

GCE

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Oral training guide

Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Russian (8RU01)

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First examination 2010

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Part 1 General guidelines

Introduction

This guide is for teachers who are preparing candidates for, and conducting, the Edexcel GCE Russian oral examinations. This guide relates to the requirements of the Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced GCE in Russian specification (for teaching from September 2008).

The Advanced Subsidiary GCE (AS Level) oral examination will be assessed for the first time in June 2009 and the Advanced GCE (A2 Level) oral examination in June 2010. All the tests will be externally assessed by Edexcel.

The AS Level oral examination is *Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response in Russian*.

The unit code is:

- 6RU01 Russian

The A2 Level oral examination is *Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response in Russian*.

The unit code is:

- 6RU03 Russian

Essential preparation

Teachers should familiarise themselves with the details of the AS oral examination (Unit 1) in the Edexcel GCE Russian specification (page 4), the assessment requirements (page 9), the unit description (pages 19-23) and the assessment criteria (pages 24-25). The details of the A2 oral examination (Unit 3) can be found on page 6, the assessment requirements on page 11, the unit description on pages 33-35 and the assessment criteria on pages 36-37 of the Edexcel GCE Russian specification.

Related documents can be downloaded from the Edexcel website at www.edexcel.com. The assessment criteria for Units 1 and 3 can also be found on page 9 of this guide.

It is essential that teachers are aware of the requirements of each unit, as incorrectly conducted tests can adversely affect candidates' marks.

AS Unit 1: Spoken Expression and Response in Russian

Students will be rewarded for their ability to demonstrate understanding of a short Russian-language text (linked to one of the general topic areas of the AS specification) and to engage in general discussion on the same general topic area. Understanding of the text will be tested by questions posed by the teacher/examiner, who will then develop the conversation into a more general discussion of the topic area.

Before the test, students will choose 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.

A definitive list of the subtopics linked to each of these general topic areas is provided below:

- Youth culture and concerns
 - Music and fashion
 - Technology (eg MP3/blogs/mobile phones/internet/games)
 - Relationships (family/friendships and peer pressure)
 - Drink, drugs, sex
- Lifestyle: health and fitness
 - Sport and exercise
 - Food and diet
 - Health issues (eg smoking, skin cancer, health services)
- The world around us: travel, tourism, environmental issues and the Russian-speaking world
 - Tourist information, travel and transport
 - Weather (eg natural disasters, climate change)
 - Pollution and recycling
- Education and employment
 - Education (schooling and higher education)
 - Education policy and student issues
 - The world of work (eg the changing work scene, job opportunities and unemployment).

Students are free to choose any of the four general topic areas, depending on their preference and interests. Students should be advised to choose a topic area with which they are familiar and which they are prepared to discuss in detail.

Unit 1 tests will be set on each of the four topic areas. The tests will be in the form of a short stimulus text in the target language. 15 minutes before the test, students will be given, at random, one of the stimuli for the topic area they have chosen. Examples of these stimuli can be found in the specimen assessment material published by Edexcel and can be downloaded from the Edexcel website at www.edexcel.com.

Each stimulus must be exploited in accordance with the sequence stipulated by Edexcel for each examination session.

This sequence must be applied to all candidates except where a particular instruction might cause distress (for example reference to relative who is ill or similar situation); in this case the next suitable stimulus must be used. The sequence must be continued after breaks in examining in any one day, for example after lunch.

Students will have 15 minutes preparation time to study the stimulus allocated to them. During this time, they should study the text with a view to answering questions about it, and to discussing the subject of the text in more detail.

Students should be encouraged to use this time effectively. Further guidance on preparing students for the test can be found later in this handbook.

It is important that students know that, in the first part of the test (Section A), they will be asked to offer opinions about the subject of the text and the related subtopic, and to discuss it in some detail, in addition to demonstrating comprehension of the text. In the second part of the test (Section B) students will need to talk about other aspects of the general topic area they have chosen.

Students may not use a dictionary or any other resources during the preparation time. They may make notes (up to one side of A4 paper if they wish) but must not write on the stimulus provided.

Students must take both the stimulus and any notes into the examination and may refer to both at any point during the test. Both the stimulus and the notes must be handed to the teacher/examiner at the end of the test, and must be retained by the centre until 20 September in the year of the test.

The Unit 1 test comprises two sections.

Section A

The teacher/examiner will begin the test by asking the four questions set by Edexcel and printed in the teacher/examiner's material. These questions do not appear on the test card given to the students.

The first two of these four questions ask students to demonstrate factual understanding of the stimulus text. The second two ask students to express their opinions about, or give their reactions to, the subject matter of the stimulus text.

In the interests of comparability and for the purposes of fair assessment across all centres, **the teacher/examiner must not rephrase or expand on these questions**. It is very important that teacher/examiners do not rephrase or expand on these questions, as to do so will adversely affect the students' marks for *Response* and *Understanding (Stimulus specific)*.

However, although the questions provided by Edexcel will use the formal 'you' to address the candidate, the teacher/examiner may use the informal 'you' to address the candidate if more appropriate and undertake any necessary change as a result of this to the linked verbs and adjectives etc. No other unnecessary changes must be made.

As teacher/examiners may not rephrase or expand the four questions set by Edexcel, during preparation for this part of the test students should be coached to give full and/or extended answers to the set questions.

If a student provides a particularly full answer to the third question that pre-empts the fourth question, the teacher/examiner should still ask the fourth question. This is done to ensure that all candidates have the same assessment experience, but students need to be advised that this could occur.

Section B

In this section, the teacher/examiner must initiate a discussion about the general topic area chosen by each student. The specific topic of the stimulus may be used as a starting point for this discussion, but the teacher/examiner must move away from this topic to more general discussion of the topic area and its linked subtopics. Failure to move away to different subtopics could have an adverse impact on final marks.

A list of questions that relate to each of the subtopics identified for all of the general topic areas can be found on page 21 of this guide. The questions are not in sequence, nor are they mandatory. They may be rephrased or substituted by others related to the same subtopic. Teachers should also devise additional questions of their own related to each of the subtopics.

There is no requirement in the AS Unit 1 oral test for students to demonstrate knowledge of countries and contexts in which Russian is spoken¹, though of course they are free to do so.

