

## Russian B

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-13	14-29	30-46	47-59	60-74	75-89	90-100

#### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-12	13-25	26-42	43-57	58-72	73-87	88-100

### Higher level internal assessment

#### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-3	4-6	7-12	13-17	18-21	22-26	27-30

### Standard level internal assessment

#### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-3	4-6	7-12	13-17	18-21	22-26	27-30

### The range and suitability of the work submitted (HL and SL)

The new format for the Individual Oral (IO) requires the selection of highly appropriate photographs, related to the options studied in class. The presentation should be based on this photograph, while a further discussion should demonstrate the candidate's ability to show his/her cultural awareness, understanding of the option topic and the ability to express complicated notions coherently. All the requirements for this exercise are given in the *Language B* guide (February 2011). At both levels, the majority of centres selected highly appropriate photographs, e.g. celebration of Russian Easter, the

Russian tradition of swimming in winter, typical Russian card players, Russian weddings, protestors in Moscow, Russian bathing rituals, Russian Easter, Russian folk music performances, the Russian stage etc., which initiated further appropriate discussion during the second part of the IO.

In contrast, some of the photos were rather primitive and not culturally relevant to the target language, e.g. the Glastonbury festival, boys playing basketball, general landscapes, sport scenes, a girl smoking, most of which required basic, one word descriptions of the objects shown on the photo. This prevented candidates from demonstrating their oral skills and did not correspond to the requirements of the exercise. In a few cases the captions for the photos were either too general, and did not provide any logical support for the candidate, or just the opposite, were too detailed, and leading.

Some presentations and further discussions at both levels were inappropriate, which created particular problems for the candidates and which did not generate stimulating discussions. In some cases topics as global warming, sport, starvation and politics were discussed using a formal, non-colloquial register making the presentations sound artificial and rehearsed. Candidates did not express their own views and simply recited quotes from secondary sources, which were used to prepare the topic.

In a few cases the required format of the oral exam was not followed: the timing for part 1 was much longer than required (this should be no longer than 4 minutes), the transition to part 2 was not logical and was not connected to the subject discussed. From a discussion of a rather general topic, some teachers asked about the candidate's plans about the future, hobbies or daily routine. This part (which should last 5–6 minutes) should be based on the candidate's presentation but should focus on the candidate's understanding of the target culture (see page 60 of the *Language B guide*).

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### **Criterion A – Productive skills**

Many candidates received good or even excellent marks in this criterion demonstrating a good command of Russian, where the language was often very fluent. The majority of candidates, with a rare exception, were able to show different registers in an appropriate situation. The vocabulary was generally broad, varied or adequate. In a few cases, an inappropriate choice of photograph prevented candidates from demonstrating their linguistic skills.

### **Criterion B – Interactive and receptive skills**

Generally, candidates were able to express their ideas clearly and coherently. They based their presentation on the photo and in the follow-up discussion, guided by the teacher, could demonstrate their own ideas, cultural awareness and maturity of reasoning. Candidates' interaction was, in almost all cases, good and they demonstrated good communication skills.

In some cases however, candidates gave very short or "yes" and "no" answers. The success of the discussion in part 2 depends mainly on the teacher asking stimulating and appropriate questions based on the presentation. But in a few cases, by interrupting candidates or asking them inexplicably long and complicated questions, the teachers did not give candidates an opportunity to show their real potential or to express their views.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

The choice of photograph is crucial; it should be an appropriate and stimulating image, which is not only connected to Russian culture, social problems, rites etc. but is close to the candidates' interests and is appropriate to their level of proficiency. The photograph should trigger an interesting discussion but not to be too simplistic or too general. Teachers should prepare candidates to be able to describe visual images, giving them the necessary terminology, avoiding the repetition of expressions, such as "here we can see" or "here it is shown" and encourage them to use complex sentences rather than one word descriptions.

To improve candidates' oral skills teachers are recommended to use Russian media sources, which are widely available on the Internet. They help candidates to master the language and provide them with up-to-date political and cultural information.

The teacher has to take an active part in the discussion, generating a spontaneous conversation, not a presentation of rehearsed opinions.

Special attention should be paid to the timing of the IO, each individual part not exceeding 3–4 minutes (Part 1) and 5–6 minutes (Part 2).

