

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCSE Russian (5RU02) Paper 1

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Overall, the examining team was pleased to see a good standard of Russian in the first large cohort of the new specification, with many candidates showing impressive levels of communication and some excellent examining on show. Most centres had clearly prepared their candidates effectively and examiners felt that candidates and Teacher Examiners had responded well to the new topics and examination format. In particular, it was felt that the increased emphasis in the mark scheme on communication was a positive step and that the greater number of marks available for the unit as a whole made distinguishing between candidates easier.

By far the most popular choice of assessment model for task 1 was the presentation with follow-up questions. Most candidates had prepared this effectively and seemed to relish the opportunity to talk about something of interest to them. The topics that worked best with this model were, under *Media, Travel and Culture*, 'My best / worst holiday' and, under *Sport, Leisure and Work*, 'My hobbies'. These topics provided plenty of scope for both closed and open follow-up questions, meaning that they worked effectively for candidates across the ability range.

The picture-based discussion was also chosen by a good number of candidates and proved to be an effective assessment model. 'Holidays' again worked well, as did sporting events, often leading into a discussion of the candidates' own sporting interests, hobbies, healthy lifestyle, etc.

For the second task, the general discussion, candidates and teacher Examiners were at home with this assessment model and some good performances were on show, with the best candidates able to respond in some detail to a range of question types and to offer opinions and justifications in longer, more complex sentences. Candidates aiming at the higher grades were also able to use a range of time frames and to employ some more complex linguistic structures and unusual items of vocabulary. Topics that were discussed with some success included 'Free Time', 'Work Experience', 'Health and Fitness' and 'Media'.

While many centres had clearly understood the requirements of the new specification well and prepared their candidates effectively, a number of centres failed fully to grasp the new requirements and this led to a number of errors in the administration and conduct of the examinations, in some cases with serious consequences for the candidates' performance. The examining team would offer the following advice to centres, to ensure efficient processing of their candidates' submissions and to ensure that candidates have access to the full range of marks available:

- Tests should last a total of 8-10 minutes, with the time divided equally between the two tasks. **Centres should note that an early draft of the assessment requirements stated a total test time of 5-7 minutes. This is INCORRECT and an erratum notice was issued by Edexcel at the time.**
- Tasks lasting less than the minimum 4 minutes are likely to disadvantage the candidate; for excessively long tasks, examiners will stop listening after the maximum 5 minutes.

- The beginning and end of **each** task should be announced, but the recording should **not** be stopped until the entire assessment is complete.
- Each task is assessed separately for Content and Response, Range of Language and Accuracy. As such, candidates must fulfil the requirements of the mark scheme in each task in order to gain full marks. For example, candidates failing to use past, present and future time frames in each task are unlikely to be able to score full marks. Equally, candidates should give and justify a range of ideas and opinions in each task.
- Centres should ensure that appropriate topics are selected for each task and should be careful to note the topic areas in the new specification. 'School', for example, is no longer an appropriate topic area in its own right, although examiners accept that a brief discussion of school might be an appropriate lead-in to a discussion of future employment plans.
- Centres should note that, while candidates are free to choose the broad topic area for the general conversation, the focus of the conversation should NOT be known to them in advance.
- Where candidates undertake a picture-based discussion, a copy of the picture used should accompany the examination materials submitted.
- Centres must ensure that a Mark Record Sheet (available from the Edexcel website), with Section A appropriately completed, accompanies the recording of each candidate.
- Centres should check that all candidates have been successfully recorded before submitting their materials. It is good practice for centres to retain a copy of candidates' recordings, in case of CDs / cassettes / memory sticks becoming broken in transit.
- Examiners were very pleased to receive a number of recordings on CD or memory stick. These formats are very welcome and all centres are encouraged to adopt one or the other, in preference to cassettes.
- When recording candidates, centres should ensure that outside noise is kept to a minimum and that, if an external microphone is used, it favours the candidate rather than the Teacher examiner.

## **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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