Although this unit relates to a chosen general topic area, it is essentially designed to assess manipulation and understanding of the Russian spoken language. The general topic areas should be considered as different contexts in which students can develop, use and understand spoken Russian language. *Detailed, specialist* Russian vocabulary or *detailed and specialist* knowledge of the chosen general topic area are not required.

Timing of the AS Unit 1 test

The AS Unit 1 test should last between eight and 10 minutes.

The test time should be divided equally between Sections A and B. However, if students complete 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 at least eight minutes**. Excess candidate material will not be assessed.

Choice of AS Unit 1 general topic area

Students must consider their free choice of general topic area for the AS Level Unit 1 test very carefully. They should be advised to choose a general topic area which they have prepared and which they are ready to discuss in detail.

It is anticipated that students from the same centre will choose to prepare different general topic areas, in order to reflect the range of their individual interests. Some overlap of topic choice is, however, expected.

Students may use this assessment as an opportunity to compare and contrast different topics both from a UK perspective and from knowledge of a Russian-speaking country or countries.

Students must inform the teacher/examiner which general topic area they have chosen before the test via an Oral Topic Form, one copy of which must be given to the teacher/examiner (or visiting examiner, if applicable) in advance of the examination.

¹ With the exception of *The world around us: travel, tourism, environmental issues and the Russian-speaking world*.

A2 Unit 3: Understanding and Spoken Response in Russian

In this test, students will be rewarded for demonstrating the ability to understand spoken Russian and to use Russian to explain, to clarify, to justify a point of view, to express opinions and to defend an argument. They will have to demonstrate knowledge of the issue they have chosen to discuss and will need to show evidence of wide-ranging reading and research into this issue.

Students will introduce the issue they have chosen for up to one minute, after which the teacher/examiner will facilitate debate on this issue for up to a further four minutes.

After debate on this first chosen issue, the teacher/examiner must introduce at least **two further issues** for discussion. Students must not know in advance of the test which further issues the teacher/examiner will choose for discussion: these must be unpredictable elements of the test.

It is in the students' interest for teacher/examiners to cover a range of issues for discussion, in order that students can demonstrate both the breadth and depth of their knowledge and linguistic competence.

As students will be rewarded for the ability to understand and respond to the spoken language, it is important that the teacher/examiner's questions are sufficiently challenging to allow the candidate to access the full range of marks for *Comprehension and Development* (see mark grid on page 12 of this guide). If the teacher/examiner's questions are not sufficiently complex and challenging, students' opportunities to score high marks in this area of assessment will be constrained.

Timing of the A2 Unit 3 test

The A2 Unit 3 test should last between 11 and 13 minutes.

The initial issue (chosen by students before the test) should be debated for up to five minutes in total. Students should introduce the issue for about one minute before debate begins, and the teacher/examiner should interrupt students if this introduction exceeds about one minute. This introduction is followed by up to four minutes debate on this issue.

The rest of the test (six to eight minutes) is for discussion of at least two further issues, chosen by the teacher/examiner. Students will not know in advance of the test which issues the teacher/examiner will introduce for discussion. This time does not have to be divided precisely between these further issues, but care should be taken to ensure that students have the opportunity to discuss at least two further issues in detail. Excess material will not be assessed.

Teacher/examiners must ensure that the unpredictable issues in this unit are linked to the general topic areas described in the specification. All students at A2 will be expected to have covered most of the seven general topic areas to some degree, and students who are able to demonstrate good knowledge of any of these areas should be rewarded accordingly. Teacher/examiners should not require the candidate to produce any very detailed or specialised knowledge in the follow-on unpredictable discussions.

Choice of A2 Unit 3 issue

Students should choose an issue which they are prepared to research in depth and which is suitable for debate. Students must take a definite stance on the issue and maintain this during their assessment.

There is no requirement in the A2 Unit 3 oral test for students to demonstrate knowledge of countries and contexts in which Russian is spoken, though of course they are free to do so.

Students have a completely free choice of the issue they wish to debate; **it does not have to relate to any of the AS or A2 general topic areas.**

As students have to indicate a stance on the issue they have chosen, they would be well advised to consider carefully the way in which the issue for discussion is phrased. It is often useful to use a statement beginning 'I think that ...' or 'In my opinion ...' in order that the stance taken is clear.

Examples of suitable issues, making the stance clear, are ‘I think that university education should be free to all students’, or ‘In my opinion, the ban on smoking in public places is wrong’. Please note that these are given only as an indication of the sort of possible issues and stances that students might consider.

Students must complete an Oral Chosen Issue form in advance of the test, on which they must write a brief statement about the chosen issue. One copy of this form must be given to the teacher/examiner before the test. Students must take a copy of this form into the examination and may refer to this at any point during the test. One copy of the Oral Chosen Issue form must be sent, with the recording, to the examiner.

Preparing students for the oral tests

The AS Unit 1 test

For AS Unit 1, students must choose one of these 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.

Students have a free choice of these areas.

These areas are the four AS general topic areas which will have been studied in class, but in preparation for the Unit 1 test, students should be encouraged to undertake additional, independent research. They have the opportunity to investigate the general topic area of their choice in greater depth and the freedom to introduce aspects of the topic in which they are interested.

In preparation for this test, teachers can build on their students’ natural curiosity, creativity and individual interests. Possible activities might include the following:

- Students work in small groups to identify which of the general topic areas interests them most, and aspects of that area which they might explore.
- Individual students research a particular aspect of the general topic area they have chosen and present it to the rest of the group. Students might prepare a PowerPoint presentation, a worksheet or vocabulary list for their classmates, or an activity for their classmates to do.
- Students interview each other and/or their teacher to canvass opinion and ideas about a particular topic.
- Students write mind maps to identify links between aspects of the topic and to expand and order their ideas.
- Students consider questions for each other about the general topic area they have chosen, and practise answering these questions in as much detail as possible.
- Students time themselves (or each other) talking about a particular subtopic of the general topic area they have chosen, trying to increase each time the amount of time they can talk without needing to be prompted (from 10 seconds, to 15, to 20, etc).

