 2016

Overall candidate performance is stable for the relatively small cohort of candidates and is strong in terms of attainment. This is consistent with the view that many candidates presenting for the examination in Russian have Russian as a mother tongue.

The distribution of sub-grades by gender over the last five years is given in **Table 8** (female candidates) and **Table 9** (male candidates).

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	66.1	13.4	5.5	7.1	2.4	0.8	2.4	0	0	0.8	0.8	0.8	0	0
2013	74.1	11.9	5.2	3.0	2.2	1.5	1.5	0	0.7	0	0	0	0	0
2014	80.3	8.8	2.7	2.7	0	3.4	0	1.4	0.7	0	0	0	0	0
2015	78.4	9.5	4.7	2.0	0.7	1.4	1.4	1.4	0	0	0	0	0	0.7
2016	72.8	13.9	4.0	2.9	1.7	2.3	1.2	0.6	0	0	0	0.6	0	0

Table 8: Percentage of female candidates awarded each sub-grade in Higher Level *Russian*, 2012 – 2016

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	58.1	12.1	6.5	5.6	5.6	3.2	2.4	0	1.6	2.4	2.4	0	0	0
2013	60	14.0	6.0	6.0	4.7	2.0	1.3	2.7	0.7	1.3	0	0.7	0.7	0
2014	60.7	15.2	7.6	4.1	2.8	4.1	0.7	0.7	0	0.7	2.1	1.4	0	0
2015	64.5	10.5	7.3	6.5	4.8	3.2	0	0	1.6	0	0.8	0	0	0.8
2016	63.1	14.4	5.0	5.0	3.8	2.5	1.3	1.9	1.3	0.6	1.3	0	0	0

Table 9: Percentage of male candidates awarded each sub-grade in Higher Level *Russian*, 2012 – 2016

2.2 Ordinary Level Statistics

The distribution of grades awarded over the last five years is given in **Table 10** (lettered grades) and **Table 11** (sub-grades).

Year	A	B	C	A, B, C	D	E	F	NG	E, F, NG
2012	22.3	33.4	33.4	89.1	11.2	0	0	0	0
2013	40	30	30	100	0	0	0	0	0
2014	82.3	5.9	0	88.2	5.9	0	5.9	0	5.9
2015	30.8	23.1	7.7	61.6	30.8	0	7.7	0	7.7
2016	37.5	37.5	12.5	87.5	0	0	12.5	0	12.5

Table 10: Percentage of candidates awarded each lettered grade in Ordinary Level *Russian*, 2012 – 2016

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	16.7	5.6	11.1	16.7	5.6	16.7	11.1	5.6	0	5.6	5.6	0	0	0
2013	30	10	20	0	10	20	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
2014	52.9	29.4	0	5.9	0	0	0	0	0	5.9	0	0	5.9	0
2015	7.7	23.1	0	23.1	0	0	7.7	0	0	15.4	15.4	0	7.7	0
2016	25	12.5	37.5	0	0	0	12.5	0	0	0	0	0	12.5	0

Table 11 Percentage of candidates awarded each sub-grade in Ordinary Level *Russian*, 2012 – 2016

The number of candidates presenting at Ordinary level is small and outcomes vary considerably from year to year.

The distribution of sub-grades by gender over the last five years is given in **Table 12** (female candidates) and **Table 13** (male candidates).

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	11.1	0	22.2	22.2	11.1	11.1	11.1	0	0	11.1	0	0	0	0
2013	50.0	0	25.0	0	0	0	0	25.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2014	70.0	20.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10.0	0	0	0	0
2015	0	33.3	0	50.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	0	0
2016	50.0	0	50.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 12 Percentage of female candidates awarded each sub-grade in Ordinary Level *Russian*, 2012 – 2016.

Year	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
2012	22.2	11.1	0	11.1	0	22.2	11.1	11.1	0	0	11.1	0	0	0
2013	16.7	16.7	16.7	0	16.7	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2014	28.6	42.9	0	14.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14.3	0
2015	14.3	14.3	0	0	0	0	14.3	0	0	28.6	14.3	0	14.3	0
2016	0	25.0	25.0	0	0	0	25.0	0	0	0	0	0	25.0	0

Table 13 Percentage of male candidates awarded each sub-grade in Ordinary Level *Russian*, 2012 – 2016

3. Analysis of Candidate Performance

3.1 Engagement and Performance

Statistical information on engagement with and performance on the various questions in the written and aural components is presented below. Data on performance in the various aspects of the oral component are not captured centrally in a manner that allows for similar analysis.

