2024 VCE Russian written external assessment report

General comments

Students demonstrated familiarity with most aspects of the examination requirements. They were able to identify information from both aural and written sources and provide well-structured, detailed responses to the questions. High-scoring responses demonstrated a strong command of Russian, using a broad range of vocabulary, varied sentence structures and accurate grammar.

In Section 1: Listening and responding, students were assessed on their comprehension of general and specific aspects of Russian audio texts by their ability to identify and analyse information and to convey this information in English and Russian. Although it is evident that most students understood the listening passages, they did not always align their answers with the questions and sometimes included information that was not present in the text. Students are encouraged to read each question carefully and note the number of marks allocated to that question, as well as any visual prompts such as tables and bullet points. Students who write extensive lists of answers in the hope of including a correct guess could be doing themselves a disservice, as assessors will only consider the first required number of responses (as specified by the task).

In Section 2: Reading and responding, most students demonstrated strong reading skills, accurately identifying specific information from complex texts. In Part A, however, some students focused on translating the texts rather than directly addressing the questions. In Part B, most students successfully extracted the required information from the diagram and table. High-scoring responses showed depth in their treatment of the task by effectively incorporating this information into their persuasive arguments and clearly articulating it in Russian.

In Section 3: Writing in Russian, students demonstrated a good understanding of text types and writing styles, clearly identifying the context, purpose and intended audience when selecting a topic. Higher-scoring students presented relevant information, ideas and opinions with depth, structured their work coherently and used Russian authentically and creatively. They showcased an excellent command of vocabulary, tense, mood and syntax.

In 2024, typical areas for improvement include:

* word choice: for example, some students used в следующую субботу я ходил instead of прошлую субботу я ходил (last Saturday I went …); спросить вопросы instead of задать вопросы/спросить (to ask questions); в коем случае instead of в любом случае (in any case); у тебя есть хорошие выборы instead of у тебя есть хороший выбор (you have good choices); сильно рекомендую instead of очень рекомендую (I highly recommend); решили впуститься instead of решили войти (decided to enter); живущий задолго после нашего времени instead of живущий в далёком будущем (living in the distant future)
* calques in sentence structure and expressions; for example, some students used: я оставлю тебя с этой информацией instead of я дам тебе подумать (I will leave you with this information/I will let you think about it); в кратком instead of вкратце (in short); напиши мне обратно instead of ответь мне/напиши мне ответ (write back to me); поделить свою рецензию instead of поделиться рецензией (to share one’s review); ты победил олимпиаду instead of ты победил в олимпиаде (you won the Olympiad/competition); спасибо за ваше время instead of спасибо, что вы нашли время для меня/уделили мне время (thank you for your time); это был первый раз я заплакал instead of это был первый раз, когда я заплакал (it was the first time I cried)
* declension of nouns, participles or numerals, especially
* in genitive; for example, some students used снимали сущность жизнь instead of снимали сущность жизни (captured the essence of life); знаешь кому нужно спросить instead of знаешь кого нужно спросить (you know who to ask); сферов продаж instead of сфер продаж (sales sectors); много картин, созданные … instead of много картин, созданных … (many paintings created …)
* in accusative; for example, some students used все знают этого фильма instead of все знают этот фильм (everyone knows this movie); покупать машин instead of покупать машины (to buy cars)
* in instrumental; for example, some students used неделя перед экзаменов instead of неделя перед экзаменами (the week before the exam); познакомишься с многих новых людей instead of познакомишься с многими новыми людьми/с большим количеством новых людей (you will meet many new people); между двоя героев instead of между двумя героями (between the two characters)
* in prepositional; some students used в сегодняшних фильмов instead of в сегодняшних фильмах (in today’s/recent movies); в аварией instead of в аварии (in an accident)
* use of gender; some students used музыка был прекрасно instead of музыка была прекрасная (the music was beautiful); уникальный интервью instead of уникальное интервью (unique interview); в обеих университетах instead of в обоих университетах (in both universities); жить в скучной Иркутске instead of жить в скучном Иркутске (to live in boring Irkutsk); фильм, которое … instead of фильм, который … (a movie that …)
* verbal governance; some students used определиться на будущую карьеру instead of определиться с будущей карьерой (decide on a future career); рекомендую всех посмотреть этот фильм instead of рекомендую всем посмотреть этот фильм (I recommend everyone watch this movie); предлагали об этом instead of предлагали это (suggested this)
* verb form (conjugation); some students usedосознавают instead of осознают (they realise); рекомендоваю instead of рекомендую (I recommend); использывуете instead of используете (you use)
* use of prepositions; some students used помощь к карьере instead of помощь в карьере (help in career); ездим по автобусе instead of ездим на автобусе (we ride on the bus); побывал в фестивале instead of побывал на фестивале (attended the festival)
* use of adverbial participle phrases; some students used Говоря о съёмке, мне очень понравилось instead of Если говорить о съёмке, то мне очень понравилось … (Speaking of the filming, I really liked …); Каждый зверь живой, погружая тебе глубже в сюжет instead of Кадры с животными погружают тебя в атмосферу фильма (The scenes with animals immerse you in the atmosphere of the movie)
* spelling; some students used зделать instead of сделать (to do); сокономить instead of сэкономить (to save); соровно instead of всё равно (all the same); зокончю instead of закончу (I will finish); пожылеете instead of пожалеете (you will regret); нам нога instead of намного (by far)*.*

