

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback Summer 2010

GCE

GCE Russian (6RU03) Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response in Russian

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Publications Code US024696

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Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response in Russian (6RU03)

Assessment Principles

The unit is assessed according to the marking grids on pages 36 and 37 of the current Specification: Response (20), Quality of Language (7), Reading and Research (7), Comprehension and Development (16). The total is 50.

Conduct of the Test

The candidate should outline the initial issue for about 1 minute, adopting a definite stance towards this. The best candidates will support their opinions with evidence of reading and research, often quoting statistics and sources and / or citing the views of others. They should then justify and defend their views for up to four minutes during which the examiner should adopt a point of view in opposition to the candidate's. Simply asking the candidate questions about their views does not constitute an adequate challenge to them and will not allow the candidate adequate scope to defend and justify them. After the first 5 minutes, the examiner should initiate a spontaneous discussion on at least 2 further issues. The examiner may be less adversarial from now until the end of the test. The entire test should last between 11 and 13 minutes.

Performance of Candidates

Most candidates chose suitable issues. The most popular continue to be: "I am against / in favour of abortion / death penalty / euthanasia/ legalisation of drugs / more being done about global warming and EU expansion". Same-sex marriage, gun control, immigration and issues to do with Russian domestic and foreign policy were less common, but not unique. The most successful issues continue to be those about which the candidate can express strong views, but which also allow an equally strong point of view to be expressed by the examiner. In other words, for examination purposes, the most suitable issues are those which are not black and white.

Many candidates demonstrated an excellent ability to take the initiative, show in-depth reading and research and use sophisticated vocabulary, structures and powers of argument. It was therefore frustrating for the examiners to find that a significant minority of teachers reduced the opportunity of their candidates to achieve the highest possible marks because the tests were the wrong length, did not move on from the original issue, did not contain at least two further issues or were cluttered with inappropriate questions for this unit. Centres should note that short tests will incur a time penalty and long tests serve no purpose as nothing a candidate says after the end of the sentence being spoken as the 13th minute elapses will be credited. Revisiting AS and GCSE questions will not allow candidates to demonstrate the appropriate linguistic and intellectual skills necessary to score highly in this unit. It should also be noted that it is not in the spirit of the exam to ask the same questions to all candidates at one centre.

Advice and Guidance

Candidates should

- write their chosen issue on the form in Russian, clearly indicating their stance. (Я за... / Я против... / Я думаю, что... etc)
- research their chosen issue carefully
- try to give statistics to support their arguments, not just say “statistics show that...”
- quote specific sources, not just say “someone said that...”
- demonstrate a clear grasp of the initial issue
- if being examined by an examiner who is not their teacher, send the oral form to the relevant person in good time for the examiner to prepare the fairest possible test

Teacher examiners should

- observe the correct time limits
- make sure the test consists only of the discussion of issues
- make sure that at least two distinct issues have been discussed after the original one has been completed
- make sure that the additional issues are genuinely unpredictable (If a candidate is struggling with one unpredictable issue, it is easy to move on quickly to another which might produce a better performance)
- avoid talking too much or dominating the argument
- check that the recording has been done clearly
- mark the tapes and their boxes clearly with the centre name, centre number, candidate numbers and names of candidates
- announce the above at appropriate places on all tapes
- if in doubt about how to conduct the test, consult the Oral Training Guide on the Edexcel website.

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	a*	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Raw mark boundary	50	43	38	33	28	24	20	16	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	70	63	56	49	42	35	28	21	0

a* is only used in conversion from raw to uniform marks. It is not a published unit grade.

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

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