Higher Level

Table 14 is based on an analysis of the performance of all candidates (N=333)

Section	Question	Popularity (% attempts)	Rank order in popularity	Average mark (and as %)	Rank order in average mark	Topic
I	1.1	100%	1=	38.78 (96.96%)	1	Education, daily routines, leisure activities, holidays, socialising, family
I	1.2	76%	12	7.59 (75.89%)	10	Language awareness: number, gender, case of Noun phrases
I	1.1	99%	2=	36.86 (92.17%)	7	Class outing to circus
I	1.2	92%	8	7.26 (72.67%)	11	Language awareness: infinitives; semantic field (circus)
I	3	96%	7	18.72 (93.63%)	6	Structuring discourse: general information about the Russian Federation (geography, population, people, religion, cooking, cities, names, tourism)
II	1	90%	9	21.33 (71.11%)	12	Grammatical accuracy: family relations, grandparents and their lives
II	2	84%	10	25.56 (85.21%)	9	Cultural awareness: Russian language in Ireland; tourism in the Russian Federation; Winter sports in the Russian Federation; Education in the Russian Federation; Places of interest in the Russian Federation
II	3	83%	11	34.28 (85.71%)	8	Guided writing: letter thanking someone for a birthday gift; story telling: best day of your life; discussion: language learning

L	1	99%	2=	18.84 (94.25%)	5	News in brief: touring theatre company; singer on tour; European Cup; Russian charity ball
L	2	99%	2=	19.01 (95.09%)	4	Advertisement: summer camp, activities, services, daily routines, cost, contact details
L	3	99%	2=	19.14 (95.71%)	2	Interview with young roller-skater: general personal information, roller-skating history, travel, pastimes, plans for the future
L	4	99%	2=	19.09 (95.48%)	3	Biography of a young Russian actor: education, career to date, interests, achievements

Table 14: popularity of and average mark for each question, Higher Level *Russian*

This table indicates that the sections which require candidates to demonstrate receptive skills (reading and listening) and to locate/identify/understand specific details are attempted by the highest number of candidates and are answered best. The comprehension task which requires candidates to demonstrate summary-writing skills is equally popular, but candidates perform slightly less well. The exercises which are least well answered test language awareness and grammatical accuracy. *Circa* 15% of candidates did not attempt exercises which required candidates to write extended texts in Russian.

Ordinary Level

Table 15 is a summary based on an analysis of all candidates (N=8).

Section	Question	Popularity (% attempts)	Rank order in popularity	Average mark (and as %)	Rank order in average mark	Topic
I	A	100%	1=	50 (84%)	6	Russian language school (days of week, cost, schedule, ...); sports centre (facilities, sports, prices, opening hours)
I	B	100%	1=	32 (79%)	9=	Information about Ireland
I	C	100%	1=	18 (90%)	2	Question words; interviews with young Russians re personal information, hobbies
I	D	100%	1=	32 (81%)	7=	Blog by young girl about herself and her family: daily routines, likes and dislikes, pets, household chores
II	A	88%	9	28 (94%)	1	Cultural awareness
II	B	50%	10	26 (86%)	3=	Extended writing: winter holidays; letter of invitation to a friend; grandmother's life story
II	A	88%	9	25 (82%)	9	These two questions require candidates to write extensively in Russian – here (as opposed to the same entries above) the average marks include marks of 0 (zero) obtained by candidates who did not attempt the question.
II	B	50%	10	13 (43%)	10	
L	1	100%	1=	21 (79%)	9=	News in brief: touring theatre company; singer on tour; European Cup; Russian charity ball
L	2	100%	1=	21 (86%)	3=	Advertisement: summer camp, activities, services, daily routines, cost, contact details
L	3	100%	1=	22 (85%)	5	Interview with young roller-skater: general personal information, roller-skating history, travel, pastimes, plan for the future
L	4	100%	1=	20 (81%)	7=	Biography of a young Russian actor: education, career to date, interests, achievements

Table 15: popularity of and average mark for each question, Ordinary Level *Russian*

Despite the small number of candidates, the data in this table make it clear that candidates were confident about their receptive skills (reading and listening), whereas a substantial proportion were lacking in assurance when it came to writing in Russian. The fact that all of those who did not attempt the extended writing remained in the examination Centre and attempted the listening section supports this proposition.