Section 1: Listening and responding

Part A

Question 1

The four aspects of libraries that make them appealing for the speakers were:

* a unique vibe that helps you to immerse yourself in the reading process
* being interested in the opinion of a professional/librarian (about new releases)
* attending book fairs/carnivals
* meetings with authors.

Most students handled this text well. When students combined the third and fourth answers (shown above) into one sentence or bullet point, 2 marks were awarded. A common mistake was including the answer ‘the speaker loves flipping through paper pages’, misunderstanding the subjunctive mood in ‘I could say that I love flipping through paper pages, but …’. Another error was ‘the speaker loved exchanging books with friends’, which is not related to libraries.

Question 2

As discussed in the podcast, advantages of wearing office uniforms were:

* Uniforms help each employee feel like part of a larger team/boosting team spirit.
* A uniform/formal suit makes it easier for a person to get into work mode.
* A uniform saves time as there’s no need to rack your brain every morning about what to wear to look professional.

Disadvantages of wearing office uniforms were:

* People don’t like it when something is imposed on them OR when they are forced to wear the same clothes as their colleagues.
* It is impossible to come up with a style that suits everyone.
* Extra time will be required for changing clothes before and after work if one has to commute to the office in different attire.

The table included in the question booklet assisted students with their responses. The most common errors were providing self-generated answers that were not present in the audio or confusing office uniforms with professional uniforms, such as those worn by doctors or flight attendants.

Question 3

The two people mentioned in the presentation had the following in common:

* They are both associated with the Golden Age of Russian culture OR linked to it OR they both lived in the Golden Age of Russian culture OR they both lived in the 19th century.
* They are both poets OR literary figures OR writers.
* They shared similar first name and patronymic name(s) – Alexander Sergeyevich.
* They both served/worked in the Collegium of Foreign Affairs / the Foreign Affairs Office.
* Quotes from their work are still relevant today / their work is still alive / most people know both authors’ poems OR People still use their apt phrases, which reflect different life situations accurately and in a modern way.

One frequent error was mentioning that both Pushkin and Griboedov knew several languages. While this is factually correct, the information about their linguistic abilities was not included in the presentation and, therefore, should not have been mentioned in the response. The only exception was a brief mention in the presentation of Pushkin speaking French as a child, while nothing was said about Griboedov’s linguistic knowledge.

