

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
in Russian (5RU02/01)
Paper 2: Speaking in Russian

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GCSE Russian
Unit 2 Speaking in Russian
Examiner Report

Overall, the examining team was pleased to see many examples of well-prepared candidates being well examined and some very good candidate performances. Large centres with mostly learner candidates tended to demonstrate the best practice in terms of preparing and examining their candidates effectively, as well as in adhering to the correct administrative procedures for the examination, although a good number of smaller centres or those with native-speaker candidates only also demonstrated good practice this year. The centres whose candidates performed best were those who understood the crucial role of the Teacher-Examiner as a facilitator in allowing candidates to access the full range of the mark scheme by asking appropriate questions that elicit a full range of tenses (top marks are unlikely to be awarded for either task unless examples are heard of past, present and future time frames) and by ensuring that the candidates themselves are well aware of the mark scheme's requirements. Candidates who understood the importance of taking the initiative and developing more extended answers that included justified opinions, as well as of ensuring that a verb was always used in the answer, were best placed to perform well. Where candidates did not perform well or their performance was restricted, this was most often due to Teacher-Examiners not asking appropriate questions or not conducting the examination according to the instructions laid out in the Specification or in Pearson's I.C.E document or training video for conducting the oral exams (both available via the Edexcel website www.edexcel.com). Specific advice on these areas is also offered later in this report.

For Task 1, the presentation with follow-up questions was once again the most popular choice of task type, although more examples were seen this year of candidates choosing the picture-based discussion. Centres should beware attempting to merge these task-types, however – a number of examples were seen of a 'picture-based presentation', which is not a task type option for this examination. The vast majority of candidates opting for *Media, Travel and Culture* for Task 1 chose to give a presentation about their holidays. This worked well as a topic choice, allowing plenty of room for opinions and justifications, as well as providing plenty of opportunity to elicit time frames through follow-up questions on future holiday plans and opinions about holidays and travel in general. A number of candidates also chose to talk about a celebrity under this topic area, which also worked well in many cases, although Teacher-Examiners had to be a little more creative in ensuring that all the time frames were given adequate coverage. Candidates opting for the picture-based discussion under *Media, Travel and Culture* almost exclusively based their discussion upon a picture of them on holiday. Centres should note at this juncture that a copy of the picture used for this option should be submitted to the examiner along with the candidate's Mark Record Sheet (MRS).

Most candidates opting for *Sport, Leisure and Work* for task 1 selected Hobbies or Free Time as the broad basis for their task, with some excellent presentations being heard on candidates' hobbies and a number of picture-

based discussions centring around images of the candidate taking part in their favourite sport. These topics again lent themselves well to eliciting opinions and to covering the range of tenses. **Unfortunately, a number of centres continue to prepare their candidates to discuss the topic of School Life. This is not a topic for this specification and centres who prepare their candidates to discuss this topic are placing their candidates at a considerable disadvantage, as irrelevant material cannot be given credit.**

Some very pleasing performances were also heard for Task 2, the general conversation. Candidates were able to undertake conversations and express ideas and opinions on a range of topics, with the best candidates showing considerable initiative in responding to open questions and the most effective Teacher-Examiners ensuring that complex language, a range of tenses and a number of justified opinions were elicited from the candidate. Where candidates were less successful on this section, in many cases this was the result of Teacher-Examiners using exclusively closed questions, which did not allow candidates enough opportunity to show initiative and extension in their answers, or of centres not conducting the exam correctly – a number of centres, for example, allowed candidates to give a presentation in Task 2; this is not part of the assessment for Task 2 and is likely to disadvantage candidates, as the task should be a dialogue throughout.

While the majority of centres' preparation of candidates, conduct of the exam and completion of the associated administration was excellent, a disappointingly high number of centres continued to make serious errors of both conduct and administration, in many cases with very serious consequences for their candidates. Clear guidance on all aspects of the preparation and conduct of the oral examination is available via the Edexcel website in the form of the Specification, the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination document and via a training video giving comprehensive advice on preparing for and conducting the GCSE oral exam for the lesser-taught languages. In addition, the examining team would offer the following specific advice to centres, to assist them in avoiding common pitfalls and to help them ensure their candidates are able to perform to the best level of which they are capable:

- Candidates must complete **two** tasks, each lasting 4-5 minutes; the first must be a picture-based discussion **or** presentation with follow-up discussion, the second must be a general discussion on a chosen topic area. The second task should not include any form of presentation by candidates, but should be a dialogue throughout. Centres should note that this is **not** a Controlled Assessment unit and that the two tasks should be recorded as a single assessment.
- Tests should last a **total** of 8-10 minutes, with the time divided **equally** between the two tasks. 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 (in **English**), 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.
- It is essential that Teacher-Examiners ensure that appropriate topics are selected for each task, noting in particular that some of the topics that appeared on the old GCSE specification are no longer appropriate topics. '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. Where an inappropriate topic such as 'school' is discussed for an entire task or a significant portion of a task, candidates are unlikely to be able to score highly.
- 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 and standard sequences of questions should not be used in the assessment or rehearsed in advance.
- Where candidates undertake a picture-based discussion, a copy of the picture used must 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 not complete Section B – this is for use by the Edexcel-appointed examiner.
- Centres should check that all candidates have been successfully recorded before submitting their materials. This includes finalising audio CDs after burning, so that they can be played on a normal CD player. **It is good practice for centres to retain a copy of candidates' recordings, in case of CDs / memory sticks becoming broken in transit.**
- Centres should note that it will no longer be possible to submit recordings on cassette after this examination series.
- 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

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<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