## Higher level written assignment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-3	4-7	8-11	12-14	15-18	19-21	22-25

## The range and suitability of the work submitted

The standard of the written assignment (WA) was generally good or even excellent. Candidates were able to demonstrate their creative, analytical and linguistic skills. The majority adopted an appropriate creative approach—they produced a new ending, added chapters, wrote personal diaries and even designed a forensic report. Numerous centres opted for Russian classic literature of the XIX century, however some centres selected short modern stories. One centre chose the primary source in Ukrainian which is not appropriate.

Generally all literary choices are perfectly justifiable as each work can trigger prolific discussion and creative interpretation. On the whole, the choice of literary sources was appropriate to the level of linguistic proficiency of the candidates. This new assessment task proved to be an interesting experience for many, which demonstrated a different approach and treatment of a literary source, and showed the real level of the candidate's performance.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

All candidates submitted the required minimum of words.

**Criterion A – Language:** the level of command of Russian was of a good or a very high standard, which was particularly impressive. The majority of candidates showed linguistic fluency, a broad vocabulary range, the ability to use complex structures and grammar constructions. Some candidates, who selected classical literature, even opted for using an obsolete language, imitating XIX century style. They obviously enjoyed this linguistic exercise. However there was also a tendency to use colloquialisms and slang, unsuitable for this purpose. Expressions like “круто”, “прикинь”, “меня кинули”, “тусоваться”, “лапшу на уши вешать” cannot be applicable when discussing Chekhov or Pushkin. Candidates should pay attention when selecting a proper register to match the period they discuss.

Generally all candidates demonstrated good or excellent grammar skills with only few significant errors (verb endings, agreements in cases, spelling mistakes).

**Criterion B – Content:** The majority of candidates handled the selected primary source properly, showed the ability to organise their ideas effectively and demonstrated a good understanding and appreciation of the chosen work. However in a few cases candidates simply retold the plot, which contradicted the very aim of the WA. They obviously demonstrated a good knowledge of the text, but lacked analytical skills.

**Criterion C – Format:** was varied and appropriate, usually creative. However in some assignments it was difficult to recognise a specific text type.

**Criterion D – Rationale:** This proved the most problematic area. Candidates ignored Russian terminology, using instead of “задачи” or “цели письменного задания,” such words as “преамбула”, “рациональное предложение”. This terminology should be provided by teachers. A few centres did not include the Rationale into the WA, but attached it separately as an abstract or preface to the WA or used it as a conclusion at the end of the assignment. Generally candidates could justify their choice of format for the WA, and the register they used for this task.

Many candidates did not write the required 150 words in the rationale, but produced the required number of words in the assignment itself.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Page 41 of the *Language B guide* states that the objective of the WA is to “provide students with a chance to reflect upon and develop further understanding of the literary works read”. It would be appropriate that candidates demonstrate their personal attitude to the selected text, e.g. in the rationale, and the impact it produced.
- Encourage candidates to explore the issue from several angles/points of view and express them both where possible.
- Help candidates select the text, suitable to the level of their proficiency.
- Discuss the register to be used in the WA and advise on specific terminology in order to analyse a literary work, especially for the rationale.

## Standard level written assignment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-3	4-7	8-12	13-15	16-19	20-22	23-25

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range of topics covered was wide, the analysis was effective and many candidates demonstrated sufficient knowledge of Russian, which enabled them to present and discuss an issue from an interesting angle. Generally centres understood the requirements of the WA task, although some misinterpreted the linking of the material to the core topic. Candidates demonstrated good or excellent intertextual reading skills when using all three texts effectively. Most teachers followed the IB guidelines effectively providing the candidates with three original sources. However, it was clear in some cases that candidates had selected the texts themselves with no teacher guidance.

It was evident in some centres that assignments were based on only two texts/sources while other centres provided rather long texts, which are too challenging for candidates at this level.

The WA is supposed to be handwritten, however at least a few centres provided typed, proof-read pieces of work. Some candidates failed to include the rationale with the assignments.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

**Criterion A – Language:** Few assignments were awarded fewer than 4 marks in this criterion. Candidates used complex sentences and grammatical structures, with a vast range of connectives, sentence starters, etc. Simple sentences were managed without any problems. The verbs endings were mostly correct; candidates used confidently the perfect and imperfect forms of verbs, although case agreements often needed further attention. Many candidates demonstrated good accuracy and precision in spelling. The choice of vocabulary ranged from satisfactory to excellent with the use of some idiomatic expressions. On the whole candidates managed to demonstrate considerable accuracy in their performance.