When researching the general topic area they have chosen, students may use internet-derived sources, but should also be encouraged to refer to books, newspapers, magazines, television and radio programmes. They might also use examples from their own life to illustrate a point, or they might ask their classmates, teachers or the foreign language assistant for help and ideas. Students might consider comparing, for example, reactions to a specific issue in the UK and in other countries.

Teachers should share the content of the assessment grids for this unit with their students, so that students are fully aware of the assessment demands and can bear these in mind when preparing for the test.

Students must be aware that teacher/examiners are not allowed to rephrase or expand on the initial **four** questions on the stimulus text for this unit, and that students should answer these questions as fully as possible.

If a student provides a particularly full answer to the third question that pre-empts the fourth question, the teacher/examiner should still ask the fourth question. This is done to ensure that all candidates have the same assessment experience, but students need to be advised that this could occur.

The 15 minutes preparation time

Before the Unit 1 test, students will have 15 minutes to study a stimulus text linked to the general topic area they have chosen. Students must not write on this stimulus, but can make notes on a separate piece of paper. Both the stimulus and any notes must be taken into the exam room, and students can refer to these at any point during the test. However, students must not refer to dictionaries or any other resources during the preparation time.

Teachers may wish to advise their students of the following to ensure that they make good use of their time:

- Begin by reading the entire text through (possibly two or three times).
- Make bullet point notes of the main points of the text.
- Make a note of any vocabulary from the text which might be useful in discussion of this topic.
- Do not waste time writing out complete sentences; you will not be allowed to read out long prepared statements anyway (remember that marks are awarded for spontaneity in this unit).
- Consider the types of questions which might be asked about the text, and your answers to these questions.
- Identify any vocabulary you already know that might be useful when answering questions on this topic.

The A2 Unit 3 oral test

For A2 Unit 3, students choose an issue they wish to debate and must take a stance on this issue. They do not have to choose an issue related to the country/culture whose language they are studying, but they can do so if they wish. The issue does not have to relate to one of the general topic areas in the Edexcel specification.

Much of the preparation for this unit will be similar to that for Unit 1 (see above). Teachers should share the assessment grids for this unit with the students, and make sure that students are aware of the need to defend the stance that they have adopted on their chosen initial issue.

When choosing the issue they wish to debate for the first part of this test, students would be well-advised to choose an issue about which they have a strong opinion. As mentioned previously, they should phrase the title of the issue so that their stance is clear, for example 'I think that ...' or 'In my opinion ...'. They must be sure that the issue can provide them with sufficient material for a one-minute presentation followed by four minutes of debate (they should have four or five different arguments in support of their point of view) and can include facts and figures to support their argument.

Examining technique

Teacher/examiners should take every care to familiarise themselves with the requirements of the oral tests, as tests which are conducted incorrectly can adversely affect the students' marks.

Teacher/examiners conducting the tests need to put the students at ease, to be friendly and approachable and to ensure that the questions asked encourage the students to achieve the highest standard of which they are capable. They must balance this with the responsibility to conduct the test to comply with the conditions of the Edexcel specification. Students will also expect that the test will be conducted with due seriousness and formality.

In order to put students at ease, the teacher/examiner should ensure that the examination room is prepared well in advance, providing sufficient space (including table space on which students may put the AS Unit 1 allocated stimulus and any notes, or the A2 Unit 3 oral form) for both the teacher/examiner and each student to feel comfortable.

The teacher/examiner should ask a range of questions which will push the students to reach their linguistic 'ceiling'. With the exception of the four prescribed questions on the AS Unit 1 stimulus, which must not be rephrased, the teacher/examiner should encourage students to expand on answers and to provide detail and clarification.

In the A2 Unit 3 test, the teacher/examiner should challenge the students' point of view, allowing students to defend their opinion and to demonstrate the ability to debate. In the A2 Unit 3 test, the teacher/examiner must also ensure that the questions are sufficiently complex and challenging to allow students to access the full range of marks available for *Comprehension*. General conversation should be avoided, as it is not appropriate in this test. Students should continue to demonstrate their ability to debate and discuss issues throughout the test and the teacher/examiner should give them every opportunity to do so. In-depth, specialist and/or factual knowledge is not expected in the Unit 3 test.

The teacher/examiner should establish eye contact with the students, make the students feel that the teacher/examiner is listening intently to the responses and should refrain from interrupting or from talking too much. It is the teacher/examiner's role to keep the discussion going, to encourage the students and to ensure that the test is correctly conducted, but their contribution should be kept to a minimum. The teacher/examiner must not correct students' language, nor express disapproval. The test should conclude on a positive note and students should leave the exam room feeling that they have given the best performance they possibly could.

Examining technique checklist for AS Unit 1 and A2 Unit 3

- The teacher/examiner should put the candidate at ease and remain friendly and encouraging throughout.
- The teacher/examiner should ask open questions and offer encouragement.
- The teacher/examiner should not proffer anecdotes, opinions, advice or information.
- The conversation/discussion should flow naturally.
- The teacher/examiner should elicit from the candidate a range of functions, for example narrate, explain, clarify, hypothesise, justify, speculate, describe.
- The teacher/examiner must not allow the candidate to recite large amounts of pre-learned material.
- The teacher/examiner should encourage students to reach their linguistic ceiling.
- The test should end on a positive note.
- The teacher/examiner must keep to the time allocated to the test.

Assessment criteria

Students will be rewarded for their performances according to the following assessment criteria, which will be applied on a 'best fit' basis.

Unit 1

Mark	Quality of language (Accuracy) (AO3)
0	No rewardable language.
1	Isolated examples of correct language; pronunciation and intonation often impede communication.
2-3	Many basic errors, impeding communication at times; pronunciation and intonation erratic, not always comprehensible.
4-5	Accuracy variable but errors rarely impede communication; pronunciation and intonation inconsistent but comprehensible.
6-7	Generally accurate but some errors in more complex language; pronunciation and intonation generally good.
8	Highly accurate with perhaps some very minor errors; pronunciation and intonation authentic.

Mark	Quality of language (Range of Lexis) (AO3)
0	No rewardable language.
1	Very basic lexis; minimal command of structure.
2-3	Lexis restricted; operates generally in simple sentences.
4-5	Adequate range of lexis; limited range of structures.
6-7	Good range of lexis with some examples of more complex structures.
8	Wide range of lexis and good variety of structures with only occasional limitation.