3.2 Attainment of Key Syllabus Objectives

Communicating in the spoken language (oral examination)

There are **three 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: Project or Picture Sequence (4-5 minutes) (30 marks)

Section one:

General Conversation: narrative

In this section candidates are asked to talk about themselves and their lives. Candidates are asked questions relating to any/all of the topics listed below.

Topics:

1. Personal information and family details: Talking about where someone is from, details of family.
2. Discussing leisure pursuits: Talking about free time, interests and activities (e.g. television, film, video, music, books, photography, sport), likes and dislikes.
3. Talking about learning and school: Talking about subjects studied, timetable, homework, extra-curricular activities, likes, dislikes and preferences.
4. Discussing family home: Describing one's home, garden, neighbourhood, and possessions.
5. Describing the general nature of the region or locality in which someone lives: (its defining characteristics, its situation relative to other places, the ethnic origins of its population, public amenities and public transport)
6. Holidays and travel: Talking about someone's holiday plans. Giving an account of holidays and visits.
7. Making plans and discussing future action: Describing one's career and/or further study plans/hopes.

Section two:

General Conversation: discursive

In this section candidates are asked to talk about an aspect of Russian life or culture that interests them. Candidates are also given the option to discuss a piece of literature (novel, short story, poem, play) or a Russian film. Candidates are permitted to decide which one of the five cultural awareness topics listed below they are prepared to talk about. The main focus is then on the topic selected by the candidate.

Cultural awareness topics:

1. Everyday life in Ireland and Russia

Candidates are required to describe the similarities and contrasts between normal everyday life in Ireland and normal everyday life in one of the communities associated with the target language, with particular reference to, for example: where people live; how people are educated; what people work at and how much people earn in various jobs; what kinds of transport facilities, amenities, shops and public services people expect to have provided in their cities, towns and villages

2. Leisure

Comparing Irish festivals, customs and traditions with those in Russia. Comparing holidays at home and abroad (at a *dacha*, in the country, at a resort). How much holiday time people have, how they use it and how people spend their leisure hours generally.

3. Aspects of Russian culture

Russian history. Russian literature, art, cinema, TV. Russian popular/youth culture.

4. Aspects of contemporary Russian life: A society in transition

The generation gap; health and lifestyle; changing perspectives regarding human relationships (marriage, the family, etc.); the challenges facing a multi-cultural state (racial equality, ethnic minorities).

5. The place of Russia on the world stage

Russia and the West; Russia and Ireland; Russia and the European Union; Russia and Asia/USA.

Section three:

Project or Picture Sequence

Project:

First part: Uninterrupted narration/presentation:

The candidate is asked to speak without interruption for up to two minutes.

Second part of project:

The candidate is asked 2-3 questions to elicit the following:

- (a) Clarification of an aspect/aspects of the content of project
- (b) Explanation of the process of doing a project

Third part: opinion on a related wider issue or theme:

The candidate is invited to explore the general themes arising from the project.

Examining the picture sequence

Uninterrupted narration of picture sequence - can be in present tense.

The candidate is asked to speak without interruption for up to two minutes.

Explanation:

The candidate is asked to explain 2-3 aspects of the picture sequence which were not clear/not dealt with in the telling of the story.

Opinion on related wider issue:

The candidate is invited to explore the general issues arising from the picture sequence.

Performance of candidates

As in previous years, the majority of the candidates had native or near-native proficiency in Russian. They showed an impressive range of lexis and idioms, excellent use of abstract language and a wealth of relevant information. Even under examination conditions the overwhelming majority of candidates were highly motivated and articulate. Candidates

performed very well in all three sections of the oral examination, with an average 85 -100 marks being awarded.

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Marks</i>	<i>Total number of candidates 342 (2016)</i>	<i>Total number of Candidates 280 (2015)</i>	<i>Total number of Candidates 317(2014)</i>	<i>Total number of Candidates 298 (2013)</i>
A	85-100	319	255	260	225
B	70-84	15	17	42	51
C	55-69	2	1	6	16
D	40-54	4	3	3	5
E	25-39	1	1	3	1
F	0-24	1	2	3	<i>none</i>

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, although this year the majority of candidates were well aware of Russian culture and traditions. Most candidates talked with great enthusiasm about everyday life in Russia and the country in general.

The most popular topic was “Everyday life in Russia and Ireland” describing the similarities and contrasts. It should be noted, however, that an increasing number of candidates chose topics related to famous Russian writers, poets and musicians.