**Criterion B – Content:** Performance was varied in this criterion. Some centres encouraged their candidates to use primary sources as a springboard to develop further the ideas discussed in the texts, to apply in their WA cross-references and quotation from the original texts. Most of the candidates performed well with intertextual reading and referred to two out of the three texts.

**Criterion C – Format:** This criterion saw interesting and varied options—dialogues, diaries, e-mails, newspaper or magazine articles, speeches etc. A number of centres opted for critical reviews or essays, although it was more difficult to use the conventions of this text type in these formats.

**Criterion D – Rationale:** Centres were varied in their approach to this criterion also. Even the translation into Russian of this word proved problematic for candidates. Translations such as “рациональ”, “рациональное предложение” “преамбула” are incorrect; some terms offered by

[www.dic.academic.ru](http://www.dic.academic.ru) would be more suitable, for example, “введение”, “вступление”, “вводная часть” or even “основные цели/задачи”. Many candidates struggled to write 100 words in the rationale, but produced the required number of words in the assignment itself.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Select the most appropriate texts, which can trigger discussion and elicit more personal ideas from the candidates. The texts should reflect the interests of young people and be up-to-date.
- Pay special attention to the rationale, and ensure that candidates reach the required minimum of 100 words. Writing the rationale should not present any difficulties as all it requires is an explanation of the reasons for choosing the topic and the text type.
- Provide sufficient guidance in using special devices for particular formats. Candidates often wrote “plain” text without any understanding of the specific requirements for different forms of expression of their thoughts. Format has been discussed on the IB website and there are clear examples of appropriate conventions for different text types.
- Pay attention to the areas of grammar, which proved to be difficult for many candidates—adjectival agreements, case endings, the role of a noun in a sentence, use of participles and relative clauses, the spelling of proper names.

## Higher level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-10	11-22	23-31	32-36	37-45	46-56	57-60

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

A number of candidates struggled with short answer questions, particularly with selecting the relevant details from texts B, C and D. Stronger candidates were able to find the correct answers. Weaker candidates appeared confused with the True/False with justification questions; some gave a correct justification but ticked the wrong box or vice versa, which resulted in zero mark. Matching and open-ended exercises demonstrated, in some cases, a poor understanding of the text or a limited vocabulary. There were some problems in finding the correct meaning from MCQ exercises, especially in text D, and in giving a conclusive short answer (QQ. 40, 49) demonstrating general misunderstanding of the ideas expressed in texts D and E. Some answers were not relevant to particular questions.

### The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Although this was a new format, most candidates performed very well and demonstrated good/excellent understanding of the general concept conveyed in the texts, especially texts A, B, C and E. The general level of competence was high as usual. The majority of candidates showed good or excellent knowledge of grammar, syntax and an excellent or good range of vocabulary. They were able to demonstrate competence in text handling (the tasks relating to both intensive and extensive reading). They also demonstrated good attention to detail as well as generally excellent understanding of the ideas expressed in the texts. Fewer problems were found in texts A and E. Many candidates understood and completed all the tasks and the proportion of good marks was higher than last year.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Many candidates obtained full or high marks for texts A, B and E.

**Text A** did not present any difficulties and most candidates achieved maximum points. Question 3 (looking for a detail in the text) presented a problem for a small number of candidates.

**Text B** also did not present many problems. Some candidates misunderstood the word “a quarter” which substituted the figure “25%” from the text (question 11).

**Text C** was more difficult to handle. Question 17 in the True/False exercise was problematic for a small number of candidates, while QQ.18 and 19 (finding the correct meaning of the word) were difficult for more candidates.

**Text D**, a short story written by a modern writer, caused more problems, which perhaps indicated that it was not carefully read, or understood too literally. Many candidates encountered some difficulties with the matching exercise (QQ. 33–35), (although this type of exercise seemed to be less problematic than last year), as well as with the short answer questions (QQ.30 (a), (b) and 40). The last question (question 40) required non mechanical, attentive reading of the text, which proved to be hard for weaker candidates.

**Text E** was well understood and interpreted. MCQ and short answer questions did not present any problems apart from question 49, where weaker candidates failed.