Mark	Response (AO1)
0	No rewardable language.
1-4	Little spontaneity; cannot develop responses; very reliant on examiner's language.
5-8	Few examples of spontaneous discourse; limited development of responses; often fails to respond appropriately to questions; needs prompting.
9-12	Some examples of fluent discourse but not always spontaneous or well developed; some hesitation in more complex areas; difficulty with some questions.
13-16	Frequent examples of spontaneous discourse ably developed; responds usually without undue hesitation; deals adequately with most questions.
17-20	High incidence of spontaneous, fluent discourse; able to respond readily to all questions; develops and sustains discourse well.

Mark	Understanding (Stimulus specific) (AO1)
0	No understanding of stimulus.
1	Limited answers to prescribed questions, demonstrating poor understanding of stimulus.
2	Satisfactory answers to prescribed questions, demonstrating adequate understanding of stimulus.
3	Detailed answers to prescribed questions, demonstrating good understanding of stimulus.
4	Full and detailed answers to prescribed questions, demonstrating excellent understanding of stimulus.

Mark	Understanding (General topic area) (AO1)
0	No rewardable language.
1-2	Hardly any relevant ideas and opinions, demonstrating poor understanding of general topic area.
3-4	Few relevant ideas and opinions, demonstrating limited understanding of general topic area.
5-6	Some relevant ideas and opinions, demonstrating satisfactory understanding of general topic area.
7-8	Many relevant ideas and opinions, demonstrating good understanding of general topic area.
9-10	Wealth of relevant ideas and opinions, demonstrating excellent understanding of general topic area.

Unit 3

Mark	Response (AO1)
0	No rewardable material.
1-4	Minimal incidence of spontaneous discourse; very limited range of structures; no use of abstract language.
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.
17-20	Very high incidence of spontaneous discourse; impressive range of lexis and structures.

Mark	Quality of language (AO3)
0	No rewardable material.
1-2	Very flawed language, often impeding comprehension; pronunciation and intonation very inauthentic.
3	Basic errors, impeding comprehension at times; pronunciation and intonation erratic.
4	Accuracy variable with some basic errors; pronunciation and intonation generally good with some lapses.
5	Good level of accuracy with occasional, usually minor, errors; good pronunciation and intonation.
6-7	Highly accurate; excellent pronunciation and intonation.

Mark	Reading and research (AO2)
0	No rewardable material.
1	Scant evidence of any reading and research into the chosen issue and other topics discussed; very superficial.
2-3	Little evidence of reading and research into the chosen issue and other topics discussed; obvious gaps and very little detail.
4	Adequate evidence of reading and research into the chosen issue and other topics discussed but overall lacks breadth and detail; somewhat inconsistent.
5-6	Good to very good evidence of wide reading and research into the chosen issue and other topics discussed with occasional gaps; some pertinent detail at times.
7	Excellent evidence of in-depth and very wide reading and research into the chosen issue and other topics discussed; excellent detail.

Mark	Comprehension and development (AO1)
0	No rewardable material.
1-4	Minimal comprehension; many basic question forms unknown; minimal development.
5-7	Limited comprehension; basic question forms generally known but little beyond; limited development of resources.
8-10	Adequate level of comprehension; responds appropriately to basic question forms but experiences problems with more complex question forms and structures; adequate development.
11-13	Copes with a variety or wide variety of question forms although more complex forms pose problems at times; generally good to very good development of responses.
14-16	Excellent level of comprehension; responds at a consistently high level to a wide range of complex and challenging question forms; excellent development.

Part 2 Exemplar material

AS Unit 1 specimen tests and commentaries

Candidate 1

Youth culture and concerns – sample stimulus 2



Comments on the oral assessment

The conduct of the test conforms to Edexcel requirements, and is conducted very well. The test lasts just over 9 minutes and 30 seconds in total (within the 8-10 minutes required), with Section A lasting just over 3 minutes and 30 seconds.

In Section A, the examiner does not rephrase or add to the four questions prescribed by Edexcel (in accordance with the requirements of the conduct of this unit).

In advance of the test, the candidate has chosen the topic *Youth culture and concerns*. The stimulus is about the internet and in Section B of the test the examiner introduces open questions about the chosen general topic area but moves away from the subject of the stimulus, asking questions which invite the candidate to talk about music, fashion, other forms of modern technology and the differences between generations.

The examiner's contribution to the conversation is kept to a minimum, but his questions serve to keep the discussion flowing and to interject when the candidate has come to the end of what he wishes to say. His questions encourage the candidate to offer knowledge of the topic area and personal opinion. The examiner mixes more complex questions with more straightforward ones, and judges well when the candidate might benefit from a slightly less challenging question. The phrasing of all the questions is, however, open, and all give the candidate the opportunity to develop a full answer. The examiner indicates to the candidate the direction of the conversation and draws links to other parts of the test («Мы поговорили немножко уже об интернете ...»). He indicates to the candidate when the test is coming to a close («Последний мой вопрос ...»). As a result of the examiner's technique, the candidate is led through the test and can feel secure that he knows how the test is developing; there are no unexpected surprises and the candidate is at ease. The examiner's tone throughout the test is encouraging and the test ends on a positive note.

Assessment feedback

Quality of language (Accuracy)

The candidate shows awareness of the AS grammar requirements. Less familiar verb conjugations can cause problems, as can some noun declensions, but language with which the candidate is familiar is generally accurate. The candidate tries hard to find a balance between the accuracy of his language and his wish to use more complex constructions. The candidate has an occasional problem with pronunciation, but is generally able to make himself clear.

Mark band: 3-5

Quality of language (Range of Lexis)

The candidate is able to use expressions to indicate his opinion (for example «Я думаю, что ...», «трудный вопрос» and «значит, что ...») in addition to having a range of vocabulary appropriate to the topic. He uses up-to-date vocabulary when talking about modern technology and has clearly prepared a range of lexis to enable him to talk about his chosen topic area.

Mark band: 5-6

Response

This candidate is able to give answers to all the questions, both those prescribed by Edexcel in Section A of the test and those posed by the examiner in Section B. He tries hard to develop his responses and to express his opinions, and usually does so successfully, even when he finds the questions challenging. On occasion, however, he seems to wait for the next question rather than taking the initiative to develop the conversation himself. The overall impression is one of a spontaneous performance.

