Russian A: Literature

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 16	17 - 30	31 - 43	44 - 57	58 - 71	72 - 84	85 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 15	16 - 30	31 - 43	44 - 56	57 - 69	70 - 83	84 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25	26 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There was a wide range of poetry selected this session. The two most popular poets were Alexander Pushkin and Alexander Blok. In general, the extracts were suitable in nature and length (i.e. they did not exceed the permitted 20-30 lines) and included the required one or two guiding questions. But there were a few centres where teachers gave their candidates between 50 and 330 lines – a whole poem or even two poems for commentary. This is not permissible. Only one entire poem of between 20-30 lines may be selected or a section of 20-30 lines from a longer poem. With such overly long extracts it was impossible for candidates to analyze the effectiveness of the writer's techniques, including a detailed account of the use of stylistic devices and their effects on the reader.

Although most candidates were given extracts with two guiding questions, only some of them were really helpful. Sometimes they were not guiding questions at all, or they were the same extracts and the same guiding questions for all candidates. This is also not permitted (see page 55 of the *Language A: Literature guide* for information on the number of extracts to be selected in relation to the number of candidates in the class). Some guiding questions were related to the whole poem, rather than with the extract itself. Sometimes the subsequent

questions were inappropriate, for example, "You know the situation in Ukraine. How do you think people from this country read works of Pushkin and Dostoevsky?" "What is your opinion about this writer?"

The second part of the internal assessment examination, the discussion, this year again met few problems and, as required, the recordings were not switched off between the commentary and the discussion. Unfortunately, the quality of the recording was not always good. One centre sent the wrong subject orals and some recordings were completely blank. As in previous sessions some teachers were not accurate in their assessment and awarded too high marks, not according to the criteria.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the poem

The candidate's knowledge and understanding of the poem demonstrated by their interpretation was adequate and sometimes very good. Only a small number of candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge, understanding and interpretation.

Criterion B: Appreciation of the writer's choices

There were very few commentaries where candidates demonstrated very good appreciation of how the writer's choices of language, structure, technique and style shape meaning in the poem. This criterion is the most challenging. Unfortunately, candidates sometimes simply named literary terms without providing an analysis of their role in the extract.

Criterion C: Organization and presentation of the commentary

Some commentaries showed some structure and focus, some showed evidence of a planned structure and were generally focused, and only a few were effectively structured, with a clear, purposeful and sustained focus.

Criterion D: Knowledge and understanding of the work used in the discussion

Many candidates demonstrated very good knowledge of the content of the work and the thoughts and feelings that the author expressed. But rarely was there very good understanding of the sub-textual aspects of the work.

Criterion E: Response to the discussion questions

The aim of the discussion is to engage candidates in a literary discussion of one of the other two works studied. Unfortunately, candidates rarely demonstrated some personal judgment about the work.

Criterion F: Language

Language was often clear and appropriate with a good degree of accuracy in grammar and sentence construction.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Teach candidates to comment on the effectiveness of the writer's techniques including a detailed account of the use of stylistic devices and their effects on the reader.

- Teach candidates to have a well thought out structure to their commentary. It should not take the form of a narration or a line-by-line paraphrase.

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

As in the May 2013 session, there were, unfortunately, few very good commentaries. Again the problem was with the time limit. The requirements for this part of the course are that there are only eight minutes for the individual oral commentary and two minutes for subsequent questions. Some commentaries ranged from two minutes to 15 minutes, and then another ten minutes for the subsequent questions.

A few centres failed to observe the rule regarding the length of extracts and the guiding questions, some were more than 140 lines and offered more than the required one or two guiding questions. These longer extracts were obviously harder to analyze in the prescribed time limit. The guiding questions were normally relevant, clearly phrased and mostly appropriate in nature.

There were one or two cases where a candidate was clearly struggling to deliver a commentary of sufficient length. When this happens, for example, an upset candidate struggles to go beyond five minutes, it is quite appropriate for the teacher to intervene, and attempt to gently direct the candidate back to the extract by clarifying or explaining the original guiding questions without giving away any answers.

Almost all teachers engaged in subsequent questioning following the commentary, but the nature of these questions was sometimes inappropriate, for example, "Could you imagine another ending to this novel?" All too often subsequent questions did not focus on the extract itself and had the effect of carrying the discussion away from it.

This session again saw many centres offering all their candidates the same extract and the same guiding questions. This is not appropriate. Not all oral examinations were well conducted but all documents very well prepared. However, some centres sent oral presentations and not the required individual oral commentaries. Some centres awarded very high marks for their candidates which did not seem to be marked according to the criteria.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding of the extract

Most candidates demonstrated adequate, and some of them good or very good knowledge and understanding of the extract with good interpretation.