It seems that the new Paper 1 format (without section B) was easier to handle, which is fully reflected in a high percentage of excellent and good marks.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Ensure that candidates read the instructions and understand the task they have to complete according to the information in the *Language B guide*, the format of the required answers and the exact meaning of the terms used in the tasks—word, phrase, expression etc
- Practice more written grammar and spelling exercises and answer techniques required for each particular task.
- Study more texts of different genres and analyse them in detail in order to improve performance in text D.

- Practice rephrasing exercises, in order to express the same ideas using synonyms or antonyms, transforming verbs into verbal nouns, nouns into adjectives etc.
- Pay attention to candidates' writing skills—punctuation, paragraphs, capital letters, hand writing.

## Standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-7	8-14	15-20	21-28	29-36	37-40	41-45

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Although a new format of Paper 1 has been introduced, most candidates handled this component well. Some problematic areas were mainly linked to a partial comprehension of the texts. The easiest was text A, the most difficult, texts C and D.

### The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

A wide range of marks—from low to excellent—were awarded, but most candidates handled the paper well. They showed sufficient knowledge of grammar, syntax and a good vocabulary range to demonstrate relevant competence. More marks were gained in the short written responses, true /false and MCQs. Many candidates understood the tasks and the proportion of good marks was higher than last year.

### The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

**Text A** was the easiest and many candidates achieved maximum marks, although weaker candidates could not find correct justifications in the True/False task (QQ. 3, 4) even after having selected the right answer. QQ. 6–8 (short answer questions) did not present difficulties for the majority of candidates.

Weaker candidates were confused with QQ. 11–13 (finding the endings from the text) in Text B. Although the general level of performance was good, vocabulary MCQ questions (15 and 16) presented some difficulty to some candidates.

Short answer questions did not present many problems in **Text C** but it was apparent that some candidates did not read the text carefully. Gap filling exercises seemed to be more problematic; some candidates appeared to be mainly guessing, rather than actually knowing the correct forms of the words. Questions 23–25 proved difficult for some candidates who misunderstood the text.



Some weaker candidates struggled with QQ. 28–31 (matching answers with questions) in **Text D**, which required an in depth understanding of the text. Short answer questions were generally less problematic, although some candidates were simply guessing and gave incorrect answers. QQ. 38 and 39 also presented some difficulties; not all candidates were able to find the nouns, substituted by pronouns in the text. Practically all candidates gained the mark for question 40.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Ensure that candidates read the instructions and understand the task they have to complete according to the information in the *Language B guide*, the format of the required answers and the exact meaning of the terms used in the tasks—word, phrase, expression etc
- Practice more written grammar and spelling exercises and answer techniques required for each particular task.
- Study more texts of different genres and analyse them in detail in order to improve candidates' reading and comprehension performance especially in text D.
- Practise interview exercises—analyse the structure of an interview, ask candidates to compose their own questions based on the given answers, in order to prepare them for similar exercises, as in this year's text D.

## Higher level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-7	8-14	15-22	23-29	30-35	36-41	42-45

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

The new format for Paper 2 saw the majority of candidates gaining high marks for criteria B and C of Section A, but again some lost marks in criterion A (in Sections A and B) by making numerous grammar and spelling mistakes. Some candidates still struggle to produce the required text type and wrote a simple short essay instead of a letter, a speech or an interview. One or two candidates responded to only one section rather than both and did not meet the required 250 and 150 word count which resulted in a lower mark for language (criterion A). Generally the register was appropriate to the task but some candidates were unable to use an appropriate register and format.

### The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

There was a high proportion of excellent essays, creative and imaginative, the language was fluent and idiomatic, the content sophisticated and coherent.

The majority of candidates showed excellent or good competence in idiomatic language and were able to express adequately their personal views and opinions.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

**Topic 1** attracted 12% of candidates (an email about superstitious Russians who pay huge attention to different signs and omens), where they followed the proposed format with the address and signature, and demonstrated a rich vocabulary and a very good knowledge of Russian rites and habits. Some of them compared Russian superstitions with their national ones, which gave an extra dimension to their argument.

**Topic 2** (a blog entry about Russian and Western girls) was more popular among candidates (18%), who demonstrated a good knowledge of Russian life, a wide range of vocabulary and grammar with some attempts to give a proper explanation of social issues, provoking different attitudes to fashion and perceptions of image in Russia and in the West.

**Topic 3** (speech about whether it should be a priority to become or stay as thin as possible) was the most popular with 49% of candidates opting for it. Practically all candidates followed the correct format using rhetorical devices, but the content varied from banal daily routine and some menus to sophisticated and highly appropriate scientific arguments in favour of healthy eating.