Mark band: 13-16

Understanding (Stimulus specific)

This candidate demonstrates understanding of the stimulus and is able to answer all four prescribed questions. In answer to the second of the four prescribed questions, he attempts to manipulate the text with some degree of success, but reading out a substantial part of the text does not convince the listener of genuine understanding. In response to the third and fourth prescribed questions, however, he manipulates the questions well, develops his answers and ultimately provides very good responses in terms of content.

Mark: 3

Understanding (General topic area)

This candidate offers answers to all the questions, using a range of ideas to support his points of view and reflecting sound understanding of this general topic area. His responses are relevant and he tries hard to develop his ideas.

Mark band: 7-8

Candidate 2

Lifestyle: health and fitness – sample stimulus 2



Comments on the oral assessment

The conduct of the test conforms to Edexcel requirements, and is another well-conducted test. The test lasts 8 minutes in total (within the 8-10 minutes required), with 1 minute and 30 seconds spent on Section A (prescribed questions). Obviously, the amount of time spent on Section A of the test depends on the candidate's responses. From the examiner's point of view, it is important that the entire test should last 8-10 minutes.

In Section A, the examiner does not rephrase or add to the four questions prescribed by Edexcel (in accordance with the requirements of the conduct of this unit).

The stimulus is about health and diet. In Section B of the test, the examiner introduces questions about the same general topic area (*Lifestyle: health and fitness*), but moves away from the subject of the stimulus, asking questions which invite the candidate to talk about sport (Russian football in particular), smoking and healthcare. The examiner's contribution to the conversation is kept to a minimum and he asks open-ended questions which allow the candidate to demonstrate the extent of his knowledge of this topic area and of his linguistic ability. At one point when the candidate seems to struggle to finish a sentence, the examiner steps in to keep the conversation going, but, importantly, without interrupting or supplying vocabulary for the candidate. The examiner indicates to the candidate when the test is coming to an end («Последний мой вопрос ...») and his tone throughout the test is encouraging. Again, the test ends on a positive note and the candidate can leave the test feeling that he has been given every opportunity to demonstrate the level of which he is capable.

Assessment feedback

Quality of language (Accuracy)

This candidate is able to make himself clear, though there is some confusion with the use of verbs and noun endings. There is a tendency to use infinitives rather than to conjugate verbs, but practised constructions are accurate. The candidate's pronunciation is generally accurate.

Mark band: 3-5

Quality of language (Range of Lexis)

The candidate is able to use a range of lexis appropriate to the general topic area he has chosen, though there is a tendency to repetition, especially of adjectives. He is able to use structures to indicate opinion (for example «по-моему» and «я думаю»), and makes use of the vocabulary on the stimulus card. His range of lexis and structures is sufficient for him to make his point of view understood.

Mark band: 3-5

Response

The overall impression of this test is one of a spontaneous performance on the candidate's part. The candidate makes a genuine effort to keep the conversation going, expanding his answers and volunteering information; it is the candidate, for example, who introduces the topic of Russian football in response to a question about his favourite sportsman or woman. Factual knowledge of Russia and Russian culture is not expected in the AS Unit 1 test, but the candidate is free to include it, and in this test benefits from the examiner picking up on this area, which is clearly of interest to the candidate.

The candidate demonstrates understanding of all the questions asked in Section B of the test, and he is able to respond to them.

Mark band: 12-15

Understanding (Stimulus specific)

This candidate deals well with the first of the four prescribed questions. In the second, the verb causes difficulty, but he indicates that he has understood the question and makes a response. He demonstrates understanding of stimulus in his answers to both of these questions. The candidate does not entirely pick up on the use of «мало» in the third prescribed question, but gives a good answer to the fourth question in Section A.

Mark band: 2-3

Understanding (General topic area)

This candidate clearly has a good deal to say about each of the subtopics of the general topic area of *Lifestyle: health and fitness* which are discussed in this test. He expresses his opinion and is able to volunteer elements of his study of this area in response to each of the subtopics introduced by the examiner. On occasion, the listener might feel that a lack of lexis restricts his ability to express his understanding of this general topic area, but the overall impression is that he has thought about the different aspects of the topic about which he has chosen to speak and is prepared to attempt to talk about all of its related subtopics.

Mark band: 6-8

Candidate 3

The world around us – sample stimulus 1



Comments on the oral assessment

The conduct of the test conforms to Edexcel requirements, and is a very well-conducted test, though it is slightly too long (the test should last 8-10 minutes in total).

In Section A, the examiner does not rephrase or add to the four questions prescribed by Edexcel (in accordance with the requirements of the conduct of this unit).

This candidate gives full answers to all four questions prescribed by Edexcel and, as a result, Section A of the test lasts nearly five minutes. This is quite acceptable, and indeed it is encouraging that the candidate is able to provide such full and well-developed answers to these questions.

The stimulus is about the environment. In Section B of the test, the examiner introduces questions about the same general topic area (*The world around us*), but moves away from the subject of the stimulus, asking questions which invite the candidate to talk about tourism, travel, Russia, the candidate's home region and the impact of travel on the environment. Each question follows naturally from the previous question, and, as this candidate is able to provide full answers to all the questions asked, the examiner's contribution to the conversation is kept to a minimum.

The examiner's tone throughout the test is encouraging, with interjections such as «спасибо» and «хорошо», and the test ends on a positive note.

In Section B of the test, the examiner asks open questions (for example «Когда вы думаете о будущем планеты, вы - оптимист или пессимист?») which allow the candidate to demonstrate the full extent of her knowledge of and opinions about this topic area, and to demonstrate the full extent of her linguistic ability. He does not demand factual knowledge, but allows the candidate to volunteer it. He picks up on the topics introduced by the candidate and encourages her to develop these in her subsequent replies.

Assessment feedback

Quality of language (Accuracy)

While she does make mistakes, the candidate demonstrates knowledge of verb conjugation and noun declension appropriate to AS Level. She is able to use correctly constructions using the dative, «который», «свой» and «быть» plus the instrumental, all of which are appropriate at this level.