A substantial group of candidates were unprepared to speak on topics related to Russia and to discuss them in detail. Some candidates had a very limited and fragmentary knowledge of contemporary Russian life (a society in transition, health and lifestyle, the generation gap, 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 – a novel, short story, poem, play or a film in Russian. Many had a fairly good understanding of the questions asked but were poorly equipped with a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary as well as a range of abstract language that could be used when talking about general Area Studies topics. Complexity of response was very basic and sometimes it was very difficult to maintain the conversation.

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, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) as opposed to Russia.

Section 3: Project

The table below shows a record number of candidates opting for the project option in 2016.

	<i>Number of candidates</i>	<i>Candidates taking the project option</i>	<i>% of candidates taking the project option</i>
2012	278	40	14
2013	298	54	18
2014	317	60	19
2015	280	81	29
2016	342	105	31

The majority of projects reflected different aspects of Russian history, culture and modern Russian society. Among the topics chosen this year were:

Russian writers, composers, painters and political figures of 19 th century	Alexander Pushkin; Ivan Bunin; Dmitri Mendeleev; Petr Tchaikovsky; Leo Tolstoy; Alexander Griboyedov; Nino Chavchavadze; Anton Chekhov
Prominent persons from Soviet times	Yuri Gagarin; Vladimir Mayakovski; Viktor Tsoi; Vasily Livanov; Mikhail Kalashnikov; Andrej Mironov,

Russian History. Prominent figures and important events	Peter the Great; The foundation of St. Petersburg; the Romanov Dynasty; The Victory Day celebration; The Stalingrad battle.
Places of interest in Russia	Lake Baikal; Kamchatka peninsula; Ekaterinburg; The “Golden Ring”; the Moscow Kremlin; the Moscow metro; The Trans Siberian railway
Contemporary Russian musicians, actors, film directors, politicians, celebrities	Ivan Urgant; Evgeni Plushenko; Vladimir Putin; Laima Vaikule; Dima Bilan; Dmitri Nagiev; Nikolai Valuev
Russian cultural history and traditions; Sport in Russia	Russian cuisine; Russian public and Religious holidays; Russian superstitions; Russian folk dance;

Candidates understood the questions very well and were excellent in identifying and naming key concepts. The project presentation showed some of the candidate’s excellent communication skills and critical thinking.

Section 3: Picture Sequence

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.

Recurring mistakes:

Candidates often used English words to fill in gaps in conversation especially with vocabulary related to school subjects, sports and everyday activities.

a) use of English lexicon and idioms; use of direct translated phrases from English into Russian

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| - я <i>делаю</i> математику, спорт | - я <i>беру</i> историю |
| - у нас <i>униформа</i> | - получить <i>сэртификэт</i> |
| - я получаю <i>пойнты</i> | - интересный <i>сабъект</i> |
| - заниматься <i>трудно</i> | - большие <i>шоппиг центры</i> |

- *брать* автобус
- ехал на *парти*
- большой *катедрал*
- буду изучать *фашен*
- очень популярен *тейбл* теннис
- *играю* во многие *спорты*
- я хочу учиться *медисин*
- *взять* высокие оценки
- это очень *релаксация*
- там у нас есть *гарден*
- большие *компетиции*
- поступать по *арту* в колледж
- *ставит* в банки (put in jars)
- *приняли свои места* (took their seats)
- я люблю русскую *синему*
- туристическая *дистинация*
- это *приватная* школа
- живу в маленьком *эстейт*
- ехать *в вестрен* Ирландии
- родители взяли *моргич*
- занимаюсь *свиминг*
- *всякие еды*
- ехать на *Юроп*
- *маленький* апартамент
- *генерально*
- разные *дрогы*
- *в лето*
- *в следующей двери* (next door)

b) incorrect use of case; mixed up genders and verb conjugation; prepositions

- не знаю на *кем* учиться
- много *разницов*
- владеет *собственный бизнес*
- люди *передвижаются* на поезде
- у нас *большая* дома
- учился *английский язык*
- идти работать *на полиции*
- *ей* болела голова
- *моя собака* два года
- заниматься *русскую грамматику*
- много старых *церковь*
- я делаю *хоум экономикс*
- хорошо *по-английскому* говорю
- *высокая* уровень

- много *спортов*
- мой старый школа
- бегать по *парке*
- много *спортов*
- помогать *люди*
- этого лета я планирую
- мы *хочим*
- мой мама зовут
- много *учителей*
- они *могут*
- русская язык
- родители там *родился*
- много *машинов*
- мене *интересная* политика

c) incorrect use of numbers (especially genitive and instrumental case)

