



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Russian (9RU0) Paper 03

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2406 Principal Examiner's report to centres

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE in Russian (9RU0)

Paper 3 (9RU03): Speaking

This speaking assessment consists of two tasks:

- Task 1 – Discussion on a theme
- Task 2 – Presentation and discussion on candidate's independent research project

Please see the Pearson Level 3 Advanced GCE Russian specification (pp. 19-40) for further details of this assessment, and for the mark grids used for assessment. Please see the same document (pp. 8-9) or the "Advice to Teacher/Examiners" section of this report for a list of the themes and sub-themes for this specification.

The tasks are conducted in consecutive order.

The candidate is rewarded for the ability to demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding of the cultural context by giving ideas, examples and information on one of the themes and on a chosen subject of interest they have researched linked to the Russian-speaking social and cultural context
- the ability to analyse aspects of the cultural context by presenting and justifying valid arguments, viewpoints and conclusions
- the ability to interact and to hold a natural and fluent conversation
- skill in manipulating language accurately
- the ability to respond to written language in speech.

Up to 72 marks are awarded positively for this assessment:

Task 1 – 30 marks:

- 12 marks for Knowledge and understanding of Russian-speaking society and culture (AO4)
- 12 marks for Accuracy and range of language (AO3)
- 6 marks for Interaction (AO1)

Task 2 – 42 marks:

- 12 marks for Responding to Russian written language in speech (AO2)
- 12 marks for Knowledge and understanding of Russian-speaking society and culture (AO4)
- 12 marks for Accuracy and range of language (AO3)
- 6 marks for Interaction (AO1)

Before the examination, the candidate has 5 minutes to prepare Task 1. During this (supervised) preparation time the candidate may make notes (up to one side of A4) but may not have access to a dictionary or any other resource. The candidate takes both the stimulus card and any notes made into the examination, and can refer to these during the assessment. The stimulus card and any notes are collected by the teacher/examiner at the end of the examination.

For Task 1, the candidate chooses one card from a choice of two, on two different sub-themes. The invigilator refers to the sequence provided in the Paper 3 speaking booklet (Instructions to the teacher/examiner) to determine which two sub-themes the candidate will be offered. The invigilator tells the candidate the choice of sub-themes, in English, using the wording for the sub-themes

provided on the randomisation grid, e.g. “You may choose ‘The lives of young Russians’ or ‘Perestroika’”. The candidate does not see the contents of either card until they have chosen the sub-theme.

Pearson issues the teacher/examiner booklet and the stimulus cards to centres before the examining session. These materials are confidential until the end of the examining session for this paper. The dates for the examining session are published in the Pearson examination timetable.

The conduct of the tasks is as follows:

Task 1 – Discussion on a theme (6-7 minutes)

The teacher/examiner asks two compulsory questions, provided on the teacher/examiner version of the card, in the order in which they are written.

These two set questions may be repeated, but, in the interests of comparability, must not be rephrased.

After asking the two set questions, the teacher/examiner asks follow-up questions and broadens the discussion to cover any other aspect or aspects of the overall theme. For example, if the candidate has (from 2024) stimulus RU5, sub-theme: Массовая культура, then after follow-up questions on the topic of the card (цирк) and Массовая культура more generally, the discussion could cover any of the other sub-themes of the theme (Политическая и художественная культура в русскоязычном мире). The other sub-themes in this case are Средства массовой информации and Праздники, фестивали и традиции.

These questions should allow the candidate to demonstrate knowledge of Russian society and culture (Themes 1, 3 and 4) and of the Russian-speaking world (Theme 2).

Teacher/examiners are advised that it is **not** necessary to cover all of the sub-themes in the theme which is being tested. The discussion must move away from the topic of the card (in the case above, цирк), and should allow the candidate to demonstrate breadth of knowledge, but in practice it is usually in the candidate’s interest to explore one or two areas in greater depth than to explore a greater number of areas more superficially.

Task 2 – Presentation and discussion of the Independent Research Project (10-11 minutes in total)

Task 2 consists of two parts:

1. **presentation** of the Independent Research Project (up to 2 minutes)
2. **discussion** of the Independent Research Project (8-9 minutes)

If the candidate’s presentation is shorter than two minutes, then the discussion can be extended, so that the total overall time of Task 2 is 10-11 minutes.

