

International Russian Language Examinations in Latvia

Russian language knowledge and skills have always had a significant historic as well as geographic significance in Latvia. Unfortunately the Russian language knowledge and skills of the generation that has grown over the last decade is not as good as those who grew up during the Soviet times. However, over the last few years there has been a lot of interest regarding possibilities of learning Russian language and many try to supplement their knowledge through courses. The demand has led to increase in supply with almost all language centres offering Russian language courses alongside other popular foreign languages. Upon completion of these courses course participants are awarded various certificates testifying their Russian language knowledge and skills. However, only a few of them are internationally recognised.

One of them is the ECL certificate – This is a European Union document that validates the foreign language skills. The certificate is recognised in all European Union countries and is valid for work and studies abroad, mainly for studies under the ERASMUS programme.

The Baltic International Academy Foreign Language Centre and ECL Certification – BIA FLC within the frame of the professional bachelor study programme “written translation and interpretation” among other languages offers the acquisition of Russian language. This centre is included in the *ECL CONSORTIUM FOR THE CERTIFICATE OF ATTAINMENT IN MODERN LANGUAGES* – <http://www.ecl-test.com>.

Aims . The aim of ECL is the development and implementation of unified, reliable system in all European Union countries in the field of foreign languages. The ECL assessments combine the experience of ERASMUS and LINGUA programmes. ECL provides the recognition of language certificates issued in all EU countries without the necessity of any additional comparison in each country.

Examination procedure. The candidate can choose the form of examination:

- complex,
- oral,
- written.

The complex examination consists of two parts: oral (participation in a dialogue, monologue on the chosen topic, listening) and written (reading, writing). The examination is held over two days. The written part (reading test, writing test) and listening part i.e. listening comprehension is held on the first day. The examination materials are immediately sent to the ECL Consortium secretariat at the end of the examination.

The oral examination is held on the second day. If the candidate has chosen the written examination then he only appears to sit for the written part of the complex examination (does the reading and writing tests), and if he has chosen the oral part then he should pass the



listening examination during the written part and then come for the oral examination on the second day.

The oral examination is divided into two parts: participation in a dialogue and monologue on a given topic using a picture given for the monologue. The examination is conducted by a commission consisting of two teachers. One teacher carries out the dialogue and manages the exam while the other writes down the answers and notes the mistakes. The whole examination is recorded with a Dictaphone and after completion of the examination the recordings are immediately sent to the ECL Consortium secretariat.

Specifics of the test. The test content and scope have been developed as a result of serious research carried out and is based on pilot testing carried out on an experimental group. The testing system is characterized by maximum similarity to real communication training and process in modern Europe. Assessment is carried out in accordance with the system of levels adopted in the European Union (A2, B1, B2, C1 levels).

ECL examinations test the ability of candidates of using their oral and written communication skills in everyday situations on professional as well as general issues at different levels of complexity. The tests do not have any special grammar tests. In order to avoid any random failures the sub tests have not just one but two tasks on different topics. If the candidate is not able to successfully complete the first topic he has the opportunity to show his ability to use the language by completing the second task on a different topic.

Evaluation. All 4 skills are assessed during the tests: reading, writing, listening and speaking (4 sub tests). The maximum points awarded for a sub test is 25. The candidate has to get at least 40% in each sub test and not less than 60% on the whole in the written part or the oral part in order to be awarded a certificate. The percentage of marks attained is indicated on the certificate. If the candidate has only completed the written part successfully then a certificate is only awarded for the written part and vice versa.

Reliability. Tests for all levels and the evaluation system have been tested based on long term experimental research that have enabled working out reliable and effective standards for determining the exact level of foreign language skills. The test developers and examiners are specially trained in the examination procedures.

The development of the test and its assessment are carried out by prestigious higher education institutions in its state language. Information regarding these higher education institutions can be found on the webpage <http://www.ecl-test.com>. All tasks are experimentally tested before being included in the tests. The commission that organises the examination and evaluates its results is responsible for the correspondence of the questions asked during the examination and the evaluation procedures to *ECL* approved standards.

