

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Russian (6RU03) Paper 1A

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Understanding and Spoken Response in Russian

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 one 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 five minutes, the examiner should initiate a spontaneous discussion on **at least two** further issues. The examiner may be less adversarial from now until the end of the test. The entire test should last between eleven and thirteen 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". Same-sex marriage, the question of increased fees for Higher Education and matters to do with the royal family were also very popular this time round. 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 minority of teachers were still reducing 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, CDs or memory sticks 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
- make sure that the tests have been recorded and can be played back at a suitable volume
- make sure the recordings are securely packed (CDs are particularly breakable in transit)

If in doubt about how to conduct the test, consult the Oral Training Guide on the Edexcel website.

Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response

Marking guidance for oral examiners

Tests that are too short

A test is too short if it is less than 10 minutes 30 seconds. Candidates are allowed a 30 second tolerance.

Drop down one mark band to the corresponding mark across the following assessment grids:

- 'Response'
- 'Comprehension and Development'

e.g.

5-8	Limited incidence of spontaneous discourse; limited range of lexis and structures; very little evidence of abstract language.
9-12	Satisfactory incidence of spontaneous discourse; range of lexis and structures adequate with some ability to handle language of abstract concepts.
13-16	Frequent examples of spontaneous discourse; good range of lexis and structures; good use of abstract concepts.

If a candidate would have scored 12, they should be given 8, if they would have scored 9, they should be given 5. The adjustment should not be applied to 'Quality of language' or 'Reading and research'.

Test that are too long

Once the 13 minute mark has passed, the examiner stops listening at the end of the next sentence.

Tests that do not move away from initial input

e.g. spontaneous discussion is not initiated/further unpredictable areas of discussion are not covered.

Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see the grids.

Response	
No unpredictable areas discussed	Only one unpredictable area discussed
No more than 8 marks	No more than 12 marks

Reading and research	
No unpredictable areas discussed	Only one unpredictable area discussed
No more than 3 marks	No more than 4 marks

Comprehension and development	
No unpredictable areas discussed	Only one unpredictable area discussed
No more than 7 marks	No more than 10 marks

Tests that are pre-learnt

Candidates are limited in the amount of marks they can score. Please see 'Response' grid.

- 'Response' - cannot score more than 8, irrespective of use of lexis/structure/abstract language.

Grade Boundaries

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.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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