Task 2 Part 1: Presentation of the Independent Research Project (IRP)

During the presentation of the IRP, the candidate:

- summarises at least two of the Russian written sources they have used during their research
- outlines the authors’ main points and ideas
- gives a personal response to what they have read.

These written sources **must** be in Russian. Written articles taken from the internet can be used. The candidate can use video/film and/or other audio sources in addition to written sources, but during the presentation the candidate must refer to **at least two Russian written** sources.

12 marks are available for Task 2 Part 1 (introduction of the IRP). These marks are awarded for “Responding to Russian written language in speech”.

Task 2 Part 2: Discussion of Independent Research Project

The teacher/examiner discusses the IRP with the candidate, using the key findings and list of sources on form RP3 to help formulate questions. The teacher/examiner should ensure that the questions they ask enable the candidate to meet the requirements of the assessment i.e. the teacher/examiner’s questions should elicit examples and information to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the Russian-speaking social and cultural context and to analyse aspects of the topic by developing and justifying arguments and forming conclusions.

Timing

Task 1: 6-7 minutes

Task 2: 10-11 minutes

Timing of both tasks begins from the candidate’s first utterance.

The two tasks are timed independently of each other.

Performance 2024

Many centres this year entered only one or two candidates, and, as a result, not all stimulus cards were used at that centre. However, if centres plan to use this material for practice exams, they should note that all stimulus cards make similar demands of candidates.

Task 1 – Discussion of a theme

Candidates should be aware that 12 of the 30 marks available for this part of the exam are awarded for “Knowledge and understanding of Russian-speaking society and culture”. In order to access the top band for this mark grid, candidates need to offer “relevant, perceptive ideas consistently supported by pertinent information / examples / references”. These need to be “consistently focused on the Russian-speaking cultural and social context”. In addition, candidates need to offer “analysis of the Russian-speaking cultural and social context, demonstrated by consistently developed and justified arguments and viewpoints” and draw “convincing conclusions”.

In order to do this, candidates need to demonstrate knowledge which goes beyond the anecdotal and which reflects research into and understanding of the topic being discussed. The focus of the discussion should be Russia (Themes 1, 3 and 4) or the Russian-speaking world (Theme 2). If the candidate is discussing Theme 2, it is sufficient to refer only to examples from Russia in order to access the full range of marks available. There is no requirement to go beyond Russia to other areas of the Russian-speaking world, though of course candidates may do so if they wish.

A significant number of candidates this year did not offer sufficient information / examples / references to access the full range of marks available for “Knowledge and understanding of Russian-speaking society and culture”, instead relying on general knowledge. These candidates often ran out of material to discuss. Many candidates spoke only in general terms rather than focusing on Russia /

the Russian-speaking context. This was particularly true of answers to cards 1, 2 and 3, where candidates often offered only anecdotal information based on general knowledge and often lost sight of the Russian-speaking context. Some candidates who had card 7, 8 or 9 began by referring to either Moscow or St Petersburg, but later in the conversation lost focus on the situation in the city they had studied and began to discuss, for example, homelessness or the environment in general terms.

However, many candidates were well-prepared and were able to offer facts, figures and specific examples to support the points they made. Such performances were very pleasing. These candidates had clearly researched the A level Russian topics and themes and were able to talk with confidence and conviction about the themes and topics they were discussing.

The teacher/examiner has a significant role to play here. It is important that the teacher/examiner's questions:

- Encourage the candidate to offer information relevant to Russia / the Russian-speaking context
- Encourage the candidate to offer opinion and analysis.

Both teacher/examiners and candidates should know that the statements and questions on the cards are phrased so that candidates can bring into the discussion any relevant information they have. Examples of the type of information that candidates might offer are given in the mark scheme, but these are only examples; there are no "right" or "wrong" answers and examiners always seek to give candidates as much credit as possible for the information they offer. Any relevant information, facts, figures, examples etc. are credited.

Important:

Teacher/examiners and candidates should be aware that candidates are expected to ask a question or questions as part of the Task 1 discussion (Pearson GCE Russian A level specification, p.21). The teacher/examiner's response to any questions should be brief.

