2023 VCE Russian written external assessment report

General comments

In 2023 students and teachers were familiar with most of the specifications for the VCE Russian written examination. Students who achieved high scores were able to identify the information from the aural and written texts and to give well-structured and detailed responses that addressed the questions effectively. They demonstrated an excellent command of the language and used a broad range of vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures.

In Section 1: Listening and Responding, students were assessed on how well they understood general and specific aspects of texts by identifying and analysing information, and on how well they conveyed the information accurately and appropriately. Although it was evident that some students understood the listening passages, they did not always interpret specific details accurately and, at times, added their own information in their answers. While some students wrote very little in the note-taking space, others had the correct answer in the note-taking space, but did not include it in their response.

In Section 2: Reading and Responding, some responses did not identify the right information for the right question in Part A, although the students seemingly understood the content of the given texts. While most students were able to grasp and retell key ideas of the text in Part B, only students who scored highly demonstrated depth in the treatment of the task through the development of relevant information, ideas and opinions relating to the text.

In Section 3: Writing in Russian, students who received high marks were able to demonstrate depth and breadth in the treatment of the task through the presentation and development of relevant information, ideas and opinions. Students who scored highly demonstrated extensive knowledge and understanding of vocabulary, tense, mood and syntax; they were able to manipulate Russian authentically and creatively, and structured ideas and information coherently and effectively.

It is important to note that students should read the question carefully to understand the exact nature of the task. It is also important to be aware of the language (English or Russian) in which the question needs to be answered. In Sections 1 and 2, students are advised to note the number of marks allocated to the questions (as well as the visual prompts such as tables and bullet points provided). This is an indication of how many answers should be provided by the student to each specific question. Where students provided more than the required number of answers, only the required number of responses were assessed in the order in which they had been submitted. For example, if a question asked for six paper products that cannot be recycled and eight were provided, only the first six were assessed. Students should use a variety of listening and reading materials to improve their comprehension and their note-taking skills.

Students of Russian should be advised to consolidate their knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary that are expected at VCE level and develop a clear understanding of different styles of writing. They should be able to apply their knowledge and writing skills to a range of question types and not rely on prepared responses.

For language to be of a higher level, students should focus on spelling, grammar, expression and vocabulary. Common errors occurred with:

* word choice: common errors were житьё под водой (instead of жизнь под водой – life under water), грёзать о чём-то (instead of грезить о чём-то – to dream about something), одеть ботинки (instead of надеть ботинки – put on boots), будильник кричал (instead of будильник звенел – alarm was ringing), удивился её спокойности (instead of удивился её спокойствию – I was surprised at her calmness)
* calques: common errors were это очень интересный топик (instead of это очень интересная тема – it is a very interesting topic), блондинные волосы (instead of светлые волосы – blond hair), журналист спрашивает футуролога вопросы (instead of журналист задаёт футурологу вопросы – a journalist asks a futurologist questions)
* declension of nouns, especially
* errors with the genitive case (больше время instead of больше времени – more time; запах ромашок instead of запах ромашек – a scent of chamomiles; с помощи технологий instead of с помощью технологий – with the help of technology; мир без рекламов instead of мир без рекламы – the world without advertisements)
* errors with the accusative case (услышали мне instead of услышали меня – have heard me; смотреть рекламы instead of смотреть рекламу – to watch advertisements) and
* errors with prepositional case usage (в этих умных городов instead of в этих умных городах – in these clever cities; о преимущества новый технологию instead of о преимуществах новых технологий – about advantages of new technologies; человек не будет работать в будущее instead of человек не будет работать в будущем – a man will not work in the future; я думаю о моего дня instead of я думаю о моём дне – I think about my day)
* usage of adjectives, pronouns and verbs in the past tense in appropriate gender and number: интересный интервью (instead of интересное интервью – an interesting interview), наша будущее (instead of наше будущее – our future), мой читатели (instead of мои читатели – my readers), горло болел (instead of горло болело – the throat was sore)
* verbal aspect: не будет изменит наши жизни (instead of не изменит наши жизни – it will not change our lives), давайте обсуждаем (instead of давайте обсудим – let’s discuss)
* sentence structure, especially the usage of «который» and constructions with participles and gerunds: common errors were про пользу, которая она нам приносит (instead of про пользу, которую она нам приносит – about the benefits it brings us); комната, освещённа утренним солнцем (instead of комната, освещённая утренним солнцем – a room lit by the morning sun); резко соскочив с кровати, меня одолела паника (instead of резко соскочив с кровати, я запаниковал(а) – abruptly jumping out of bed I panicked)
* spelling mistakes concerning verb conjugation (танцевают instead of танцуют – they dance, увидем instead of увидим – we will see), unstressed vowels (протинув руку instead of протянув руку – holding out his/her hand), unpronounceable consonants (учавствовать instead of участвовать – to participate; путешевствовать instead of путешествовать – to travel)
* style and register: это будет круто (instead of это будет здорово, чудесно, замечательно – it will be great), будут прикольными (instead of будут вызывать восхищение, будут необычными, забавными – they will be admired), это вообще жесть (instead of негодование, вызванное чем-то неприятным – this is awful), мне капут (instead of мне конец – I am in a big trouble).

Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section 1: Listening and Responding

It is important that students make good use of the space provided for note-taking, but they should also be reminded that answers written in the note-taking space are not awarded marks.

Part A – Listening and responding in English

Students who scored highly were careful to understand the requirements of each task and provided responses that met each criterion. Answers in Russian in Part A of the Listening and Responding did not receive any marks. Students are encouraged to read the instructions in the examination booklet carefully and highlight the key task words.

Text 1

Most students handled this text well. Incorrect answers in Question 1a. included ‘the winners will be decided by the city’s governors’ and ‘1st of October’. In Question 1b., some of the responses were too short and did not receive full marks as they did not include key words, for example, ‘youth events’ / ‘young people’, ‘places for leisure/entertainment / spending free time’.

Question 1a.

Conditions for voting in the competition were:

* Everyone can vote regardless of age.
* The voting ends in December.

Question 1b.

The benefits that the winning city would bring to its region were:

* Many youth events of the country will be organised in the winner-city.
* New leisure places for young people will be created and remain in the city forever.

Text 2

Question 2

The paper products that cannot be recycled were

* milk or juice cartons
* paper cups
* laminated photo paper
* greasy wrapping paper or paper with food stains
* receipts from shopping
* shredded paper.

Answers such as ‘exercise books’, ‘textbooks’ and ‘journals’ did not receive marks. When students mentioned ‘laminated paper’, it was important to specify ‘photo paper’. Similarly, for ‘wrapping paper’, it was necessary to use descriptors such as ‘greasy’ or ‘with food stains’ or ‘marks’ on it.

Text 3

Question 3

The answers to the question on what makes the island of Kizhi unique were:

* The island is entirely occupied by an open-air ethnic museum.
* Domes of bell towers, churches and temples are made entirely out of wood, but they look as though they were made of gold and silver.
* The Kizhi structures were built without a single nail, with an axe only.
* The summer church has 22 domes.
* There is no modern transport on the island (there are horses, bicycles, getting around on foot).
* It has an atmosphere of the past (or historical atmosphere).

It was important to accurately convey the information and not to make up any new information. For example, the following answer ‘churches are made entirely out of wood, but they look as though they were made of gold and silver’ was incorrect as in the text this description was of domes of bell towers or tops of buildings.

Part B – Listening and responding in Russian

Students were assessed on their understanding of the listening text and their ability to accurately convey appropriate information from the text in Russian. The information presented in the response needed to be relevant to the question. Students were not awarded separate marks for language. Responses that included the relevant information and were expressed clearly in Russian were awarded full marks. Answers in English in Part B of the Listening and Responding did not receive any marks.