Criterion B: Appreciation of the writer's choices

This criterion appeared the most difficult for candidates at this level, but many of them could analyze how the writer's choices of language, structure, technique and style shaped meaning.

Criterion C: Organization and presentation

Many candidates' commentaries had a clearly planned structure and were well focused.

Criterion D: Language

Language was mostly clear and appropriate with a good degree of accuracy in grammar and sentence construction. As in previous years some candidates demonstrated poor spoken Russian and few skills in using the required literary register.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Teach candidates to focus on the extract itself, *not* on the whole work.

- Teach candidates to explore the technical details and their *effects* in the texts, rather than simply naming literary terms.

Higher level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

Standard level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20	21 - 25

The following comments relate to both SL and HL.

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

Procedures, instructions and forms were appropriate, clearly described and easy to use. All centres included the necessary information on form 1/LWA.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The majority of assignments covered a suitable range of works and topics with good understanding of the relevant criteria. The majority of candidates demonstrated the skills of producing a literary analysis of works studied in Part 1.

The most popular authors, on whose literary works candidates based their Written Assignment, were William Shakespeare, Patrick Süskind, Henrik Ibsen and Tennessee Williams. However, a few candidates based their assignments on works that are not listed in the prescribed literature in translation list (PLT), namely F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Three Musketeers* by Alexander Dumas. In the May 2015 session, this error will incur penalties, so centres are advised to check the list carefully.

The topics of some Written Assignments were not successfully formulated. Such flawed topics do not provide an opportunity for candidates to achieve the highest level of marks. Please see page 31 of the *Language A: Literature* guide suitable prompts, and essay titles.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Fulfilling the requirements of the reflective statement

Many candidates did not address the demands of this criterion and recounted the discussion that took place in the interactive oral, or merely retold the content of the literary work, or gave a summary of the stages of work already undertaken. These candidates found it difficult to demonstrate how their "...understanding of cultural and contextual considerations of the work" was "developed through the interactive oral".

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

The topics of many candidates' assignments were very broad and general, for example, "Argon – the victim of Tartuffe" or "'Midsummer Night's Dream' written by Shakespeare". Such inappropriate titles show only a basic understanding of the literary work with no attempt at interpretation or presenting an individual analysis.

Some assignments appeared quite mechanical, quoting well-known examples, but with no supporting individual, personal evidence in support of candidates' ideas and thoughts, referenced by exact quotes from the literary text. In such assignments there was no analysis, only a retelling of a subject and separate attempts to explain some facts in the work. Candidates did not demonstrate the skills of imaginative or creative writing, nor of close reading and detailed analysis.

Criterion C: Appreciation of the writer's choices

There was very little analysis of the *effects* of the stylistic devices used by the authors. Many candidates used literary terms but did not demonstrate true understanding of their meaning in analyzing the text.

Many candidates quoted widely from the work studied, but did not explain them or offer their own opinions in their assignment. The writer's style was very often ignored.

Criterion D: Organization and development

Many candidates demonstrated a good level of achievement in this criterion.

At the same time, there were also candidates who found it difficult to organize their writing in a logical and effective manner. Often there were no quotations or relevant details from the analyzed text or candidates did not show clearly or acknowledge where the evidence for their analysis was taken from.

There were no bibliographies or footnotes in many candidates' assignments.

Criterion E: Language

Many candidates demonstrated a good level of achievement under this criterion.

Overall, the language of the written assignments generally was clear, with occasional lapses in grammar and sentence construction. However, many candidates showed no knowledge of literary terminology.

Pleasingly, there was a very small number of assignments in which the language was very good and mistakes in spelling and punctuation were absent.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be encouraged to:

- know the literary work very well and not make factual mistakes

- understand the author's ideas

- express their own opinion, and not retell the opinion of others

- use literary terminology in their analysis of the text

- concentrate on the *analytical* aspects

- write competently in an appropriate register using terminology appropriate to the task.

Teachers should be encouraged to:

- follow closely the requirements of the task and recommendations in the guide

- encourage their candidates to pay more attention to textual analysis

- be well acquainted with the written assignment criteria and to share this with their candidates

- look at, and share with candidates, samples of written assignments available in the teacher support material (TSM) on the OCC.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20

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

As usual, analysing the *effects* of the stylistic devices used by the authors presented the greatest difficulty. Quite a few candidates simply listed the devices used, limiting their comments to things like "This makes the description more vivid".