Comments on stimulus cards

Stimulus RU1: On occasion the questions on this card were answered well. However, many candidates were not able to offer much information relating to young Russians and the internet, instead talking only in general terms. Conversation often drifted to talk about the uses, pros and cons of the internet in general rather than focussing on the Russian context. In such cases candidates were not able to access the top boxes of the grid for "Knowledge and understanding of Russian-speaking society and culture" which requires the candidate to maintain focus "predominantly" (7-9) or "consistently" (10-12) on the Russian-speaking cultural and social context.

Stimulus RU2: The candidates who answered this card were often able to give information about the teaching of MFL in Russian schools (e.g. the languages studied by Russian pupils, specialist teaching of MFL) and most came to the conclusion that young Russians think it important to study a foreign language. When discussing the topic of education more widely, many candidates were able to demonstrate good knowledge of the Russian education system, often mentioning the ЕГЭ, the curriculum and the structure of the school day in Russia.

Stimulus RU3: Relatively few of the candidates who chose this card were able to offer specific examples when answering the questions about the world of work. Many spoke only in general terms about the issues facing men and women in the world of work and the reasons for unemployment, often losing sight of the Russian context. However, candidates who had studied this topic were able

to discuss topics such as the effect of migrant workers on the employment situation in Russia, or the situation regarding equal pay in Russia.

Stimulus RU4: Candidates who chose this card could often offer opinion about the current situation with regard to the media in different areas of the Russian-speaking world and used appropriate and interesting examples to support the points they made. Many mentioned the work of journalists and high-profile figures.

Stimulus RU5: Most candidates who answered this card were able to offer sound opinion about the popularity of circus as an art form. However, when discussing issues such as the treatment of animals in circuses, many lost sight of the Russian-speaking context and talked in general terms about, for example, public opposition to the use of animals for entertainment. To get a mark in the top box of the mark grid for “Knowledge and understanding of Russian-speaking society and culture”, candidates are expected to include specific detail, for example the names of circuses and circus performers from the Russian-speaking world or the relative popularity of the circus in that part of the world as a form of entertainment.

Stimulus RU6: This topic is always a popular one and was often well-answered by those who chose it, resulting in pleasing performances. Candidates were often able to offer specific details about festivals in the Russian-speaking world in response to the set questions, and to talk in some detail about celebrations when discussion broadened to wider aspects of this theme.

Stimulus RU7: When answering questions from cards 7, 8 and 9, candidates must remember to specify which city (Moscow or St Petersburg) they are discussing. Candidates should know that they are expected to offer information about only one city, there is no expectation that they will talk about both. It was unfortunate that many candidates who chose this card spoke generally about the advantages and disadvantages of life in a big city, losing focus on the Russian city they had studied. Candidates must remember to focus on Moscow or St Petersburg, and the teacher/examiner’s questions should encourage candidates to maintain this focus.

Stimulus RU8: Relatively few candidates chose this card, but those who did were often able to discuss measures put in place to fight crime in the city they had studied. They mentioned, for example, projects to improve street lighting in certain areas of Moscow, or to improve safety on the St Petersburg metro. When discussing this topic, teacher/examiners must be sure that the questions remain focussed on the Russian context; questions such as “How do you think the problem of crime can be solved?” or “Do you live in a safe city?” can lead the candidate away from discussing this issue with regard to Moscow or St Petersburg specifically.

Stimulus RU9: Candidates were often able to talk in some detail about the environment and pollution in the city they had studied. Many had good knowledge about the situation regarding air pollution and the measures being put in place to combat this in Moscow, such as attempts to reduce the amount of traffic in the city centre.

Stimulus RU10: Relatively few candidates chose this card, but those who did often demonstrated good knowledge of Perestroika and the economic changes at that time. They mentioned, for example, foreign investment by companies such as Macdonald’s and Pizza Hut, and the increased opportunity for people to open independent businesses.

Stimulus RU11: As for stimulus RU10, relatively few candidates chose this card but those who did were prepared to talk about the topic in some detail. Many were able to back up the points they made with facts, figures and specific examples. It was clear that many of the candidates who answered this card

had researched the topic well and had good knowledge both of Gorbachev and of the changes taking place in the USSR at that time.

