

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCE Russian (6RU01) Paper 1A

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General Introduction

The candidate is rewarded for the ability to demonstrate understanding of a short target language stimulus (based on one of the General Topic Areas (GTA) of the Edexcel AS Russian specification) and to discuss that same General Topic Area.

Up to 50 marks are awarded as follows for this test:

- 16 marks for Quality of Language (8 marks for Accuracy of Language and 8 marks for Range of Lexis)
- 20 marks for Response
- 14 marks for Understanding (4 marks for stimulus-specific understanding and 10 marks for understanding of the General Topic Area).

The criteria for awarding these marks can be found in the Unit 1 mark grids in the Edexcel specification.

Before the test, the candidate chooses one of the four following General Topic Areas:

- Youth Culture and Concerns
- Lifestyle: Health and Fitness
- The World Around Us: travel, tourism, environmental issues and the Russian speaking world
- Education and Employment.

The candidate is free to choose any of these four areas, depending on their preference and/or areas of interest. The candidate informs the teacher examiner of the GTA they have chosen in advance of the test. They complete an Oral Topic Form, one copy of which will be given to the teacher examiner in advance of the examination.

Unit 1 tests, in the form of a short stimulus text in the target language, are set on each of the four topic areas. 15 minutes before the test the candidate is given, according to the random allocation specified in the teacher examiner 6RU01 examination booklet, one of the stimulus cards for the topic area they have chosen.

Edexcel issues the teacher examiner booklets and the stimulus cards to centres before the examining session. These materials are confidential until the end of the examining session for this unit. The dates for the examining session are published in the Edexcel examination timetable. In 2012 the examining session finished on May 15.

The candidate has 15 minutes supervised preparation time to study the stimulus text on the Unit 1 card before the exam. They are not allowed to use a dictionary or any other resources during this time, but may make notes of up to one side of A4 paper. The candidate must not write on the stimulus card. The candidate takes both the stimulus card and any notes into the examination, and may refer to both at any point during the test.

The Unit 1 test comprises two sections:

Section A

The teacher examiner begins the test by asking the four questions on the stimulus card about the text prepared by the candidate. These questions are printed only in the teacher examiner 6RU01 examination booklet; the candidate is not aware of the questions in advance of the test. The first two of these four questions ask the candidate to demonstrate factual understanding of the stimulus text and the second two ask the candidate to express opinions about or reactions to the subject matter of the stimulus text.

In the interests of comparability across different languages and for the purposes of assessment, the teacher examiner may not rephrase or repeat these four questions, nor add to or expand them. If repetition of a question is unavoidable in order to keep the conversation going, then this may be reflected in the mark awarded for Response. If the teacher examiner rephrases a question, then the candidate's response to that question is ignored when assessing their performance. It is therefore essential that the teacher examiner does not rephrase any of the four set questions. Please see below (Advice to teacher examiners) for further clarification.

Section B

The teacher examiner develops a discussion about the General Topic Area chosen by the candidate. The topic of the stimulus card may be used as a starting point for this discussion, but the teacher examiner moves away from this topic to a more general discussion of the topic area and to discussion of at least one other subtopic of this General Topic Area.

There is no requirement for candidates to demonstrate knowledge of Russia or Russian speaking contexts in the Unit 1 oral test, though, of course, they are free to do so.

Timing of 6RU01

The 6RU01 test should last between 8 and 10 minutes in total (Sections A and B combined). This time should be divided equally between Sections A and B. However, if the candidate completes the answers to the questions in Section A in less than four minutes, the teacher examiner should ensure that the discussion in Section B is extended, in order that the total test time is not less than eight minutes.

Performance 2012

As in previous years the most popular GTAs were Youth Culture and Concerns and Lifestyle: Health and Fitness. There did however seem to be a greater variety of choice between the topic areas this year, with slightly more choosing The World Around Us than in previous years. The candidate, of course, has a free choice of the GTA they choose to discuss in the test.

All eight stimulus cards made similar demands of the candidates. The majority of candidates were able to attempt the first two section A

questions, the more factual ones, whereas the level of response to the second two section A questions proved to be good discriminator between performances. Some candidates answered a set question so fully as to cover another. Where this happens, the teacher examiner should still ask all the questions, and most did so, in the interests of comparability between candidates. Please see below (Advice to teacher examiners) for further clarification.

Many candidates had prepared well for this test. They were able to offer a wealth of ideas and opinions on their chosen topic area, to use a wide and varied range of lexis appropriate to the chosen GTA and to demonstrate command of a wide range of linguistic structures.

Most candidates had clearly thought about their chosen topic area and were well-prepared with statistics and facts to support their ideas. A number, however, had not thought about their chosen topics and although these candidates generally did well on the Youth Culture and Lifestyle topics, they often showed a lack of knowledge for The World Around Us and to a certain extent Education and Employment.

Accuracy varied depending on the candidate but it was pleasing to hear correct formation of cases, especially with irregular endings such as, много людей. There was also evidence of much more advanced grammar with some candidates using A2 grammar such as subjunctives and participles.