Text 4

Question 4

Most students scored well on this question. Correct responses were:

* Любой, независимо от возраста и образования, может принимать участие в Тотальном диктанте. (Anyone can participate in the Russian Grammar and Spelling Competition Event regardless of age and education.)
* Всё организовано, как красивый праздник. (The Russian Grammar and Spelling Competition Event is organised as a special cultural festive occasion.)
* Тотальный диктант объединяет разных и интересных людей. (The Russian Grammar and Spelling Competition Event brings together different and interesting people.)
* Диктант пишут одновременно по всему миру, очно и заочно. (The event takes place at the same time around the world, in person and online.)
* Диктант пишут от руки (не на компьютере). (It is written by hand [not on computer].)

Text 5

While it was evident that students understood the text, some did not receive full marks because they did not provide full explanations in Question 5a., e.g. including people with particular interests and the way New Year’s Eve can be celebrated by them in one sentence. «Для домоседов – завалиться на диван» (‘for homebodies – to get on the sofa’) was not considered a correct answer as the text provided different advice.

Most students identified a well-known New Year’s saying mentioned in the interview in Question 5b., but a few students did not explain its meaning. Incorrect explanations included: «независимо от интересов, всем хочется праздновать Новый год» (‘Regardless of interests, everyone wants to celebrate the New Year.’) and «это твой праздник – увлекайся» (‘It’s your celebration – let loose’.).

Question 5a.

Correct responses were:

* Общительным людям или тем, кому наскучило отмечать дома, рекомендуется отмечать Новый год в незнакомой компании. (Sociable people or those who would be bored celebrating at home are advised to celebrate the New Year in the company of unknown people.)
* Любителям новых впечатлений рекомендуется самим организовать праздник (взять на себя организацию праздника или придумать культурную программу). (Those who love new impressions are advised to take over the organisation of the New Year celebration [to organise a celebration or to invent a cultural program for the event].)
* Домоседам или людям, не любящим шумные вечеринки, рекомендуется побаловать себя или встать с дивана. (Homebodies or those who don’t like noisy parties are advised to treat themselves to something or get off the sofa.)

Question 5b.

Correct responses were:

* Новогодняя примета – «Как Новый год встретишь, так его и проведёшь». (New Year's saying – ‘As you meet the New Year, so you will spend it.’)
* Люди верят, что настрой, с которым они проведут новогоднюю ночь, вполне может распространиться на весь год (на оставшиеся 364 дня). (People believe that the mood with which they will celebrate New Year's Eve may well extend to the whole year [to the remaining 364 days].)

Text 6

The information presented in the response needed to be relevant to Questions 6a. and 6b., respectively. For example, the answer «в Нидерландах назвали самолёт именем Анны Павловой» (in the Netherlands there was an airplane named after Anna Pavlova) was not an appropriate answer to Question 6a., and the answer «спектакль стал символом России» (the performance became a symbol of Russia) was not relevant to Question 6b.

Question 6a.

Correct responses were:

* Танец «Лебедь» сделал Анну Павлову знаменитой или танец «Лебедь» – её визитная карточка. (The ‘Swan’ dance made Anna Pavlova famous / The ‘Swan’ dance is her calling card.)
* Символ русского балета или самый узнаваемый танец (The symbol of Russian ballet or the most recognized dance)
* Был создан в короткий срок или был создан именно для Павловой. (It was choreographed particularly for Pavlova / It was choreographed in the shortest possible time.)

Question 6b.

Correct responses were:

* Сорт белых тюльпанов назван именем Анны Павловой. (A variety of white tulips was named after Anna Pavlova.)
* В Нидерландах её именем назвали самолет. (An airplane was named after her in the Netherlands.)
* Открытый почти полвека назад астероид назван в её честь. (An asteroid discovered almost half a century ago was named after her.)

Section 2: Reading and Responding

In this part of the examination, students were assessed on their understanding of general and specific aspects of the reading texts. The information presented in the response needed to be relevant to the question.

Question 7a.