Part B

Question 4

Correct explanations of the way people were presented in photographs before the 20th century were:

* **Стандарт красоты – плотно сжатые губы.** В то время маленький рот с плотно сжатыми губами считался очень красивым. (**Beauty standard – tightly closed lips.** At the time, a small mouth with tightly closed lips was considered very beautiful.)
* **Правило этикета – улыбка с закрытым ртом.** Фотографируясь, было важно не показывать свою улыбку. / Согласно этикету, надо было улыбаться только с закрытым ртом, особенно в общественных местах. (**Etiquette rule – smile with a closed mouth.** When being photographed, it was important not to show teeth. / According to etiquette, one was expected to smile only with a closed mouth, especially in public places.)
* **Отсутствие качественной стоматологии / гигиены рта**. Из-за отсутствия качественной стоматологии до начала 20 века люди не могли/не хотели улыбаться на публике/люди прятали зубы. (**Lack of quality dentistry and oral hygiene.** Due to the lack of quality dentistry before the early 20th century, people either couldn’t or didn’t want to smile in public / hid their teeth.)

The most common difficulty for students was trying to rephrase the statement about the development of quality dentistry at the beginning of the 20th century, when people began to flash bright white smiles. Students were required to reframe this from the perspective of the period **before** the 20th century.

Question 5

Any five of the answers listed below were accepted as correct:

* Если уши прижаты, это означает: у собак – дружелюбность/радость/доверие/открытость, a у кошек – то, что они сердятся. (If the ears are pressed back, it means: for dogs – friendliness/joy/trust/openness; for cats – that they are angry.)
* Собаки показывают настроение хвостом, а кошки – усами. (Dogs express their mood with their tails, while cats use their whiskers.)
* Собака выражает радость, когда прижимает уши, а кошка – если у неё усы вперёд. (A dog expresses joy when it flattens its ears, while a cat does so when its whiskers are pushed forward.)
* Развитые органы чувств: у собаки – чуткий нос, а у кошки – усы, которые помогают ориентироваться в темноте. (Developed sensory organs: for dogs – sensitive nose; for cats – whiskers that help them navigate in the dark.)
* У собак много профессий, таких как поисковики, охранники, спасатели, а у кошек единственная профессия – ночные охотники. (Dogs have many professions such as trackers, guards and rescuers, while cats have only one – night hunters.)
* Собакам нужны помощь в уходе / собакам хозяин моет лапы, а кошки ухаживают за собой самостоятельно / им помощь хозяина не нужна. (Dogs need help with grooming / the owner washes the dog’s paws, while cats groom themselves independently and do not need their owner’s help.)

The most challenging part of this question was identifying the traits that set dogs apart from cats. Listing a characteristic unique to only dogs or cats did not earn a mark. Additionally, providing commonsense answers that were not mentioned in the conversation (such as ‘cats prefer to be alone’ or ‘dogs are loyal friends’) was a frequent issue.

Question 6a.

Correct responses were:

* Почти все герои Достоевского жили на улицах Петербурга – там, где сейчас ходит трамвай «Достоевский». (Almost all of Dostoevsky’s characters lived on the streets of St Petersburg – the same area where the tram ‘Dostoevsky’ now runs.)
* Достоевский ходил по улицам Петербурга большую часть своей жизни. (Dostoevsky walked the streets of St Petersburg for most of his life.)
* Правнук Достоевского сам работал водителем трамвая почти 50 лет назад. (Dostoevsky’s great-grandson worked as a tram driver himself almost 50 years ago.)

Students with advanced listening skills received full marks, as the third point, which was challenging to include, was separated from the first two by unrelated information.

Question 6b.

Correct responses were:

* Дизайн нового трамвая выбирали жители города. (The design of the new tram was chosen by the residents of the city.)
* Искусственный интеллект контролирует ситуацию на пути, обеспечивая безопасность. (Artificial intelligence monitors the situation on the way, ensuring safety.)
* Прозрачное интерактивное окно-экран предлагает информацию для туристов / пассажиров, показывает, как город выглядел 100 лет назад. (A transparent interactive window-screen offers information for tourists/passengers on how the city looked 100 years ago.)
* «Умная» система следит за состоянием водителя, фиксируя первые признаки засыпания или снижения концентрации внимания. (The ‘smart’ system monitors the driver’s condition, detecting the first signs of drowsiness or reduced concentration by his facial expressions.)