A very common error remains with the mispronunciation of достаточно. Tense formation also seemed problematic for some less able candidates with some candidates using just the infinitive or present tense forms. Also, although almost all candidates had an awareness of the necessity of case endings, less able candidates often chose the incorrect ones.

On occasion, the teacher examiner rephrased one or more of the four prescribed questions on the stimulus. As has been mentioned previously, if this is the case, then the candidate's response to that question is ignored when assessing their performance. Some teacher examiner asked supplementary questions in section A. This is not required. Please see below (Advice to teacher examiners) for further clarification. In some instances, in section B of the test the teacher examiner failed to move away from the topic of the stimulus card to discuss other subtopics of the GTA chosen by the candidate. In these cases, the mark awarded to the candidate for "Understanding – GTA" may be restricted.

A significant number of tests were shorter than the minimum required eight minutes. In such cases, the candidate is unable to access the entire range of marks available for the test. The teacher examiner should begin timing the examination from the time when they ask the first of the prescribed questions on the stimulus. The test should last 8 – 10 minutes. Where a test exceeds this and the candidate is speaking as 10 minutes elapses, the examiner listens to the end of the candidate's response, or to the next sense break in what they are saying, and then stops marking. If the teacher examiner is speaking as the 10 minutes elapses, the examiner stops listening at that point.

The majority of centres followed the instructions for administration of the tests. A completed Unit 1 Oral Form (OR1) for each candidate should be sent along with the recordings and the top two copies of the attendance register to the examiner. Cassettes, CDs or memory sticks should be labelled with the centre number and the names and numbers of the candidates recorded on that cassette/CD/memory stick. Care should be taken to ensure that the work of each candidate has been clearly recorded.

Comments on candidates' performance in Section A:

Youth Culture Stimulus Cards 1A and 1B:

Nearly all the candidates were able to answer the first two questions, though some were unable to express the times at which the company is open. Most candidates dealt well with questions 3 and 4 on both cards and were able to give a wealth of opinions about computers and the internet.

Youth Culture Stimulus Cards 2A and 2B:

Some candidates had difficulty with the pronunciation of *женятся* as they were unsure of where the stress falls in this word. Their answers to questions 1 and 2 though, in the main, indicated that they had understood the text. As with the other Youth Culture card, most candidates dealt well with questions 3 and 4 of these cards.

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness Cards 1A and 1B:

Nearly all the candidates could answer questions 1 and 2. The majority offered comprehensive answers to the third and fourth questions on both cards, and had clearly used the preparation time to prepare personal responses to the subject of the text.

Lifestyle, Health and Fitness Cards 2A and 2B:

Most candidates dealt well with all four questions on both cards. Sport is clearly a topic about which candidates who have chosen the Lifestyle, Health and Fitness topic have a great deal to say and most were able to use a wide range of vocabulary and structures when talking about it.

The World Around Us Cards 1A and 1B:

Relatively few candidates chose the topic of The World Around Us, but of those that did most dealt well with all the questions on these cards and their answers indicated that they had understood the text well. Many candidates used the vocabulary in the text effectively in their answers to the questions.

The World Around Us Cards 2A and 2B:

As for cards 1A and 1B, relatively few candidates chose the topic of The World Around Us, but of those that did most dealt well with all the questions on these cards and their answers indicated that they had understood the text well. Most candidates who chose this GTA had clearly prepared to talk about the climate in some detail, and were generally able to use a good range of appropriate vocabulary in answer to the questions on these cards.

Education and Employment Cards 1A and 1B:

Relatively few candidates chose the topic of Education and Employment but almost without exception those who did coped well with all four questions on these cards. The topic of university tuition fees was often mentioned in response to question 3 on card 1B, and many candidates were able to express a clear and strong opinion about this issue.

Education and Employment Cards 2A and 2B:

As for cards 1A and 1B, relatively few candidates chose the topic of Education and Employment but almost without exception those who did coped well with all four questions on these cards. In response to the third and fourth questions on both cards candidates offered well-considered and varied opinions about work and working abroad, often referring to personal experience or aspirations.

Comments on candidates' performance in Section B

The majority of candidates were able to discuss a wide range of areas relating to the GTA about which they had chosen to speak. As previously mentioned, the section B discussion should move away from the topic of the stimulus card to cover other subtopics of the same GTA.

In order for the candidate to be able to access the full range of marks available, it is essential that Section B be a discussion, not merely a string of questions and answers. There is some overlap between the GTAs, and this was reflected in candidates' answers. For example, discussion of the use (or otherwise) of drugs might be a topic for a candidate who has chosen Youth Culture, or one who has chosen Lifestyle, Health and Fitness. This is quite acceptable. On occasion, though, the teacher examiner asked questions which could not be seen to fit in any of the subtopics of the candidate's GTA. An example might be a question about which AS subjects the candidate is studying where the candidate's chosen GTA is Lifestyle, Health and Fitness. On such occasions, the candidate's ability to access the full range of marks for "Understanding – GTA" may be restricted.

Advice to teacher examiners on the conduct of the 6RU01 examination

It is essential that the teacher examiner is aware of the requirements of 6RU01, as incorrectly conducted tests can adversely affect the candidate's mark. Further advice about the conduct of the test can be found in the Edexcel AS/A2 Russian Oral Training Guide, available on the Edexcel website.