Referencing the text also presented a problem for quite a few candidates: the weaker candidates used quotes from the text to fill in the blanks in their rendering of the passage. Unfortunately, this does not raise marks for understanding, because retelling does not mean understanding. The text should be referred to in the course of analysing the effects of the literary devices, to illustrate a point. However, a mere citing of such features without an explanation of the effect in the particular passage or poem does not garner high marks.

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

This year more candidates demonstrated proper understanding of the extracts – not a mere retelling, not a 'translation' of individual lines or phrases, but a true understanding of the passage as a piece of creative literary writing, with its effect on the reader.

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

Prose

The more successful candidates understood that the passage set the scene for further developments. The weaker ones preferred to try and figure out what these developments might be.

Stronger candidates saw the change in the view-point in the course of the passage, as if the camera first gave us a wide shot of the bus against the landscape, and gradually closed in on certain individuals. They also managed to see the difference in their state of mind, as seen from their descriptions. The weaker ones, on the other hand, tried to guess where the people were going and why or when this was taking place and got completely confused.

Poetry

Most candidates noticed the cyclic structure – the same words used in the first and last lines. However only the stronger ones spoke of a difference in tone, and understood the overall nature of the poem – an observation of nature, where a natural force is personalised. However, the weaker candidates tried to 'read between the lines', trying to find things that were not there – such as criticism of the system, etc. The purpose of the exercise was to find the change in tempo, tone, etc and how the author makes us feel it. It was also a pleasure to see that some candidates saw a semblance with the imagery used in the famous poem *The Twelve* by Alexander Block, who also used the image of the wind as a powerful force of nature/history.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teaching candidates to identify certain stylistic devices in a text and name them correctly is the very first step in teaching how to analyse a text. The aim is to teach them to first note

their reaction to a text: where they feel like smiling, where they tear up, if they sympathize with a character/situation or dislike it, and then to find words in the text that make them feel this way. The final step is to be able to give these words a name.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 20

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

As usual, few candidates wrote of the *effects* of the stylistic devices used by the authors. At best, they would list the devices but not always using the terms correctly.

Structure was also sometimes a problem: some candidates treated the guiding questions not as prompts, but as proper questions that required answers. When their responses were not properly integrated into a coherent piece of writing this affected the marks for organization.

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

Fortunately, this year fewer candidates attempted to 'imagine' what the authors implied, what stood behind the story, what would happen next, etc.

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

Prose

It was good to see some candidates recognize this as an example of a 'stream of consciousness', and show how the author conveyed the state of mind of the narrator. This was the only message/purpose of the passage, and there was no need to look for any other 'hidden' meaning, no need to delve into historical and/or geographical detail, no need to speak of things not properly understood.

Poetry

It was a pleasure to find that some candidates did see some resemblance between this poem and a sonnet: a number of 4-line stanzas, summed up in the final 2 lines – a moral of sorts. Unfortunately, few understood the meaning of these last 2 lines as it does contain a pun, which had a negative effect on their marks.   Those who did understand the meaning also managed to see the irony in the poem.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teaching candidates to find certain stylistic devices in a text and name them correctly is the very first step in teaching how to analyse a text. The aim is to teach them to first note their reaction to a text: where they feel like smiling, where they tear up, if they sympathize with a character/situation or dislike it, and then to find words in the text that make them feel this way. The final step is to be able to give these words a name.

It is also important to explain to SL candidates that guiding questions are meant to prompt the candidates, to point them to the features of a text the examiner expects them to consider, not as questions that they have to answer one by one.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25

General comments

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

The fact that at least two works must be compared in this assessment task can be quite challenging for candidates. Very often candidates wrote about each of the works studied, separately, making a very loose connection in the introduction or in the conclusion of their essays. Some essays were very long in length, but more words do not mean a better result. In some essays, candidates wrote about 3, 5 works (or even 7 works in one essay) were not useful, because these were mere summary and contained no analysis or logical structure. It is required that only 3 works are studied at HL in Part 3, and candidates have to compare at least two of them.

Analysis of the literary techniques employed by the writers, which should be the candidates' focus at this level, posed the most difficulty. Candidates explored the topic and plot rather than the literary "conventions" and the majority of candidates achieved a lower level in criterion B (Response to the question), and criterion C (Appreciation of the literary conventions of the genre). A very small number of candidates gave a really good response in both of these criteria. The lack of focus on the chosen question is certainly one of the main problems, because again, as happened in the previous session, many candidates did not read the question carefully enough. Thus they could demonstrate only some knowledge and little understanding of the work in relation to the question answered.