Fewer candidates (11%) opted for **Topic 4**, a review of the event “A Night at the Museum”, which presented a challenge. Some candidates discussed not only their personal experience, but gave interesting arguments regarding the importance of culture and, particularly, of visual art in human life. Some of them limited themselves by describing the process itself without analysing the meaning and the importance of this new event.

**Topic 5** (an article on what achievement or scientific invention of the last decade was considered to be the most important) also was challenging and attracted only 10% of candidates. These produced convincing responses demonstrating their scientific or technical awareness, as well as extremely good vocabulary, the use of idioms and metaphors.

Some of these essays were creative and interesting, well-phrased and fluent; but weaker candidates simply used the opportunity to express common or prepared in advance ideas about general health or hobbies, without any connection to the required theme.

Section B was based on a stimulus discussing the future of electronic books. The majority of candidates showed excellent or good performance in criterion A, and were able to demonstrate maturity of thought, good reasoning and produce a coherent argument. In contrast, weaker candidates did not understand the question and wrote a short essay about the importance of computers in our life or about the necessity of reading. These responses lost marks in criterion B (argument).

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Practise the skills required for the Paper 2 task.

- Remind candidates to select the topic carefully but not to use pre-prepared work which is often not an exact match to the requirements of the question and which is ultimately counterproductive.
- Remind candidates to follow strictly the format and its requirements.
- Train candidates to use proper devices prescribed by a particular genre.
- Ensure candidates respect the structure of the paper: to write a title, a heading paragraph and an appropriate conclusion.
- Practise writing the prescribed minimum number of words for both sections within a fixed time.
- Practise writing responses based on a given stimulus in all core topics.

## Standard level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-16	17-21	22-25

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some candidates struggled to follow the required format; they did not use appropriate devices for a blog entry or a speech or selected a wrong register or rhetorical devices. A few candidates wrote essays containing fewer than the required 250 words. Common problems were grammar and spelling mistakes and poor punctuation. Often the essays were not properly structured (no introduction or conclusion, no clear paragraphs or capital letters). In some cases candidates used a pre-prepared topic to express non-related ideas.

### The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

A high proportion of essays displayed a good level of creativity, maturity of thought and written skills. The clarity of expression was appropriate to the subject. The language accuracy, the choice of register, the vocabulary was excellent or good. The argument was logical and coherent, the essay well structured. The best candidates were able to express their personal views and opinions as well as cultural or social awareness.

### The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

**Topic 1** (speech about the importance of visiting Russia) was selected by 29% of candidates, where they could demonstrate their personal experience with the understanding of the methods of studying foreign languages.

**Topic 2** (an advertisement for a café with Russian cuisine) attracted 14% candidates. Some responses were really creative and demonstrated a good knowledge of Russian traditional food, while weaker candidates just described events like dancing or singing without paying any attention to the requirement of the topic.

The most popular was **Topic 3** (a blog entry about the importance of taking part in a bike trip with others from your centre). The best candidates followed the proposed format and were able not only to express their own ideas but also to show their grasp of relevant writing and linguistic skills.

**Topic 4** (report about a concert in support of stray animals) was less popular (6%), but it was challenging. Candidates demonstrated a good social awareness, a wide range of vocabulary and grammar with some attempts to attract attention to this important issue.

**Topic 5** (interview with the creator of *Facebook*) attracted 21% of candidates who combined the requirement for the interview with, sometimes, outstanding knowledge of technical and ethical issues of this popular website. A few candidates did not follow the required format and wrote an essay about the importance of *Facebook* in our life. However, other candidates ignored the format of the topic or produced fewer than 250 words, which resulted in repetition of ideas and a poor structure. Register, style and audience (rhetorical devices) were not always appropriate.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Practise the skills required for the Paper 2 task.
- Remind candidates to select the topic carefully but not to use pre-prepared work which is often not an exact match to the requirements of the question and which is ultimately counterproductive.
- Remind candidates to follow strictly the format and its requirements.
- Train candidates to use proper devices prescribed by a particular genre.
- Ensure candidates respect the structure of the paper: to write a title, a heading paragraph and an appropriate conclusion.
- Practice writing the prescribed minimum number of words within a fixed time.
- Improve written skills, especially orthography and punctuation.