Relevant responses to this question were:

* optical anomalies (or ‘bright nights of 1908’) across Western Europe and Siberia
* silver clouds (or skies)
* inexplicable seismic waves, the strength of a magnitude 5 earthquake
* magnetic storms occurred all over the world
* fallen trees (or forest fires / broken windows in houses)

Question 7b.

Relevant responses to this question were:

* The government officials were mostly concerned about political changes in the country.
* The Tunguska meteorite fell in a hard-to-reach (or low-populated) area, and local leaders did not consider it important to send an expedition there.

Students are reminded to ensure that they respond to the correct question. For example, the response ‘bright nights of 1908’ was only relevant in Question 7a, and did not receive any marks when it was provided in Question 7b.

Question 8

Relevant answers to this question were as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Tendency | Example |
| ‘Ideological’ (or ‘idea’) consumption  (following a particular lifestyle / joining a community) | Healthy eating, yoga or vegetarianism |
| ‘Aesthetical’ consumption (emotional experiences / new experiences) | Tourism (travel) / museums |

While most students were able to correctly provide details of the ‘ideological’ consumption, the second answer (‘aesthetical’ consumption) was often mistaken with ‘smart consumption’ – buying only essential items – and economy of resources such as water and electricity.

Question 9

Students were asked to read the interview about living in the future and to write a blog post evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of the new innovations mentioned in the interview. Student responses were assessed holistically according to the assessment criteria published on the VCAA website. It was expected that characteristics of the blog post would be successfully applied and that the writing would be personal and evaluative. The advantages and disadvantages of the new innovations could have included the following points:

* Бытовая техника будет всё делать за человека (household appliances will do everything for a person)
* Компьютер поможет разумно расходовать энергию (the computer will help to use energy wisely)
* Компьютер помещён на шлем или вживлён в тело человека (a computer is placed on a helmet or is implanted in a person's body)
* Компьютер сможет менять физический и психический образ человека (the computer will be able to change the physical and mental image of a person)
* Человек-киборг сможет жить на Луне или в океане (a human cyborg will be able to live on the moon or in the ocean).

High-scoring responses provided clear, well-structured personal evaluations and displayed critical thinking. Some students offered a title for their blog entry, such as «Жизнь в будущем» (‘Life in the future’), «Жизнь и будущее» (‘Life and the future’), «Что случится в будущем?» (‘What will happen in the future?’), «К чему нас приведёт прогресс?» (‘What will the progress lead us to?’). Most responses started with a greeting directed to blog readers, e.g. «Дорогие подписчики!» (‘Dear subscribers!’), «Привет всем читателям моего блога!» (‘Hello to all the readers of my blog!’) and finished with a concluding sentence and an invitation to like the post, e.g. «В итоге» (‘In summary’), «Подводя итог, я с уверенностью могу сказать» (‘To sum up, I can confidently say’), «Поставьте лайк» (‘Like this post’). A number of responses finished with an open question, inviting readers to comment on the topic raised. Students then added commentaries from potential readers, successfully creating a dialogue with the blog author and continuing the evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the new innovations.

In addition, in the main part of their blog entry, students who received high marks

* offered their personal opinions: «Моя оценка такова» (‘My evaluation is as follows’), «Сегодня я хотел/хотела высказать своё мнение» (‘Today I would like to express my opinion’), «Данная возможность меня пугает» (‘This possibility scares me’), «Но это не то, что меня больше всего волнует» (‘But this is not what I am most worried about’)
* clearly indicated that they were evaluating advantages and disadvantages of the new innovations: «С одной стороны» (‘On one hand’), «С другой стороны» (‘On the other hand’), «В то же время» (‘At the same time’), «Из положительных аспектов можно выделить» (‘On the positive side, it could be highlighted’), «Начнём с преимуществ» (‘We’ll start with advantages’), «Но есть и недостатки» (‘But there are disadvantages’)
* asked questions: «Вы когда-нибудь задумывались, как будет выглядеть мир в будущем?» (‘Have you ever thought about how the world will look in the future?’), «Неужели из нас хотят сделать роботов?» (‘Do they want to turn us into robots?’), «Будет ли это этично?» (‘Will this be ethical?’)
* manipulated Russian authentically and creatively: «пополнить арсенал своих обширных знаний» (‘enrich your arsenal of extensive knowledge’), «проблема загрязнённого окружающего мира» (‘the problem of the polluted environment’), «безэмоциональные контролируемые киборги» (‘emotionless controlled cyborgs’), «процесс становления личности» (‘the process of personality formation’), «мы подходим к будущему с мерками прошлого» (‘we approach the future by the standards of the past’), including usage of proverbs «Без труда не выловишь и рыбку из пруда» (‘You can’t take a fish out of the pond without effort’).