Other features of the tram were mistakenly listed as unique: the colour and design resembled a famous model from the 1960s (and were therefore not unique), and the availability of chargers for gadgets and heated flooring was noted as ‘no longer surprising for Russians’.

Section 2: Reading and responding

Part A

Question 7

Relevant responses to this question were:

* observation of the Earth’s surface to provide warnings about impending natural disasters
* a project to reduce temperatures in cities by developing a thin coating of asphalt to help lower the heating of road surfaces
* development of advanced medical equipment for treating people on Earth, such as a compact X-ray machine
* using a 3D bioprinter in zero gravity to print complex cells and even organs for people in need of transplants
* long-term cooperation between scientists, contributing to the strengthening of friendships between countries
* assisting students from around the world who send their scientific research to the station OR supporting research where results can only be achieved in zero gravity.

Students demonstrated strong skills in retrieving specific information from the text and conveying it in English, despite the complexity of the vocabulary.

Question 8

Relevant responses explaining the names that Lake Baikal has had since ancient times included:

* ‘Blue eye of Siberia’ – because of crystal purity of the lake water (close to distilled)
* ‘Well of the planet’ – because of large water reserves (Baikal contains one-fifth of all surface freshwater reserves on planet Earth)
* ‘Miracle of nature’ – because of unique flora and fauna (most of the inhabitants of the lake are endemic)
* ‘Place of power’ – because this place is considered to have a special energy, which attracts shamans OR brings peace and harmony.

Linking the names of Lake Baikal to their corresponding reasons proved to be a particularly challenging task. Students did not receive marks for simply translating the text, as the explanations needed to be explicitly connected to the names. However, a substantial number of students demonstrated advanced reading comprehension skills, as they were able to identify the correct explanation for the name ‘Blue eye of Siberia’, while disregarding the incorrect interpretation that ‘it resembles a blue eye, as seen by cosmonauts’. This misinterpretation was ruled out because the question referred to ancient times, and the text emphasised that the resemblance was merely coincidental.

Part B

Question 9

Students were asked to write an email persuading a friend to choose between two universities. They had to use information from a pie chart showing the most in-demand professions and a table listing the offers from each university. To develop persuasive arguments, students were also given details about their friend’s achievements and preferences.

Students’ responses were assessed holistically, taking into account their engagement with the provided information, depth of ideas and opinions, vocabulary knowledge, ability to organise information and the authenticity of the language used. It was expected that the characteristics of an email format would be successfully applied, and that the writing would be both personal and persuasive.

High-scoring responses were clearly structured. These responses:

* started with an appropriate greeting that set the tone for the message. These greetings ranged from the more formal Здравствуй, мой дорогой друг (Hello, my dear friend) to a casual Привет, Коль (Hi, Kolya)
* inserted a reference to the information provided in the task, such as Я слышала, что ты всё ещё не можешь выбрать университет … (I heard that you still can’t decide on a university …) or Поздравляю с победой в олимпиаде по математике (Congratulations on winning the math Olympiad)
* provided three to four strong arguments, such as financial and geographical advantages, preferences for the mode of education (online or offline), opportunities for quicker career progression, and so on. For example:
* В выборе университета основным критерием должны быть программа образования и ее сочетаемость с работой в наиболее востребованных сферах на рынке труда. (When choosing a university, the main criterion should be the educational program and its compatibility with work in the most in-demand fields in the job market.)
* Ещё один важный плюс университета в Иркутске – возможность получить общежитие и жить с другими студентами. Представляешь, как это будет интересно? (Another important advantage of the university in Irkutsk is the opportunity to get a dormitory and live with other students. Can you imagine how interesting that will be?)
* Зачем такому смышленому парню, как ты, ехать в Иркутск? В Москве у тебя будет больше возможностей! (Why would a smart guy like you go to Irkutsk? You’ll have more opportunities in Moscow!).