- семья состоит из *четыре* человека
- без четверти *восьми*
- с *сто сорок миллионов*
- три *русские девушек*
- Я здесь три *лет*
- вместе с *два дети*
- около *четыре часа*
- около *три миллионов*
- больше *триста людей*
- более *десять годов*

d) wrong stress in some Russian words (place names, personal names, plural endings)

-Рахманинов, Алтай, Кауказус; учители, русские городы, красивые озер,
 Праздник Труда, день Победы, три года назад, красивые лесы, биология

e) some candidates got mixed up with the verbs of motion like to go, to walk, to move

- собираюсь *идти* в России
- я *пришёл* в Ирландию давно
- я *пойду* в Москве
- мы *идём* в Литве
- я *ехал* здесь
- люблю в Италии *ехать*
- она *гуляет* за покупками
- я *ходил* в Украину

Understanding the spoken language (listening comprehension)

Higher level

The standard in the listening comprehension was generally extremely high, even among candidates who demonstrated very poor writing skills. This indicates that they have had a lot of exposure to spoken Russian even if they have never learned to write Russian.

Ordinary level

The standard of responses in the listening comprehension was very high, as has always been the case with this cohort. This year, for the first time, there were more questions – each of which was assigned fewer marks (2 marks per detail, as opposed to 5). A comparison of average marks for each of the four sections over the past six years makes it difficult to assess whether this impacted on candidates' performance: the size of the cohort is too small to make comparisons. However, with the exception of 2015 where the results are unusually low, the results this year are lower than in any of the years between 2011 and 2014 (the average for this paper was 83% this year, as opposed to between 88% and 93% between 2011 and 2014).

Year	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Number of candidates
2011	88%	86%	99%	98%	N=17
2012	89%	81%	91%	90%	N=18
2013	94%	96%	92%	84%	N=10
2014	91%	86%	91%	84%	N=17
2015	71%	74%	75%	69%	N=13
2016	79%	86%	85%	81%	N=8

Understanding the written language (reading comprehension)

Higher level

Candidates generally demonstrated excellent receptive skills. This is evident in the high quality of the answers in the reading comprehension section.

In the summary-writing section, comprehension of the text was very good. However, some candidates lost marks by not providing enough detail, failing to distinguish primary from secondary details (some candidates translated whole paragraphs and failed to demonstrate summary-writing/synthesis skills), and gave answers in report form (bullet points). The quality of candidates' English was sometimes relatively poor, but only on rare occasions did it impede communication. One candidate summarized the whole text in answer to question 1 and left the other sections unanswered.

Exercises testing language awareness caused more difficulties for candidates than reading comprehension or structuring discourse.

(a) Candidates were asked to supply the nominative singular form of noun phrases. Many obtained full marks but there was a large proportion who scored no or low marks on this question, even when they displayed excellent comprehension skills in the first part of Section 1.

(b) Candidates were asked to supply infinitives. Most of the candidates understood what was being asked in this section; most provided some correct infinitives; very few seem to have misunderstood the question completely, as has happened in previous years. A small number of candidates put the verbs into the past tense. There was a high degree of variability in responses (see answers in brackets below).

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1. пошли | пойти (пойдти, поётьи, пошол, йти, поэти, поетй) |
| 2. ложился | ложиться (лежать, ложить, лечь, ложиться, ложица) |
| 3. спросил | спросить (спросит, спросиыт) |
| 4. могла | мочь (можыть, мог, могу) |
| 5. купил | купить (купит) |

The most common errors include: omission of the soft sign or the reflexive particle in **ложиться**, supplying the wrong aspect (e.g. **покупать** instead of **купить**, **идти** instead of **пойти**). The verb **мочь** proved most challenging for candidates, with several displaying

impressive linguistic ability by supplying infinitives of other verbs which are semantically related, such as **уметь** or **суметь**, but unfortunately no marks can be awarded in these cases.

(c) Candidates are asked to supply words from the text which relate to the topic of ‘circus’. Candidates generally performed extremely well in this exercise. Some candidates, however, supplied words which were not included in the text: **акробаты, попкорн**.