Not only SL candidates, but also some HL candidates demonstrated poor language skills and writing a literary essay posed a real problem for these candidates. Candidates who analyze the texts without always using the appropriate literary terminology can nevertheless be awarded high marks, providing that the *effects* of these devices are stated. The Russian A: Literature course is a very demanding course and candidates ought to be able to use appropriate language for literary analysis.

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

There were, unfortunately, very few very bright, original essays, where ideas were persuasively organized, with excellent structure, coherence and development. Many candidates knew the content of the works they studied. Some of them (unfortunately, again very few) were able to quote several lines of poetry or prose to support their arguments. The language of the essays was mostly clear and carefully chosen.

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

Questions on the genres of Prose (Q2), Poetry (Q5), Drama (Q7), and Short Stories (Q12) were the most popular among candidates. The most successful essays were on Question 5 (Poetry) but these responses were from the same centre and were few in number. These candidates demonstrated not only perceptive knowledge and understanding of the works in relation to the question, but also a very strong and logical structure in their comparative essay.

The most difficult questions for candidates were questions from the genres Prose (Q 3), Drama (Q9) and Short Stories (Q10 and Q11). Candidates focused on the plot of the works rather than on the techniques used by the writers to create particular effects. Many candidates did not understand the key terms and concepts that appeared in the questions so they were unable to answer that specific aspect of the chosen question.

Unfortunately, this year there were some essays where candidates chose questions under the wrong genre compared with the works studied, for example, they chose to answer a drama question when they had studied novels. Some candidates also referred to works studied in translation. Please note that from the May 2015 session, such errors will be penalised.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teach candidates to approach the question carefully and to define the aspect of the question before starting to write.

Teach candidates how to demonstrate the effects of the technical devices and styles employed by the authors and provide an analysis *in relation to the question* in their essays.

Teach candidates to write a comparative essay and to pay attention to its specific structure.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 22	23 - 25

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

Again this year, SL candidates seem to have performed better than HL candidates. However, the requirement to compare at least two works again posed a problem for most of the candidates. In many cases candidates wrote everything they knew about the relevant works with little attention paid to the aspect of the question. Some of them could not maintain a balance between the two works being discussed, and others summarized the works studied in their writing instead of establishing a comparison between the two. The stylistic aspects of the works were not adequately considered. Candidates also veered away from textual analysis towards a description of content. In particular, the appreciation of the literary conventions of the genre was an area which often exceeded candidates' skill levels.

As at higher level, responding to criterion B (Response to the question) and to criterion C (Appreciation of the literary conventions of the genre) were the weakest areas in the essays. Sometimes candidates recognized the literary features, but they could not explain how the author used them to show the reader his ideas and thoughts. Some candidates ignored the literary devices related to the question and gave a superficial analysis.

Unfortunately, very often the language of SL candidates was very poor with a lot of errors in grammar and sentence construction which may indicate that they were inappropriately registered for this course. The Russian A: Literature course is a very demanding course and candidates even at this level ought to be able to use appropriate language for literary analysis.

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

With a new PBL, many more interesting Russian writers are available for study so teachers have a greater choice of works from which to choose. Some candidates demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of new and different works studied in relation to the question.

Many candidates did well in producing their responses, with a satisfactory structure and development, showing good writing practice. Many essays were awarded high marks. Most candidates demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the works studied and many of them were able to make detailed reference to the texts to support their arguments.

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

In previous sessions candidates mostly responded to the Short Stories and Prose questions, but now other genres are also now receiving attention.

Questions on the genres of Prose (Q1), Drama (Q7), and Short Stories (Q 12) received the most responses. There were some excellent essays from candidates who chose question 5 (Poetry).

The most difficult questions for candidates were the questions from Prose (Q 3), Drama (Q9) and Short Stories (Q11). Question 4 was a very interesting question about poetry but unfortunately, only one candidate chose it. It is evident that the study of poetry is not a popular option amongst centres. In addition, only three candidates chose question 10 from the Short Stories genre.

In some cases, candidates failed to understand the key concepts and phrases in the question (as was the case with Question 2 from Prose) and therefore were unable to respond adequately. Question 12 was a relatively easy choice and candidates normally showed no problem in understanding its demands.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teach candidates to read each question very carefully and to pay attention to the key concepts and phrases.

Teach candidates to make a real link between the different works and teach them to write an appropriately well structured comparative essay.

Teach candidates to answer the question through the writers' use of literary devices.

Teach candidates to pay attention to grammar and punctuation.