Timing

The 6RU01 test should last 8-10 minutes in total. If section A takes less than 4 minutes, then section B should be extended so that the total test time is not less than 8 minutes. It is in the candidate's interest to allow the full 10 minutes test time, in order that they may demonstrate as wide a range as possible of ideas and opinion on the chosen GTA. If a test is too short, the candidate is not able to access the full range of marks available for the test. If it is too long, the examiner stops marking as soon as is appropriate after 10 minutes, ie at the end of the next sense-break in what the candidate is saying, or at the end of the candidate's next answer, whichever comes first.

The timing of the test should begin as the teacher examiner begins to ask the first of the four questions set on the stimulus test.

Conduct of Section A

In the interests of comparability between tests, and so that the candidate is not disadvantaged, the four questions set on the stimulus must be asked exactly as they are written in the teacher examiner 6RU01 examination booklet. The only exception to this is that the formal form of address may be changed to the more familiar where that is appropriate, that is «вы» may be changed to «ты», and «по-вашему» to «по-твоему», etc. All four questions must be asked, even if a candidate has already partially answered a question in a previous response. Again, this is in the interests of comparability. Where a teacher examiner inadvertently adds an interjection to the beginning of a question or at the end of a candidate's answer, and this addition adds nothing to the question, and does not change the body of the question in any way, then this is ignored when assessing the candidate's work. An example might be where the teacher examiner says «хорошо» at the end of an answer before asking the next question.

However, if the teacher examiner changes or rephrases the question in any way, then the candidate's response to that question is ignored when assessing their work. It is essential, therefore, that the teacher examiner asks the questions exactly as they are expressed in the teacher examiner 6RU01 examination booklet.

Additional questions must not be asked in Section A.

Section A questions should not be repeated, but where the teacher examiner does repeat a question in the interests of keeping the conversation going, this is taken into account when assessing the candidate's mark for Response.

As the teacher examiner may not rephrase or expand the four questions set by Edexcel, during preparation for this part of the test candidates should be coached to give full and extended answers to the set questions. Candidates and teachers should also be aware that the first two questions on each card (factual questions about the text) do not require very long answers.

Conduct of Section B

The topic of the stimulus card may be used as an opening for the section B discussion, but the teacher examiner must swiftly move on to discussion which covers at least one more subtopic of the candidate's chosen GTA. For example, in this year's tests, the topic of the second stimulus card for Lifestyle:Health and Fitness, «Теннис в России – Кубок Кремля», is "Sport and Exercise". Therefore, the teacher examiner must make sure that the section B discussion predominantly deals with one or both of the other subtopics of this GTA, ie. "Food and Diet" and "Health Issues (e.g. smoking, skin cancer, health services)". If this is not the case, then the candidate cannot access the full range of marks available for this test.

A definitive list of subtopics linked to each of the General Topic Areas follows:

GTA 1 - Youth Culture and Concerns

Subtopics:

- Music and Fashion
- Technology (e.g. MP3/blogs/mobile phones/internet/games)
- Relationships (family/friendships and peer pressure)
- Drink, Drugs, Sex.

GTA 2 - Lifestyle: Health and Fitness

Subtopics:

- Sport and Exercise
- Food and Diet
- Health Issues (e.g. smoking, skin cancer, health services).

GTA 3 - The World Around Us: Travel, Tourism, Environmental Issues and the

Russian - speaking World

Subtopics

- Tourist Information, Travel and Transport
- Weather (e.g. natural disasters, climate change)
- Pollution and Recycling.

GTA 4 - Education and Employment

Subtopics

- Education (schooling and higher education)
- Education Policy and Student Issues
- The World of Work (e.g. the changing work scene, job opportunities and unemployment).

It is in the interests of the candidate that the teacher examiner asks questions which allow them to demonstrate the full extent of their knowledge of the structures and lexis expected at AS level. Pedestrian and GCSE-type questions often do not encourage the candidate to use AS level language and structures. A list of example questions for this examination can be found in the Edexcel Oral Training Guide. These questions are not compulsory, merely examples of the type of question that might be asked. The teacher examiner should encourage the candidate to expand on answers, to provide detail and clarification.

There is no requirement for the candidate to demonstrate knowledge of Russia or a Russian-speaking context in the AS Russian Unit 1 oral test, though, of course, they are free to do so.

In assessing the mark for Understanding – GTA, the candidate is awarded marks for the range of ideas and opinions they offer about their chosen GTA, but, in practice, concrete examples and factual knowledge about the topics being discussed often add to the candidate's ability to access the full range of marks available. Candidates have a free choice of the GTA they choose, but should be advised to choose a topic area which they have prepared and which they are ready to discuss in detail.

Recording quality

A increasing number of centres are submitting the recordings of the tests as MP3 files on CD or USB sticks. The quality of these is generally good, and better than those on cassette tape, though some CD recordings were rather faint. It is the responsibility of the centres to ensure that the recording quality is sufficiently loud and of decent quality. USB sticks are, of course, robust. Centres should also take care to package material carefully.

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