The use of «все» causes some problems and on occasion the candidate makes mistakes in pronunciation which appear to come from reading errors («сегодня», «по» for «но» and «улен» for «член» for example).

Mark band: 4-6

Quality of language (Range of Lexis)

The candidate is able to use a range of lexis appropriate to the general topic area she has chosen, for example «загрязнение», «природные ресурсы», «наводнение» and the wide range of lexis she uses to talk about recycling. Her expression is not limited by a lack of lexis, in fact quite the opposite. Her use of some complex constructions has already been mentioned, and she does well to use constructions such as «автор говорит, что», «это значит, что», «специалисты говорят, что» and «лично я ...» to express her opinions and her knowledge of this topic area. It is very useful for candidates to prepare a range of constructions such as these, which can be used in many situations and serve to make the candidate's speech more natural.

Mark band: 6-8

Response

This candidate is able to give full and well-developed answers to all the questions, both those prescribed by Edexcel in Section A of the test and those posed by the examiner in Section B. For example, in response to the examiner's question about travel, she introduces the topic of Russia, its history and culture, and the examiner picks up on this point. Similarly, in response to the final question about her attitude towards the future, she is able to bring in many different ideas and examples in support of her argument.

The candidate demonstrates understanding of all the questions asked, and she is able to respond readily to them.

Mark band: 16-20

Understanding (Stimulus specific)

This candidate demonstrates excellent understanding of the stimulus and gives full and detailed answers to all four prescribed questions.

Mark: 4

Understanding (General topic area)

This candidate offers full answers to all the questions, using many different ideas to support her points of view and demonstrating a thorough understanding of the general topic area she has chosen to discuss. Her answers reflect a good deal of preparation and consideration of topics linked to the general topic area and the way in which she is able to develop her responses to incorporate linked themes is impressive.

Mark band: 8-10

Candidate 4

Education and employment – sample stimulus 1



Comments on the oral assessment

The conduct of the test conforms to Edexcel requirements, and is a very well-conducted test, though it is slightly too long at just over 10 minutes in total. Just under 3 minutes and 30 seconds are spent by the candidate answering the four prescribed questions in Section A, with the remainder of the time devoted to discussion of the general topic area chosen by the candidate.

In Section A, the examiner rephrases the fourth prescribed question very slightly, and, while this does not affect the meaning of the question, this practice is to be avoided (in accordance with the requirements of Edexcel's requirements for the conduct of the AS Unit 1 test).

The stimulus is about employment. In Section B of the test, the examiner introduces questions about the same general topic area (*Education and employment*), but moves away from the subject of the stimulus, asking questions which invite the candidate to talk about education at school and university and the candidate's own views about future employment. As in the previous examples, the examiner's contribution to the conversation is kept to a minimum and the discussion moves easily from one topic to another. The examiner's tone throughout the test is encouraging, and the test ends on a positive note.

The examiner asks a range of straightforward and more open-ended questions and leads the candidate effectively through the test. To introduce Section B, the examiner indicates to the candidate clearly the next topic for discussion, «Теперь, несколько вопросов о ...». After discussion of education, the examiner re-introduces the topic of employment in order to give the candidate the opportunity to demonstrate the extent of his knowledge and understanding of this topic, saying «Мы уже поговорили немножко об идеальной работе ...». The examiner does not demand factual knowledge, but allows the candidate to volunteer it. He picks up on the topics introduced by the candidate and encourages him to develop these in his replies.

Assessment feedback

Quality of language (Accuracy)

This candidate demonstrates knowledge of verb conjugations and noun declensions appropriate to AS Level, though there are errors. Practised forms of even difficult and irregular declensions are accurate (for example «разговаривать с ними», «с людьми») and the candidate tries hard to find the correct case endings, correcting himself successfully on occasion.

The candidate demonstrates the ability to use the conditional tense appropriately («Я хотел бы ...») and also uses the instrumental case correctly after verbs. In all, the impression given is that the candidate is aware of the AS grammar requirements and, despite errors, is able to apply them.

Mark band: 4-6

Quality of language (Range of Lexis)

The candidate uses a range of lexis appropriate to the general topic area he has chosen (*Education and employment*), for example «поступить в университет», «найти работу», and the range of lexis used to talk about the subjects he studies at school and his future plans.

He uses constructions with the instrumental case, conditional verbs and the comparative and superlative forms of adjective. He knows irregular comparatives («легче», «старше» and «раньше» for example). This candidate makes a good attempt to make his sentences more complex by using, for example, «например», «потому, что» and «наверно». While there are lexical errors and errors in structure, he has command of a range of language which allows him to express a range of views clearly.

Mark band: 6-8

Response

This candidate responds readily to all the questions asked and works very hard (and successfully) to give full and well-developed answers. The impression of this test is one of spontaneous discourse on the part of the candidate, who develops the conversation by introducing his own opinions and ideas, and who is not reliant on the examiner.

Mark band: 16-20

Understanding (Stimulus specific)

This candidate demonstrates excellent understanding of the stimulus and gives full and detailed answers to the first two prescribed questions. In response to the third prescribed question, he focuses on the idea of working in a restaurant and ignores the fact that the job advertised is in Moscow, but this is a perfectly acceptable interpretation of the question and he gives a full and detailed response to the question. In response to the fourth prescribed question he again gives a comprehensive response and works hard to develop a very full answer.

Mark: 4

Understanding (General topic area)

The candidate's answers to all the questions about the chosen general topic area (*Education and employment*) demonstrate very good understanding of the topic. He expresses his opinions clearly and has clearly thought about the topic area in some detail. He draws on both his personal experience and wider knowledge of current issues surrounding education when formulating his answers, is able to draw links between different aspects of the general topic area and to offer his own personal judgement about them.

Mark band: 7-9

List of suggested questions for use in the AS Unit 1 Oral Test Section B

Listed below are indications of the type of questions teacher/examiners might use in Section B of the AS Unit 1 speaking test.

In Section B of the AS Unit 1 test, the teacher/examiner should develop a discussion about the general topic area chosen by the student. This discussion should move away from the focus of the stimulus used in Section A to the general topic area and its linked subtopics. There is no requirement to cover all of the subtopics. The teacher/examiner may choose one or more of these subtopics for discussion. The number of subtopics covered will depend on the student's response and the student may have more opportunity to demonstrate the extent of his or her knowledge and linguistic ability through a thorough discussion on one or two subtopics than a superficial discussion of several.