In the section testing grammatical accuracy candidates made the following types of mistakes:

1. Orthographic mistakes where the written word mirrors the pronunciation of the word:
 - a. stressed and unstressed vowels: **с дедушкой** instead of **с дедушкой**;
детем/ детьям/ детийм instead of **детям**
 - b. lack of clarity around word boundaries, particularly in prepositional phrases: **у них** for **у них**; **самной** for **со мной**
2. errors in verb forms: **закончиль/ закончел** for **закончил**; **переехаль** for **переехал**; **уезжают/ уезжает** for **уезжают**; **появется/ появлятьсы/ появляеться** for **появляется**
3. errors in nominal, adjectival and pronominal forms: **времини/ времяни/ времений** for **времени**; **долгаю/ долгиы** for **долгой**; **у вас/ у него/ у оний** for **у них**

As regards cultural awareness, most candidates read the questions carefully and scored highly for content. Answers were evenly spread across the five topics:

1. An Rúisis in Éirinn / The Russian language in Ireland / Русский язык в Ирландии
2. An Turasóireacht i gCónaidhm na Rúise / Tourism in the Russian Federation / Туризм в Российской Федерации
3. Spóirt Gheimhridh i gCónaidhm na Rúise / Winter Sports in the Russian Federation / Зимние виды спорта
4. An t-Oideachas i gCónaidhm na Rúise / Education in the Russian Federation / Образование в Российской Федерации
5. Áiteanna is díol spéise i gCónaidhm na Rúise / Places of interest in the Russian Federation / Достопримечательности в Российской Федерации

Answers which achieve full marks demonstrate the candidate's knowledge about the subject in hand, an ability to deploy rich and complex language and to employ a wide range of appropriate lexis. In the example below, there are minor errors in most sentences, including errors in the choice of preposition; errors in the use of punctuation conventions; errors in script (confusion of Latin and Cyrillic alphabets); errors in orthography and capitalisation conventions; minor errors in syntax. None of these errors impeded comprehension and therefore none prevented the candidate from obtaining full marks.

Русский язык в Ирландии: Как не странно здесь в Ирландии очень много кто говорит по русски (C1), очень много людей которые приехали с Латвии, Литвы, Украины и даже Монголии разговаривают между собой не на Английском а на русскот (C2). Все очень дружные между собой и очень любят собираться вместе и проводить время (C3). А так-же здесь много ирландцов которые учат русский если ит нужен он для например бизнеса (C4). Здесь есть много курсов по русскому языку на которые можно пойти даже всей семьей (C5). Что меня удевило это то что даже русские знаменитости приезжают сюда и дают концерты так как здесь очень много кто знает русский [C6]. (C = 10; E = 20 - total 30)

Another answer which obtained full marks demonstrates the candidate's excellent cultural knowledge: this candidate was able to back up propositions with appropriate examples (the list of tourist destinations) and to provide contextual information to account for a process/phenomenon (the introduction of sanctions). This candidate also demonstrated an ease with complex syntactic structures (beyond the standard of the Leaving Certificate syllabus): **за последние пару лет; были введены санкции; как и россияне, так и иностранцы** and deployed sophisticated lexis, appropriate to the task: **туристическая ветка России; съезжаются.**

Туризм в Российской Федерации. На сегодняшний день туристическая ветка России быстро растет. (C1) Существует количество разных мест и достопримечательностей, посещаемые многими туристами и жителями России. Так как за последние пару лет были введены санкции в Европу (C2), в России начал расширяться внутренний туризм. [C1]

Самые известные и любимые места посещения являются: горы Алтай и горнолыжные курорты (C3), Сибирь (C4), Сочи (C5) и Санкт-Петербург (C6). Санкт-Петербург — один из самых больших и интересных городов России. [C7] Каждый день туда съезжаются как и россияне, так и иностранцы. [C8] Он является самым Европейским городом в РФ. [C9] ... (extra page) (C = 10; E = 20 - total 30)

Marks were sometimes lost for not providing enough factual information: В Ирландии есть очень много людей кто говорит ра риски. (C1) Они обично с российи, латвийи и тругих многих стран (C2). [C = 4; lower E = 9 - total 13]

A small number of candidates copied phrases and sentences from the structuring discourse question when answering on tourism or places of interest in the Russian Federation. These phrases or sentences were bracketed off and not given marks for either content or expression, which in some cases led to candidates scoring poorly on this question: [Представлены природные зоны: пустыни, тудра, леса и субтропики. Обитателены животный белье медведи, олени, птицы — журавли.] [В России для каждого может найтисы место и климат по вкусу.]

Ordinary level

Candidates' comprehension skills were, on the whole, very good. Candidates were able to retrieve the information that was required of them in the Information retrieval exercises; in the Mix and Match exercise three candidates obtained maximum marks and in the Structuring Discourse exercise six candidates obtained maximum marks.

