

LOTE: Russian GA 2: Oral examination

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Part 1 – General conversation

The overall performance of students was better than in previous years, indicating more thorough preparation. However, some confused the terms ‘thorough preparation’ with ‘learning by rote’. When the latter is the case, the student’s conversation sounds stilted, and not authentic and lacks the ability to deal with unpredictable responses from the assessors. Students who were able to make the conversation flow had few problems with either the content or range of the general topics.

Part 2 – Report and discussion

There was a wide variety of interesting and imaginative topics, many of which showed a high level of research. However, the overall impression at the end of the (overall) assessment was that many students had not prepared their reports carefully enough. Common problems included choosing a report topic which presented only narrative. It was then often difficult to discuss such topics and some reports gave no indication of planning of content or presentation.

Students who chose an interesting topic and researched their topic were able to elaborate in the discussion. Topics which led to an interesting discussion included:

- how to bring up parents
- Russian folktales
- Beethoven’s ‘Moonlight Sonata’
- anabolic steroids
- army service
- the Great Wall of China
- astronomy
- a famous Lithuanian footballer
- the saxophone
- flowers.

Well-planned and researched reports showed by their answers that the student had thought in depth about the topic. Also, when a lot of different resources were used (indicative of research), the student was better able to develop the topic in the discussion. Many students did not prepare their report sufficiently well, nor did they structure their report with an introduction and conclusion. A small percentage had not prepared their report thoroughly and either was over-reliant on cue cards or presented their report haltingly. Several students seemed to know the Russian word доклад. Less successful students knew little more about the topic, than what they had said in their report. Also, many students still do not heed the criteria ‘... indication of possible aspects of discussion’ thus restricting their ‘capacity to convey information and develop ideas and opinions during the discussion of the report’.

Part 3 – Situational role-play

The most successful situations were those involving animals and 18-year-olds. The ‘Animals’ was better performed, e.g. looking after a puppy gave the opportunity for lots of details about feeding and walking the dog. When allergy was mentioned, one student offered a handkerchief to breathe through and also left the telephone number of the veterinarian. In most cases, students were very resourceful, with some demonstrating theatrical performance skills. Most students were good at moving the action forward, showing considerable practice in role-play. These ranged from performances with brilliant acting to those where a few students waited for the assessors to initiate all the interchanges, whilst they responded with simple sentences or phrases.

All parts of the task

Anglicisms such as ‘to do a subject’, the use of камера instead of фотоаппарат and English phrases which just slipped out sometimes spoiled the atmosphere a student had created, as did direct translations of expressions such as ‘have a good day’. The presentations of some student reports gave the impression that they were determined to cram as much information as possible into the two minutes. Students need supervised practice in timing their delivery.

LOTE: Russian GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students continue to be penalised because they have not practised discourse forms in sufficient depth. In this year's task they were required to write an evaluative article with a title, date, place, author's name (fictional) and layout (paragraphs).

Very few observed the Text 2 heading 'A leaflet of the Green Movement', and if they did understand it, they did not utilise this information in a meaningful way.

Poor spelling continues to plague many students and it makes a poor impression when the first phrase of an answer contains incorrect spelling of common words. Irrelevancies abounded, such as writing recipes using mushrooms and admiring squirrels in the forests. Extraneous material such as wood chipping was mentioned in the text of a previous examination but not in this 2001 paper.

Quality and appropriateness of information

Capacity to identify and pass on accurately five main points taken solely from the graphic and/or written resource

Most students had little difficulty in identifying the five main points found only in the written texts.

Relevant points that might have been selected included:

- loss of animal and plant habitat for food
- logging necessary for building roads, homes
- logging leads to global warming, climate change
- logging has spread to new areas, villages, sanatoria
- positive impact of logging – it has led to planting of new trees.

Sometimes a point was mentioned, e.g. the location of the sanatoria in the forest, but the link was not made that the trees had to be logged in order that the sanatoria could be built in the forest.

Capacity to identify and pass on accurately five main points taken solely from the resources provided orally

Most students easily identified the five main points found only in the oral source. Relevant points that might have been successfully selected were:

- logging for industrial purposes, paper, railways
- logging for agriculture
- illegal logging is enormous and still growing
- heavy industrial pollution kills forests/no technological means to stop this
- chemical substances destroy forests
- lack of laws/control/planning.

Capacity to identify and pass on accurately information from two additional main points produced by combining related information from different parts of both the written and oral resources

Point 1: Oral: crowds of tourists visit National forests

Reading: tourists litter forests and start forest fires

This proved difficult for most students and it was as though many students were not given sufficient practice in combining points. Most students found Point 1, although this was often poorly expressed.

Point 2: Oral: action groups help to protect forests

Reading: the Green Movement seeks active participation from the population

Many wrote that forests should be protected, but they did not combine this point with the actions of the Green Movement seeking out the active participation of the population.

It was surprising that many students did not specifically mention the name of the action group it was given in the title for Text 2 and also in the task.

Suitability of form and organisation

Skill in observing the conventions of the discourse form required to complete the task: writing a speech

All of the following conventions of this discourse form for an evaluative article had to be carefully observed, e.g. title, date, place, author's name (fictional), layout (paragraphs).

The overall standard of response was very poor. The Russian Study design (page 50), clearly lists the main characteristics of common text types, and these must be studied more carefully. It was disappointing that many students did not provide a title, when they could have copied an appropriate phrase from the paper.

Capacity to organise information from the resources into a meaningful sequence within the required word limit range

A meaningful sequence was not achieved by most students. A significant number of students repeated many points several times in the report, indicating a lack of careful planning and sequencing.

Most papers were within the required number of words (250–300), with very few being penalised for exceeding the word limit. Some students wasted words by writing passages which were too descriptive, or gave too much unnecessary detail; for example, all the different types of chemical pollution.

Effectiveness of expression

Control of language

Linking words appropriate to an evaluative article were well used, e.g. unfortunately, as a rule, of course, besides this, however, on the one hand. **Rephrasing** was achieved by the more successful students, but too many students still copy text word for word. Most responses showed poor knowledge of basic grammatical points, with common errors included mixing tenses, lack of agreements, and incorrect phrases.

Effectiveness of the finished piece

Many students ignored the requirements of the discourse form and evaluative kind of writing. They did not show both the disadvantages and advantages of the human impact on the forests. The introduction was often irrelevant to the task, e.g. 'Russia is rich in forests ...', and other similar sentences taken verbatim from the texts. Students who started their answer with phrases such as 'I want to tell you about the destruction of the forests', and those who used incorrect headings, for example, 'We need to protect our forests', went in a completely different direction to that required by the task. In order to meet all the requirements for this kind of writing, there was no room for irrelevancies and personal opinions.