Section B will last for not less than 4 minutes, as part of the overall test which lasts 8-10 minutes.

These questions are not prescriptive, but indicate the type of question that a teacher/examiner might ask. An example is given for each of the prescribed subtopics. Open questions should be used where possible in order to elicit a full response from the candidate.

The general principle of the discussion should always be to start by asking more straightforward, accessible questions and then to move on to questions that can progressively take students towards their 'linguistic ceiling'. The teacher/examiner should encourage the student to expand his or her answers and to give reasons for his or her opinions.

Students will have chosen to be tested on one of the following general topic areas and their subtopics, as listed on page 22 of the specification.

- **Youth culture and concerns**
 - Music and fashion
 - Technology (eg MP3/blogs/mobile phones/internet/games)
 - Relationships (family/friendships and peer pressure)
 - Drink, drugs, sex
- **Lifestyle: health and fitness**
 - Sport and exercise
 - Food and diet
 - Health issues (eg smoking, skin cancer, health services)
- **The world around us: travel, tourism, environmental issues and the Russian-speaking world**
 - Tourist information, travel and transport
 - Weather (eg natural disasters, climate change)
 - Pollution and recycling
- **Education and employment**
 - Education (schooling and higher education)
 - Education policy and student issues
 - The world of work (eg the changing work scene, job opportunities and unemployment)

Youth culture and concerns

Music and fashion

Do you think that young people spend too much money on music/fashion?

Думаете ли вы, что молодые люди тратят слишком много денег на музыку/моду/концерты?

Technology (eg MP3/blogs/mobile phones/internet/games)

What are the advantages and disadvantages of technology?

Какие преимущества и недостатки новых технологий?

Relationships (family/friendships and peer pressure)

Who has more influence on young people, family or friends?

Кто больше влияет на молодых людей, семья или друзья?

Drink, drugs, sex

Why do young people smoke/take drugs/drink alcohol?

Почему молодые люди курят/принимают наркотики/пьют алкоголь?

Lifestyle: health and fitness

Sport and exercise

What role does sport play in society today?

Какую роль играет спорт в жизни общества сегодня?

Food and diet

Do you think that it is important to eat a healthy diet?

Думаете ли вы, что важно правильно питаться?

Health issues (eg smoking, skin cancer, health services)

Are you for or against the smoking ban in public places in the UK?

Запрет на курение в общественных местах в Великобритании – вы за или против?

The world around us: travel, tourism, environmental issues and the Russian-speaking world

Tourist information, travel and transport

Do you often travel abroad?

Вы часто ездите за границу?

Weather (eg natural disasters, climate change)

People often travel these days. Do you think that this affects the climate?

Люди путешествуют много сегодня. Вы думаете, что это влияет на климат?

Pollution and recycling

Are young people interested in the environment?

Интересуются ли молодые люди окружающей средой?

Education and employment

Education (schooling and higher education)

Which are the most important school subjects?

Какие самые важные школьные предметы?

Education policy and student issues

Do you agree that students should pay for university education?

Вы согласны, что студенты должны платить за университетское образование?

The world of work (eg the changing work scene, job opportunities and unemployment)

Which professions are (un)popular today?

Какие профессии (не)популярны в наши дни? Почему?

A2 Unit 3 specimen tests and commentaries

Candidate 5



Comments on the oral assessment

Please note:

This example is of the first part of the A2 Unit 3 test only, that is the introduction by the candidate of her chosen issue, and debate of this issue. In the A2 Unit 3 examination, after debate of the initial issue (chosen by the candidate), the examiner would introduce at least two further, unpredictable, issues for discussion. It is very important that the candidate is not aware which further issues will be introduced.

The test would last for between 11 and 13 minutes in total.

In advance of the test, the candidate has chosen and prepared an issue for debate, 'Abortion should be legalised'. She has informed the examiner of her choice of issue, and the stance that the candidate intends to take on this issue is clear.

The examiner begins the test by inviting the candidate to introduce the issue chosen for debate, and allows her to present this issue and her stance on it, uninterrupted, for just over one minute. This conforms to Edexcel requirements for conduct of this test that candidates will 'outline their chosen issue for about one minute, adopting a definite stance towards the issue'.

After the candidate's introduction, the examiner begins debate about this issue. She challenges the candidate's point of view, acting as 'devil's advocate', in accordance with Edexcel's requirements, and asks challenging questions which allow the candidate to demonstrate the ability to respond at a level appropriate for the A2 examination. It is very important that candidates are asked complex and challenging questions and are thus given the opportunity to demonstrate this ability, in order that they are able to access the entire range of marks available in the assessment grid for *Comprehension and Development*. If the examiner's questions are not sufficiently challenging, then the candidate's chance to access the entire mark range may be jeopardised.

The examiner lets the candidate speak and gives her time to think. She keeps the debate going, encouraging the candidate to develop and to expand her answers. When the candidate seems to dry up, the examiner keeps the debate going by asking another question which follows on from the previous debate. When the candidate cannot answer one question and offers a very short answer to the examiner's subsequent question, the examiner perseveres and the candidate is able to pick up the debate again.

At one point, the examiner supplies the candidate with some vocabulary; this may be reflected in the candidate's mark, but it is up to the professional judgement of the examiner to decide whether such a course of action is necessary to keep the debate going and is, therefore, ultimately of benefit to the candidate to do so. Certainly, this candidate can feel that she has been given every opportunity to demonstrate the full extent of her knowledge and opinion of the issue she has chosen to debate, and to access all levels of the assessment criteria.

After the candidate's initial introduction of about one minute, the issue chosen by the candidate should be debated for up to a further four minutes. This example exceeds that time limit slightly.

Assessment feedback

Please note that this assessment is based on one part of the AS Unit 3 test only. In a genuine assessment, the entire 11 to 13 minutes of the test would be assessed. Marks here are allocated on the assumption that this standard of performance would continue for the entire test.