Stimulus RU12: Very few candidates chose this card. However, for candidates with a good knowledge of this theme, it offered an opportunity to talk and to offer opinions about the events of 1991 and the position of both leaders and the general population at that time.

Task 2: Presentation and discussion of Independent Research Project

Choice of topic:

Almost without exception, candidates chose a suitable topic for the IRP i.e. a topic related to the Russian-speaking cultural and social context. On occasion the candidate chose a topic which related to the Russian-speaking context initially, but drifted into more general, global issues. Often topics relating to technology or the environment were prone to do this. On occasion the topic title was a little vague, such as when a candidate chose as their title one of the A level sub-themes, (e.g. Жизнь российской молодёжи).

Many candidates followed the advice in the document “A level Russian – ideas for the independent research project” (available on the Pearson Edexcel website) to phrase the title of and treat the topic in a way which allowed them to access all bands of the mark scheme. In order to be able to demonstrate the ability to “develop and justify arguments and viewpoints”, it is often helpful to phrase the IRP topic as a question, for example “Почему ...?” or “До какой степени ...?”.

Please note that the topic for the IRP must not be one of the texts or films that the candidate has studied for Paper 9RU02.

As in previous series, there were many well-researched topics offered by candidates this year. Many candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge of the topics they had researched and it was a pleasure to listen to their presentations and discussions. Some examples of interesting titles this year include Советские экранопланы, История и традиции русской бани, Коммуналки в СССР, Почему в России не любят Горбачёва?, В СССР люди жили лучше, чем сейчас?, Была ли роль Ленина положительной или отрицательной в истории России?, До какой степени россияне религиозные?, Роль русского языка в объединении и развитии стран СССР, Октябрьская революция: была ли она неизбежной?, Блокада Ленинграда and Сахалин. Many candidates chose a title based on a historical figure; Иван Грозный, Пётр Великий, Достоевский, Майя Плисецкая and Чайковский are often popular choices, and this year there were examples of figures from more recent history such as Виктор Цой, Слава Зайцев, Павел Дуров, Егор Крид and Андрей Сахаров.

<https://www.finam.ru/vox/discussion/v-sssr-lyudi-gili-luchshe-chem-seychas/> **Part 1 – introduction**

A significant number of candidates failed to mention in their introduction the Russian written sources they had used. Instead, they gave an overview of their chosen topic and then began to talk through their ‘findings’ from the RP3 form. Some candidates mentioned the sources they had used but failed to summarise these, or to give a personal reaction to them. A few candidates gave presentations which went beyond two minutes and therefore not all the information they gave on their sources could be credited.

It is **essential** that candidates are aware of the requirements of this part of the test. If only one Russian written source is referred to by name during the introduction, then a maximum of 3 marks of 12 can be awarded. If no Russian written sources are referred to by name during the presentation, then 0 marks are awarded for this part of the test.

Part 2 – discussion of the IRP

The majority of teacher/examiners conducted a sympathetic discussion of the IRP, using the headings on the RP3 form to help them formulate their questions. Teacher/examiners generally allowed and encouraged candidates to show the full extent of their knowledge of the topic they had chosen, and

followed the list of candidate's findings to ensure that the conversation was going in the intended direction. Most teacher/examiners respected the timing of this section of the test.

As for Task 1, teacher/examiners and candidates should be aware that candidates are expected to ask a question or questions as part of the Task 2 discussion (Pearson GCE Russian A level specification, p.21). The teacher/examiner's response to any questions should be brief. Many candidates this year did not ask a question in this section of the test.

This year many candidates seemed just to have copied and pasted information from the internet to use as bullet points on the RP3 form. Such bullet points were not always useful to the candidates during the discussion of their topic. Candidates are advised to think carefully about the bullet points they write; long, involved bullet points with which candidates are not familiar (because the candidate has only copied them, not written them themselves) can serve to confuse candidates during the exam.