The standard of answers in the cultural awareness was high. The following examples illustrate how marks were allocated for content:

Climate in the Russian Federation: The climate in the Russian Federation is very varied. The climate is a continental climate all over Russia (C1) except for Alpine areas like Altai (C2) or temperate areas such as around Sochi (C3). During the winter most of Russia is cold and snow covered [C4]. During the summer most of Russia is very warm, between 20 and 30 degrees c [C5]. The Northern harbours such as Murmansk are frozen and closed during the winter [C6]. There is almost desert climate on the border with Kazakhstan near Astrakhan. There is very little rainfall here [C7].

Languages in the Russian Federation: There are many different languages in Russia (C1). The main one is Russian (C2) but many people in small places don't know it (C3). There are more than 150 languages in Russia [C1].

A number of candidates repeated factual details: marks are not awarded for repeat material.

Communicate in the written language (written production)

Higher level

The quality of Russian in the answers was generally very high. Many candidates displayed a very sophisticated level of linguistic capability when answering this section; they used varied and appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic turns of phrase.

Marks were usually lost for spelling mistakes. Common mistakes included omitting soft signs in infinitives and second person singular verbs, using **а** instead of **о** and **и** instead of **е** in unstressed syllables (**телефон**), and misspelling the words **еще**, **очень** and **лучше**. Other common mistakes included:

- a. Incorrect gender of nouns: **ваша здоровья**
- b. Influence of English in choice of prepositions: **спасибо для**
- c. Incorrect adjectival endings: **домашние задание; подарила новаю одежду/ новию сумку**
- d. Confusion of Latin and Cyrillic script: **рпиходили**
- e. Reflexive endings on verbs: **нравица**
- f. Spelling conventions: **я хочю**
- g. Case endings in noun phrases: **волнуюсь об этих экзаменов**

A small number of candidates are marked using the Lower A scale. This scale is used where the expression is very fluent, with a high degree of lexical, syntactic (noun-adjective agreement, appropriate use of aspects, correct use of verbs of motion, appropriate adverbials of place (location and motion), animate reference, complex syntactic structures) and idiomatic variety but where there are problems with basic accuracy (script, spelling, word boundaries and inflectional morphology) and errors in every 2nd or 3rd word.

Я помню как бита это было вчера я и мой лиБий дриг Герман поехали одихат на местное озера ты купило большое количество зды и отправильсь в пучешествие. По дороге на озера мы стретяль очень особинова человека! ... Lower A

Samaya lucaja dnja na mojej valani eta koda ja uvidela svajevo sabaka. U menja jesti sabaka v Litve i koda ha ujahala mi jevo astavili mojem babushkam. Ja prijahala v Litvu 3 nedeli nazat i jevo uvidela. Ona bila ocen rada i davolna sto ja prijahala jevo uvidet... Lower A

A number of candidates wrote in Cyrillic block capital letters (the printed script); one candidate wrote in Latin script (see above). Candidates are not penalised for their choice of script.

The majority of candidates chose the letter option for extended writing. It was very thoroughly answered: practically all candidates made sure that all of the necessary points were covered.

Of the remaining 40% of candidates, most selected the story. About 10% of the total cohort elected to write the discursive essay.

Some of the candidates did not attempt the writing sections. Even some candidates who scored highly on other sections did not attempt these sections, indicating that even though their receptive skills were highly developed, they did not have confidence in their productive skills.

Ordinary level

Writing skills in the Ordinary Level cohort ranged from near perfect levels of fluency (1, below), through to very basic levels of expression (2, below) to candidates not attempting this section at all.

- (1) Зимние каникулы: В Ирландии зимние каникулы длятся две недели для школьников. Наши большие праздники начинаются на самом конце каникул, по этому мы с родителями подарки делаем друг другу в новогоднюю ночь. Мои родители с начало очень удивлялись что тут никто не празднуют Новый Год. В России это всегда вбольшой и весёлый праздник с песнями и танцами. Мы тоже собираемся несколько семей в новогоднюю ночь и празднуем с полным столом еды домашней еды, поём, танцуем. Ровно в двенадцать часов папа открывает шампанское и каждый желает друг другу самого лучешго, самого удачного года, чтобы все били счастливы, здоровы и ничего недостовало. Я очень люблю токую тёплую атосферу, какой я нигде больше не встрчала и пепочувствовало, только у нас в семе и в у

бабушке в России. Это называется русская душа. Когда за окном холодно, идёт дождь и дует сильный ветер и ничего что делать в зимние каникулы я люблю читать книги.