A trial written test can be taken online and is available on the *ECL homepage*, but the trial oral examination can be passed at *BIA FLC* during consultations that are held a week before the examinations.

Šis projekts tiek finansēts ar Eiropas Komisijas atbalstu. Šī publikācija [paziņojums] atspoguļo vienīgi autora uzskatus, un Komisijai nevar uzlikt atbildību par tajā ietvertās informācijas jebkuru iespējamo izlietojumu.

The validity of the certificate is indefinite.

Who chooses to pass the *ECL* examinations?

People who choose to pass the *ECL* examinations are most often students, people who are involved in scientific research activities, representatives of various professions who wish to live, work and study in European countries. The wish to pass these examinations because to greater extent these examinations show the real foreign language skills of communication in contrast to other (*TOEFL*, *IELTS*) examinations that test the academic knowledge and skills of candidates. The *ECL* certificate is an important addition to one's language portfolio especially in connection with increasing international mobility opportunities.

The other important certificate that is awarded is the Test of Russian as Foreign Language-TORFL.

The Russian language centre of Moscow State University is the State Examination Centre that issues the international State certificate. One can also prepare and appear for this examination in Latvia. BSA, as well as a lot of other organisations that offer Russian language courses, e.g. Baltic Media Language learning Centre and language school "Lingua Franca", offer such an opportunity.

Why do you need an international State certificate?

- to study in Russian universities,
- to work in companies that work with Russia,
- to work with Russian customers and tourists,
- to work in Russia,
- to teach Russian language.

The content of the tests are confidential.

Assessment levels:

- *Elementary level (ТЭУ)*

Minimum skills for everyday communication.

- *Basic level (ТБУ)*

Basic level of communication skills for professional, social and cultural communication.

- *Level 1 (ТРКИ-1):*

Intermediate level of communication skills for professional, social and cultural communication. The first level certificate is an official document that is necessary for entering Russian higher education institutions and getting the Russian citizenship.

- *Level 2 (ТРКИ-2):*

Successful performance in the Second Level Certificate indicates a high level of competence in Russian in all spheres of communication. It enables to carry out professional activities in Russian in various fields. This certificate is necessary for getting Bachelor's or Master's degree in Russian higher education institutions.

Samples of test:

- <http://www.russian-test.com/>
- www.aliuslingua.lv/lv/zinasanu.../krievu-valodas-tests
- <http://masterrussian.com/index-8.shtml>

Additional information:

- <http://www.ecl-test.com>
- www.russian-online.net/de_start/.../trki
- http://www.studyRussian.lv/index_lv.php

Apply for the test at:

- Online - <http://www.ecl-test.com>, <https://picasaweb.google.com/ecl.latvia>
- Director of *Baltic International Academy Foreign Language Centre and ECL Certification* – BIA FLC – assoc. prof. Larisa Ignatjeva, tel. 26171355

Russian language level testing – Larisa Ignatjeva, tel. 26171355

Russian language (as a foreign language) learning methodology courses - Manager Linda Ramauska, tel. 29172059.
- ECL certificate in Russian language can also be gained at Russian language methodology centre of Valmiera State Gymnasium, Valmiera that works in cooperation with *Baltic International Academy Foreign Language Centre and ECL Certification*.

International certificate in Russian language can also be gained at:

- Daugavpils, DU Foreign language centre
Vienības street 13, Room 410
Director : Dr.philol. researcher. Ilona Ļaha
Tel.. 65422994
Secretary: Inesa Antonva
E-mail: svesvaloducentrs@du.lv
- Business language centre of Ventspils University in cooperation with Lifelong learning department offers summer school for learning Russian language for European citizens.
- Liepāja, Baltic Media language learning centre etc..

Information prepared by:

M.B.A., Mg.philol. Sandra Smilga, Turība University, Lecturer at the Department of Languages, e-mail: sandrasm@turiba.lv