Lower-scoring responses simply paraphrased information from the presented article. Some students struggled with punctuation in constructions with the direct speech, often following the rules of English. Responses were required to be in a form of a blog post, therefore, phrases such as «Здравствуй, дорогой дневник!» (‘Hello dear diary’) and «Привет всем зрителям!» (‘Hello to all viewers!’) in the introduction were not relevant.

Section 3: Writing in Russian

In this section of the examination, students chose one of three questions, each requiring a different text type and a different style of writing: an imaginative story (Question 10), a letter of recommendation (Question 11) and a speech for the school assembly (Question 12). All three questions were attempted by students, with an even spread between the questions.

Generally, students demonstrated a good understanding of the requirements of the task and made correct use of the required kind of writing and text type for each of the questions.

While most students were able to include relevant content in their response, difficulties with grammar and language accuracy were a key issue impacting the level of achievement.

Students who scored highly demonstrated

* depth of treatment of information, ideas and/or opinions
* wrote a text appropriate and relevant to context, purpose and audience
* structured and sequenced information and ideas
* manipulated language structures and vocabulary in Russian.

As an area of improvement students are advised to practise writing extended responses within a specified timeframe. They also need to ensure that they address the specific audience, purpose and text type required.

Question 10

Students were asked to imagine that they are inside the painting of Russian artist Ekaterina Syromyatnikova. They were required to write an imaginative story for a youth magazine about what happened next. Thus, an imaginative, narrative kind of writing was required for magazine readers. A key issue preventing students from receiving high marks in structuring the story was focusing entirely on the description of the nature or of the room depicted in the painting and not providing a description of events or adventures.

Students who received high scores provided a title for their story, for example, «Неожиданная встреча» (‘An unexpected meeting’), «Оживающая картина» (‘A painting comes alive’), «Волшебное утро» (‘A magical morning’), «Интересный сон» (‘An interesting dream’). A few students provided an indication that the article is written for a magazine by providing a publication date, a magazine title, a number and issue for the magazine and the city of publication. Students who scored highly also demonstrated a skilful usage of language by employing:

* adjectives and participles: лёгкий летний ветерок (a light summer breeze), ярко-голубое небо (bright blue sky), сладкий свежий запах (sweet fresh smell), мягкий тёплый свет (soft warm light), маленькие капли росы (small dew drops), звонкий хохот (ringing laughter), cказал испуганным шёпотом (said in a frightened whisper)
* adverbs: неохотно встала с кровати (reluctantly got out of bed), медленно открыв глаза (slowly opening his/her eyes), сказал недоверчиво (said incredulously), пристально осматривают комнату (looking intently at the room), солнце ярко осветило комнату (the sun brightly lighted the room)
* questions: Как я сюда попала? (How did I get here?), Это был просто сон? (Was it just a dream?).

Students who scored highly also included reflections on how the painting could have changed the boys' mindset regarding the most important things in life and universal values, such as their attitude towards nature, their perception of beauty in the surrounding world or talent and creative work.

Question 11

In Question 11, students were asked to write a letter to their uncle who recently opened a new pet shop, persuading him to employ their good friend for a sales consultant position. Many students followed the conventions of a letter of recommendation and included a greeting, a main part and a closing. They structured ideas logically and creatively, stating clearly in the main part of the letter why their friend should be employed.

