

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback Summer 2010

GCSE

GCSE Russian (5RU04)
Unit 4: Writing in Russian

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Unit 4: Writing in Russian (5RU04)

For this first qualification series it was pleasing to note the high performance from candidates. The majority of candidates were well prepared and clear on the requirements for the new specification. Candidates showed a good awareness of the importance of employing past, present and future tenses as well as the requirement to and justify opinions in order to access the full range of marks.

Section A (the short writing task) required candidates to produce a short writing task in Russian (25-50 words) in response to a choice of four questions that relate to both of the prescribed themes (Media, travel and culture/Sport, leisure and work). The task was assessed for communication and knowledge and application of language only.

Stronger candidates performed especially well in this section by responding fully to both of the targeted bullet points and by writing close to the word limit. The majority of candidates did take on board the need to respond to the bullet points but a high number also wrote a number of words which far exceeded the word limit. There was evidence of efficient and effective use of the dictionary to support the content though less convincing responses showed a less secure ability to manipulate vocabulary into the correct grammatical forms.

Question 1a required candidates to discuss travel to and from school. The best answers included responses to both bullet points that required discussion on how the candidate currently travels to and from school and then expanded to discuss how they think travel will change in the future. Less convincing answers did not refer to the future aspect of the question.

Question 1b invited candidates to discuss and describe a favourite television programme. This was to be expanded by describing a favourite episode. Stronger answers gave good reasons for liking the programme with details about an episode. Less convincing answers did not discuss a particular episode but simply described the programme in general terms. The least convincing answers simply listed people involved in the programme.

Question 1c was by far the most popular question in section A. Candidates had to describe the sports that they and their friend took part in and then discuss which sports they would like to do in the future. The best answers involved full descriptions of sports offered in school which everyone takes part in. Less convincing answers did not make reference to sports done by friends but just involved a list of sports done by the candidate. The secondary part of the question led to some interesting ambitions from candidates with a lot of reference to extreme sports.

Question 1d required candidates to respond to a job advertisement with a requirement to give personal details and then give reasons as to when and why the candidate had chosen to learn Russian. The first part was well answered with competent basic details about the candidate and stronger candidates responded well to the second part with several strong descriptions of having spent some time in Russia as the reason for speaking the language.

Section B (the longer writing task) required candidates to produce some extended writing in Russian (at least 90 words). Candidates had to choose one of four possible tasks that related to both of the prescribed themes. Tasks offered

opportunities for candidates to narrate, express opinions and to justify points of view. The task was assessed for communication, knowledge and application and accuracy of language. Stronger candidates performed especially well in this section by responding fully to both of the targeted bullet points and by writing in the appropriate register. As in section A there was much evidence of efficient and effective use of the dictionary to support the content though less convincing responses showed a less secure ability to manipulate vocabulary into the correct grammatical forms.

Question 2a was a popular option which required candidates to write an article for the school magazine giving reasons for participation in a school trip. Candidates had to elaborate by giving their impressions of the trip. The most convincing answers described the educational value of the experience as well as describing the other participants on the trip. There were convincing accounts of trips to improve language skills as well as many descriptions of sporting trips. Weaker candidates wrote competent answers describing a holiday but did not make any reference to the fact that this was a school trip. Some candidates also described holidays with family but this did not respond to the task.

Question 2b invited candidates to describe an admired celebrity with reasons as to what this celebrity had done. The best candidates gave full descriptions of the actions of the admired celebrity with reference to charitable works or the biography of the celebrity. Less convincing responses merely described the celebrity with no depth to what the person had done to warrant admiration.

Question 2c was the least popular choice. The question required candidates to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of work experience as well as requiring candidates to discuss their own experience. Candidates who attempted this question gave good answers with competent use of past tenses to describe personal experience and competent use of the future tense to describe future work plans in light of work experience.

Question 2d was the most commonly answered question of this section. Candidates had to describe how teenagers spend their weekend and then give an account of how the candidate had spent the previous weekend. The vast majority of candidates responded very well to the second part of the task and showed very good ability to describe a weekend. Stronger answers also coped well with the requirement to discuss how teenagers spend the weekend. A range of interesting responses gave insight into the different regions where candidates live. Less convincing answers did not refer to how teenagers in general spend weekends but spent too long describing the weekend of the candidate alone. This did not deal with the requirement of the task.

The general feeling from this exam was that candidates were well prepared. There were some highly impressive performances from candidates at the top end of the ability range, not only in terms of the range of grammatical structures and vocabulary produced, but also in the sophistication of their opinions and points of view. The introduction of the dictionary on the whole allowed candidates to give impressive and fluent answers although there is some need to ensure sufficient practice in language manipulation.

Sport, leisure and work was the most commonly chosen topic this year.

As for the previous specification there was some evidence of candidates who have some knowledge of Russian but whose main language is another Slavonic language. Often their written work is highly influenced by these languages and accuracy suffers as a result. Spelling shows evidence of being more phonetic and inaccurate. A small number of answers showed evidence of misreading/misunderstanding the questions. Centres are encouraged to ensure that candidates have a sufficient grasp of written Russian to enable them to perform to their best in this paper as well as giving candidates sufficient practice in responding to task types.

Advice and Guidance

- Read all instructions carefully
- Candidates must include past and future tenses in their answer to access the higher mark bands
- Check verbs endings carefully
- Check spellings carefully
- Consider handwritten form of letters
- In question 1 make sure that both bullet points are addressed
- Beware writing a generic essay which does not fully address the question in question 4
- Remember that a mark of zero for communication and content will mean a mark of zero for knowledge and application of language and for accuracy.
- Avoid spending too long writing an excessively long answer for section A
- Make sure that the answer to section B is at least 90 words. A shorter answer will result in less marks being awarded for knowledge and application of language and for accuracy
- Make sure that the dictionary is employed appropriately
- Make sure to cross the correct "question answered" box

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw mark boundary	50	44	37	30	24	19	14	10	6	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	80	72	64	56	48	40	32	24	16	0

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

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