Advice for teacher/examiners (Tasks 1 and 2):

- Do not speak too much, keep teacher/examiner intervention to a minimum
- Respect the timing of the exam
- In Task 1, ask the questions **exactly** as they are written on the teacher/examiner version of the stimulus card
- Encourage the candidate to offer knowledge and understanding that relates to Russia/the Russian-speaking context as appropriate (in both parts of the test)
- Ask questions which encourage the candidate to give a critical response to the topics discussed
- Make sure that candidates know that they should ask a question or questions in both Task 1 and Task 2
- Make sure that candidates choose a suitable topic for the IRP i.e., one rooted in the Russian-speaking context
- Make sure that candidates understand the requirements of Task 2 Part 1 (presentation on the IRP) i.e. the requirement to refer to two Russian written sources, summarise these and offer a personal reaction to what they have read.
- Use the headings on the RP3 form to develop discussion of the IRP.

The majority of centres this year followed the instructions for the conduct and for the submission of the speaking test and provided the necessary documentation, including a copy of the RP3 form (one per candidate). Copies of these documents, together with the "Administrative support guide – conducting speaking tests" document are available on the Pearson website (<https://qualifications.pearson.com>). Nearly all the tests received this year were of suitable recording quality.

Where a test is too short it may not be possible for the candidate to access the full range of marks available. Similarly, if the guidance as to the topics to be covered is not followed, the candidate may not be able to access all of the mark grids. **It is therefore essential that the teacher/examiner is aware of the requirements of 9RU03, as incorrectly conducted tests can adversely affect the candidate's mark.** As mentioned previously, further advice about the conduct of the test can be found on the Pearson website.

General – preparation of candidates for the 9RU03 exam:

- Share the mark grids and the indicative content for the SAMs material and previous speaking tests with candidates, so that they are familiar with the requirements of the exam
- Ensure that candidates practise asking questions during the exam
- Ensure that candidates have a “bank” of examples and information that they can use to demonstrate knowledge of Russia (Themes 1, 3 and 4) and the Russian-speaking world (Theme 2). Examples of the type of knowledge that might be used in Task 1 can be found in the indicative content in the mark schemes for 9RU03
- Ensure that candidates practise preparing and responding to the speaking test cards in timed conditions
- Provide candidates with generic phrases and topic-specific vocabulary that can be used in the exam
- Engage the candidate in genuine conversation by responding to what the candidate says and encouraging the candidate to develop and to build on what they say.

Recording and submitting the tests

- Ensure that the recording equipment used is suitable and will provide a clear recording of the candidate’s performance
- Check the recording quality before starting to conduct the tests
- Ensure there are no mobile phones in the examination room; a number of tests this year were interrupted by mobile phones beeping or ringing
- Follow the instructions in the “Administrative support guide – conducting speaking tests” document available on the Pearson website (<https://qualifications.pearson.com>).

A level Russian Themes and sub-themes:

Тема 1: Развитие российского общества

Theme 1 is set in the context of **Russia only**.

Sub-theme 1:

- Жизнь российской молодёжи
- Здоровье; отдых; новые технологии.

Sub-theme 2:

- Образование
- Система образования; жизнь российских школьников.

Sub-theme 3:

- Мир труда
- Отношение к труду; возможности для молодых россиян; равноправие.

Тема 2: Политическая и художественная культура в русскоязычном мире

Theme 2 is set in the context of the **Russian-speaking world**.

Sub-theme 1:

- Средства массовой информации
- Свобода выражения; печатная и онлайн пресса; влияние на общество и политику.

Sub-theme 2:

- Массовая культура
- Музыка, цирк и танец.

Sub-theme 3:

- Праздники, фестивали и традиции
- Фестивали; праздники; обычаи; традиции

Тема 3: Москва или Санкт-Петербург - Изменения в жизни большого российского города

Theme 3 is set in the context of **Russia only**.

Sub-theme 1:

- Изменение населения
- Жизнь в городе; жизнь в пригородах.

Sub-theme 2:

- Общественные проблемы
- Бездомность; преступность.

Sub-theme 3;

- Окружающая среда
- Реконструкция и благоустройства города; загрязнение.

Тема 4: Последние годы СССР – М.С. Горбачёв (1985-1991)

Theme 4 is set in the context of **Russia only**.

Sub-theme 1:

- Перестройка

Что вызвало перестройку; экономические изменения; исходы.

Sub-theme 2:

- Гласность

Что вызвало гласность; общественные изменения; исходы.

Sub-theme 3:

- 1991 год

Проблемы для СССР к началу 1991 г.; путч в августе; распад СССР.