Most students started their letter with an appropriate greeting («Уважаемый дядя!» or «Дорогой дядя!» – ‘Dear uncle!’). In many answers the greeting was followed by an introduction and a connecting sentence taking the reader to the main part of the letter («Хочу вас поздравить с открытием зоомагазина» – ‘I would like to congratulate you on opening a pet shop’, «Вы обращались ко мне с просьбой найти подходящего претендента на должность продавца-консультанта» – ‘You have asked me to find a suitable candidate for the position of sales consultant’).

In the body of the letter, suggested points may have included (but were not limited to):

* the friend is the perfect match for the role of a shop assistant
* qualifications
* experience
* personal and interpersonal traits
* active lifestyle
* goes the extra mile
* willing to help
* respected by friends and schoolteachers
* professional qualities
* facts and events of the friend’s life that caught the student’s attention
* the circumstances of the student’s acquaintance.

High-scoring answers included a number of reasons for employment: общительный (companionable), ответственный (responsible), надёжный (trustworthy), перфекционист (perfectionist), учится на биологическом факультете (studies at a biological faculty), уже работал в зоомагазине (has already worked at a pet shop), готов работать за троих (ready to do the same amount of work as three people) as well as provided real-life examples of handling difficult situations or caring for animals.

Appropriate closure of the letter was required, e.g. «Твой племянник Вася» (‘Your nephew Vasia’). Closures that did not refer to a nephew/niece, e.g. «Твой любимый внук» (‘Your favourite grandchild) or «Твой родитель» (‘Your parent’) were not relevant.

Question 12

In this question, students were required to write an evaluative script for a speech they will present at their school assembly, informing their peers about the potential positive and negative impacts that advertising can have on young people. Responses were expected to demonstrate the characteristics of a speech text type and use emotive language to create the desired atmosphere.

Some of the students chose to provide a title for their speech: «Реклама в нашем обществе» (‘Advertising in our society’), «Современная культура потребления» (‘Modern culture of consumption’). In high-scoring answers students greeted their peers first: «Дорогие мои одноклассники!» (‘My dear classmates!’), «Приветствую всех на сегодняшнем школьном собрании!» (‘I greet everyone at today’s school assembly!’) and then provided a connecting sentence to bring attention of their listeners to the main part of the speech: «Сегодня мы затронем немаловажную тему» (‘Today we will touch upon an important topic.’).

Suggested points may have included (but were not limited to):

* young people often buy goods and services on display
* chasing fashion trends
* tendency to imitate
* young people are in an active phase of socialisation, when individuals learn the system of norms and values imposed by advertising, allowing them to function as a full member of the community
* young people, open to everything new and unusual, become unprotected from the manipulation of advertising
* highly educated psychologists work in advertising to exploit all the weaknesses of the younger generation, who are in search of their own style.

Students who scored highly wrote well-structured speeches, used introductory phrases: «во-первых» (‘firstly’), «во-вторых» (‘secondly’), «в-третьих» (‘thirdly’); expressed their opinions: «Должен признаться, что ...» (‘I have to admit that …’), «Возможно, вы со мной не согласитесь, но ...» (‘You will probably disagree with me, but …’), «У каждого есть своё мнение» (‘Everyone has their opinion’); demonstrated breadth in the treatment of the task: «Реклама имеет много подводных камней» (‘Advertising has many pitfalls’), «Реклама заставляет молодых людей покупать ненужные вещи» (‘Advertising makes young people buy unnecessary things’), «Реклама может стать оружием в руках рекламодателя» (‘Advertising can become a weapon in the hands of the advertiser’), «Прежде чем покупать что-либо, подумайте дважды, действительно ли так необходима вам эта вещь» (‘Before you buy anything, think twice if you need it’) and thanked peers for their attention: «Спасибо за внимание!» (‘Thank you for your attention!’).