- (2) Мина завут С. Я Р из Ё Латви. Мне 18 лет. Из зимние каникулы я Р сматрус TV. Я играус в му маи систро. Ио 5 лет. Я иду в Латви в маи бабушки. Ио уест сабака и 3 кот. Тат уест уест snow.

4. Conclusions

Oral Component

The majority of candidates showed impressive communication skills and the ability to deal with a wide range of issues in general conversation. They demonstrated that they had a wide range of relevant information and opinions and displayed a virtually flawless range of lexis and idioms. It is noteworthy at this juncture that many candidates left their native educational system some time ago and currently do not appear to have any formal instruction in Russian. Consequently their Russian is being influenced by English. Many of these candidates subconsciously incorporated English lexis and idioms while conversing in Russian.

Aural/Written Paper

Topics and skills in which the candidates showed strengths:

Almost all candidates demonstrated excellent receptive skills, both in listening and reading. Most also had very good productive skills in writing.

Areas of weakness in candidates' answering:

The number of candidates who did not attempt the cultural awareness and guided writing sections demonstrates that a small proportion did not have confidence in their writing skills. In their essays, a sizable proportion of candidates demonstrated that, although they had fluent, idiomatic Russian, they did not have much practice at writing and had not learned to spell correctly.

Frequency of excess answers: Excess answers were not usually provided. A large proportion of candidates wrote too much in the guided writing section, but this did not cause them to lose marks, except where they went off topic and therefore lost some marks for textual coherence.

5. Recommendations to Teachers and Students

The comments below refer to both levels unless otherwise specified. The depth of understanding and level of mastery required of candidates at Ordinary level is obviously less than that expected at Higher level.

5.1 Preparing for the examination

(a) To teachers

Oral Component

- Teachers should inform students about the examination structure – in particular about the fact that there is a project option – and topic options for conversation. As Russian is not taught in the majority of schools in Ireland, this recommendation is also addressed to school Principals.
- If it is not possible to provide formal language teaching support for students in individual schools, schools should try to organize at least one mock oral examination with a qualified Russian speaking teacher from another school.
- Teachers should work more with their students on the Project (section three) and General Conversation: discursive sections (section two).
- Teachers should encourage students to undertake a project - given the double benefit for students: to enrich their cultural awareness, and to provide them with an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the depth of their Russian cultural awareness and language proficiency.

Aural/Written Papers

- Teachers should remind students to make sure they are doing exactly what is asked of them in the question e.g. providing factual details about a cultural topic instead of just their own opinion, if such is required.
- Teachers should encourage students to familiarize themselves with past examination papers so they can be familiar with the types of questions that are asked.
- Teachers should remind their students 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 two grades.

- Teachers should focus on summary-writing skills with students for the second reading comprehension.
- Teachers should ensure that students are familiar with basic grammatical terms in both Russian and English.
- Teachers should also encourage their students to read as much Russian as possible to familiarize themselves with correct spelling.
- In addition, teachers should highlight to students that they should not use details from other questions in their own writing. (This is stated in the Guided Writing instructions, but needs to be highlighted again.)

(b) To students

Oral Component

- Students should engage in a comprehensive and systematic study of the Russian language especially of the Russian Area studies section.
- Students should equip themselves with a wide range of topic-specific vocabulary - as well as a range of structures that can be used with any topic.
- Students are encouraged to watch Russian films, news and educational programmes (Russian satellites TV channels are widely available in this country) and use Russian language Internet sources.
- Students should take a greater interest in Russian culture and should be prepared and willing to discuss a topic which they select related to Russian history, culture and way of life.
- Students should familiarize themselves with the examination structure by consulting the Russian Oral Examinations pages on the State Examinations Commission's website.

Aural/Written Papers

- Students should focus on summary-writing skills for the second reading comprehension. Students should be clear regarding what constitutes a fact for the Cultural Awareness question.
- Students should read every question carefully, attempt every question, and familiarize themselves with basic grammatical terms and correct spelling and be familiar with the layout from past examination papers.

5.2 In the examination

- Students should speak about general topics at greater length and respond to all questions in as full and detailed a manner as possible.
- Students should avoid the use of short, undeveloped answers which restrict communication.
- Students should not supply information/details in response to comprehension questions which are not in the text.
- Students should not supply the same information in two ways in response to comprehension questions or in the writing tasks: no additional marks are awarded.
- Students should not use details from other questions in their own writing.