High-scoring responses also:

* included an appropriate conclusion with clear closing sentences, for example: Напиши, что же ты все-таки выбрал? (Write and let me know what you ended up choosing!); Я надеюсь, ты прислушаешься к моему совету, но финальный выбор всегда за тобой (I hope you will take my advice, but the final decision is always yours); К какому бы решению ты ни пришёл, я, зная тебя, уверена, что оно будет мудрым и приведет тебя туда, где тебе будет по душе (Whatever decision you make, knowing you, I’m sure it will be wise and lead you to where you will be happy); Сделай разумный выбор! Не прогадай! (Make a smart choice! Don’t miss your chance!)
* added a thoughtful farewell to end the email on a personal note, for example: ‘Желаю удачи!’ (Good luck!); ‘Ни пуха ни пера!’ (Break a leg!); ‘Так держать!’ (Keep it up!); ‘У тебя всё получится!’ (You’ve got this!).

These students used various styles of communication creatively and chose appropriate structures, clearly indicating the evaluation process with well-chosen vocabulary and phrasing, such as: также (also); с одной стороны (on the one hand); с другой стороны (on the other hand); важно заметить … (it is important to note …); в то время как (whereas); по сравнению (in comparison); прежде всего я хочу отметить … (first of all, I want to note …); зная про твои увлечения … (knowing about your hobbies); А знаешь почему он уступает? (Do you know why it falls short?); Однако, несмотря на эти неудобства … (However, despite these inconveniences …); Если подумать шире … (If you think more broadly …).

In addition, although not required, many students included attributes of an email, such as ‘To’ and ‘From’ sections, the date, time and email addresses, which added authenticity to their work.

Section 3: Writing in Russian

In this section of the examination, students chose one of three options, each requiring a different text type and a different style of writing: an evaluative film review (Question 10); an imaginative and informative interview (Question 11); or a personal blog entry (Question 12). All three questions were attempted by students, with Questions 10 and 11 being the most popular choices.

Question 10

Students were asked to write a review for their school film club about a film they saw at a youth film festival, evaluating various aspects of the film. Responses were expected to use an evaluative style and incorporate emotive language to effectively convey opinions and engage the audience.

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

* the quality of the actors’ performances: were they convincing and engaging?
* music and soundtrack: how did the music enhance the film’s mood and themes?
* the director’s choices regarding scenery, visual elements and overall atmosphere: were they impactful?
* storytelling: was the story clear, engaging and original?
* cinematography and photography: was it creative? did it contribute to the emotional tone?
* emotional impact: were any scenes particularly moving, funny or memorable?
* relevance: would the film be recommended for the school club screening and why?

High-scoring responses demonstrated a skilful use of language through:

* emotive descriptions, such as: он очень трогательный и заставил прослезиться (it is very touching and brought tears to my eyes); невероятно талантливый человек (an incredibly talented person); кадры, которые вызывают целую палитру эмоций (shots that evoke a whole palette of emotions)
* phrases and structures for expressing opinions, such as: мы бы поставили «двоечку» или «троечку» (we would give a ‘D’ or a ‘C’); на мой взгляд, самый большой плюс фильма – его сюжет (in my opinion, the biggest plus of the film is its plot); сложилось впечатление, что актёры – новички и не владеют актёрским мастерством (I got the impression that the actors are novices and lack acting skills); фильм оставляет желать лучшего (the film leaves much to be desired)
* sophisticated comparisons and insightful conclusions, for example: Фильм ощущается почти как книга Достоевского или классических японских поэтов, заставляет глубоко задуматься над своим собственным опытом, желаниями, мотивацией (The film feels almost like a work by Dostoevsky or classic Japanese poets, prompting deep reflection on one’s own experiences, desires and motivations); Лично мне этот фильм дал понять, что несмотря ни на какие конфликты, люди должны оставаться людьми (Personally, this film made me realise that, despite any conflicts, people must remain human); Должен признать, что он (фильм) раскрывает ужасы человеческой души, красоту и уродство поведения людей (I must admit, it reveals the horrors of the human soul, as well as the beauty and ugliness of human behaviour).