Response

The candidate is able to respond to most of the questions asked, and to provide comprehensive answers to most of the questions. She uses a wide range of lexis, including abstract vocabulary, relevant to the issue and a variety of structures appropriate at A2 Level to express her point of view. She is able to defend her stance on the issue and to counter the examiner's argument. This candidate has clearly practised debating the issue she has chosen and has prepared a good amount of language to help her to put forward her point of view.

Mark band: 13-16

Quality of language

The language which the candidate has prepared in readiness to debate the chosen issue is accurate and demonstrates a sound grasp of A2 grammatical structures, noun declension, adjective agreement and conjugation of verbs. On occasion her intonation and phrasing lacks a little clarity, but her pronunciation is generally good.

Mark band: 4-6

Reading and research

This candidate has evidently researched the issue thoroughly. She has prepared a detailed introduction to the issue and uses facts and figures to support her argument, in addition to her personal opinion.

Clearly, a candidate might not be expected to provide this level of detail for the unpredictable issues introduced by the examiner after discussion of the issue chosen by the candidate. However, to access the top range of marks for *Reading and research*, the candidate is required to demonstrate 'excellent evidence of in-depth and very wide reading and research into the chosen issue and other topics discussed'.

Were the candidate able to sustain this level of performance for the whole test, she would be likely to be awarded 7 marks out of 7 for *Reading and research*. However, it would be unreasonable to expect this level of detail in the unpredictable issues and a candidate would not necessarily be expected to demonstrate this level of performance in order to access the full range of marks available for *Reading and research*.

Mark: 7

Comprehension and development

As previously mentioned, the examiner poses some complex questions (both in terms of structure and lexis) and the candidate deals well with these, demonstrating comprehension of challenging question forms. Although she struggles to answer on a couple of occasions, she is generally able to provide comprehensive answers and to develop her answers.

Mark band: 11-13

Candidate 6



Comments on the oral assessment

As the candidate in this example chose a topical issue to introduce and then debate, at the time of writing the issue appears a little out of date. However, this test is a good example of how the A2 Unit 3 test might be conducted, even if the issues might seem dated on occasion. The nature of this exam is such that candidates might well choose topical issues for debate, and this is entirely appropriate.

In advance of the test, the candidate has chosen and prepared an issue for debate, «Я верю, что Владимир Путин - плохой руководитель для России». He has informed the examiner of his choice, and the stance that the candidate intends to take on this issue is clear.

The examiner begins the test by inviting the candidate to introduce the issue chosen for debate, and allows him to present this issue and his stance on it, uninterrupted, for just about one minute. This conforms to Edexcel requirements for conduct of this test.

After the candidate's introduction, the examiner begins debate of this issue. She challenges the candidate's point of view, acting as 'devil's advocate', and allowing him the opportunity to demonstrate that he can defend his point of view. She encourages him to examine the issue from different sides and to reveal the full extent of his knowledge of this issue.

The total time spent on the candidate's introduction and debate of his chosen issue is a little over 6 minutes, slightly longer than that required in this specification. For this specification, not more than 5 minutes of the 11-13 minutes total test time should be spent on the introduction and debate of the initial issue chosen by the candidate.

Following debate of the initial issue, the examiner introduces further issues for discussion. The issues she introduces follow logically from the first, allowing the candidate to demonstrate the extent of his knowledge and opinion about politics and Russia's place in the world and thus the overall impression is one of a flowing debate with natural progression.

Throughout the test the examiner encourages the candidate to expand his answers. She gives him time to think and to respond. On the one occasion when the candidate indicates that he does not know much about an issue she introduces, she moves swiftly on to another. This is absolutely acceptable and an example of very good practice on the part of both the candidate and the examiner. This test is designed to let candidates show the full extent of their knowledge and linguistic ability; it is not in the candidate's interest for the examiner to pursue a line of debate with which the candidate is not comfortable. For this reason, examiners should not demand specialised factual knowledge. Rather, as in this example test, they should endeavour to introduce issues about which the candidate can express an opinion, but should not be afraid to challenge that opinion. As mentioned previously, it is only by asking complex and challenging questions that the candidate will be able to access all levels of the mark grids.

Throughout the test, the examiner's tone remains encouraging and she makes every effort to put the candidate at ease, while still pushing him to his 'linguistic ceiling'. She uses a variety of question forms and prompts him to explain his points of view in detail. On one occasion the candidate makes a factual error and the examiner encourages him to correct himself. While examiners should not correct a candidate's language, in an instance such as this a prompt to the candidate to reconsider what he has said is perfectly appropriate. This is, after all, what would be likely to happen in genuine discussion.

In this example of the A2 Unit 3 test, the initial and subsequent issues relate to Russia and politics. This is within the requirements of the specification, but equally it is important to note that candidates have a completely free choice of issue; the issue they choose does not have to relate to the culture and/or society of a country or community in which Russian is spoken, nor does it have to be taken from one of the Edexcel general topic areas. Candidates would be well advised to choose an issue for debate about which they have a strong opinion in order that their argument might be convincing.

Assessment feedback

Response

This candidate is able to respond readily throughout the test. He tries hard to develop his answers to the questions and the impression given is one of a good spontaneous discussion. He uses a range of lexis and structures appropriate to the issues being discussed and has a command of a variety of language which allows him to convey both his knowledge of these issues and his opinion about them.

Mark band: 16-18

Quality of language

As might be expected, there is a difference in the accuracy of the candidate's language when he is debating his chosen issue and the unpredictable issues. He demonstrates a good awareness of case endings and verb conjugations, even if he is not always able to apply them correctly when he is thinking on his feet. His level of intonation and pronunciation allow him to convey a clear message.

Mark band: 4-5

Reading and research

This candidate has prepared his chosen issue with care and has a range of facts and opinions with which he can support his point of view. There is evidence that his level of knowledge is wide-ranging, and he is able to draw on his knowledge in response to unpredictable questions, making links between different themes and expanding his responses effectively. He has sufficient knowledge to introduce relevant facts without prompting from the examiner and is able to include some detail.

Mark band: 5-7

Comprehension and development

The candidate demonstrates comprehension of a variety of question forms, both complex and not so complex. He responds readily even to challenging questions and works hard to develop his answers, very often providing a comprehensive answer to the examiner's questions, volunteering reasons and justification for his opinion.

Mark band: 13-16

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