Question 11

In this question, students were tasked with writing a script for an interview with a high-school graduate from 2074, discussing their school and school life. Students were encouraged to imagine travelling to the future, where the details discussed in the interview could differ radically from present-day school experiences. Therefore, the writing needed to be both imaginative and informative, targeted at readers of a youth newspaper.

Some students introduced fascinating concepts, such as:

* За последние полвека система образования поменялась: вместо школ общего образования – карьерные академии. (Over the last half-century, the education system has changed: instead of general education schools, we now have career academies.)
* Мы можем перемещаться из дома в любое место с помощью машин для транспортации. (We can travel from home to anywhere using transportation machines.)
* Специальные звуковые волны помогают всем ученикам в классе сосредоточиться. (Special sound waves help all students in class to concentrate.)
* Нас часто возят на экскурсии по другим планетам. (We often go on field trips/excursions to other planets.)
* Учитель присылает мне задания по почте и, открывая их, я могу полностью погрузиться в предмет … с лёгкостью очутиться в любой точке мира … и всё вокруг будет ярко и реалистично. (The teacher sends me assignments via email, and when I open them, I can fully immerse myself in the subject … easily find myself anywhere in the world … and everything around me is vivid and realistic.)

Many students demonstrated an understanding of the structure of an interview, adopted an appropriate tone, asked interesting questions and provided engaging answers.

Some students offered a title for the article containing the interview, for example: Ученики 2074-го превосходят многих учёных 2024-го! (The students of 2074 surpass many scientists of 2024!); included an engaging introduction, such as Даже не спрашивайте, как я попал в будущее. Правда, всего на 50 лет вперёд, но … (Don’t even ask how I got to the future. Okay, it’s only 50 years ahead, but …); and a suitable closing, such as К сожалению, наше интервью подошло к концу. Я рада была познакомиться и узнать о будущем наших школ! Желаю всего самого доброго. (Unfortunately, our interview has come to an end. I’m glad to have met you and learned about the future of our schools! Wishing you all the best.)

Question 12

In Question 12, students were required to write a blog entry, describing a personal situation that illustrates the meaning of the famous Russian proverb ‘Under the lying stone water does not flow’. Responses were expected to stylistically align with a personal blog, addressing its readers. The challenge for students was to fully grasp the meaning of the proverb, craft a compelling narrative that suited its message, reflect on the lesson learned from the situation and actively engage readers in the discussion.

Examples of high-scoring responses:

* an engaging introduction: Вы просили пост про мотивацию и успех … Вот он! (You asked for a post about motivation and success … Here it is!)
* a successful dialogue with readers: Это звучит всё здорово и легко … Но вдумайтесь: переезд … переворот жизни с ног на голову не загнали его в депрессию … (It all sounds great and easy … But think about it: moving … turning his life upside down did not drive him into depression …); А вам не кажется, что именно такие люди в жизни достигают больших высот? (Don’t you think that it’s precisely people like this who achieve great heights in life?)
* an effective conclusion: Поэтому, друзья, мораль сей басни такова: работайте, старайтесь, вкладывайтесь в своё дело, будь то учёба, работа или что-то другое. И вам обязательно вернётся награда за это в виде успеха, счастья, денег, новых друзей и, возможно, любви. Не лежите, как тот самый камень … (So, friends, the moral of this story is: work hard, put in the effort and invest in what you do – whether it is studying, working or anything else. The rewards will surely come in the form of success, happiness, money, new friends and maybe even love. Don’t just lie there like that stone …); Поделитесь, случались ли у вас такие моменты в жизни? Что вы думаете на этот счёт? (Have you experienced such moments in your life? What do you think about this?)

As a final touch to their blog entries, some students included reader comments, effectively illustrating the blog style and adding valuable depth to their reflections on the topic. At times, they even included heated discussions sparked by the blogger, such as: Вы несете какую-то чушь! Вы неправильно понимаете эту пословицу! (You’re writing nonsense! You misunderstand this proverb!)