

GCSE

This Examiners' report relates to mark scheme

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Examiners' Reports

GCSE

Russian (1241)

June 2003

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Russian 1241

New Specification Summer 2003

Although 2003 was the first year of the new specification for all languages, the Russian was the only one to change from two tiers to one tier.

i Performance in this year's examination was again of a high standard. The new Specification provided continuity from the old, particularly in the Listening and Reading Tests.

The more significant changes in the Speaking Test, and to some extent the Writing Test, served to make the papers more accessible to the vast majority of candidates. Candidates found no difficulty in adjusting to the new formats.

As in previous years candidates' performance was at its best in the Speaking Test. Performance in Listening and Reading was also of a high standard, with overall scores in Listening being the better of the two, again in accordance with expectations.

Performance in the Writing Test was generally good but, as usual, this paper proved to be the one where candidates most need to focus their efforts for improvement. Issues specific to individual papers, which affected the performance of some candidates, are referred to in the following reports.

Paper 1

Listening and Responding

Candidates' Performance

- Q1-Q4** The vast majority of candidates, with the exception of a few who did not recognise на велосипеде, did very well in these opening questions.
- Q5-Q8** Weather vocabulary was well known and did not pose many problems.
- Q9** Candidates from some centres found this question more challenging than expected, but the majority did well in recognising various types of holiday accommodation.
- Q10** Most candidates coped well with this type of question and their answers in Russian language were well presented. Many candidates tried to write '12' as a word – this is not required. Some candidates gave extra detail showing their excellent understanding of the extract heard.
- Q11-Q15** This question was aimed at higher grades, but, perhaps due to its place in the question sequence, was attempted by most candidates, with even weaker candidates showing a pleasing performance and being able to score up to 2-3 marks.
- Q16-Q17** A 'trough' in level after a 'peak' – very well done by the overwhelming majority of candidates.
- Q18** Some candidates had problems recognising учитель, but most did well matching professions to spoken extracts correctly.
- Q19** This was another question aimed at higher grades. On the whole, candidates coped well with selecting matching information from multiple-choice suggestions. Most difficulties were encountered with understanding how Elena and Aleksandr were related (there were two clues in the extract – молодая пара and недавно поженились).
- Q20- Q21** Most candidates knew household tasks vocabulary well.
- Q22** This question was also well done and most candidates matched the information on preferred celebrations correctly.
- Q23-Q25** Only a few candidates had difficulties with these questions but some tried to write the numerals as words, despite the numeric '15' provided in the example.
- Q26** A pleasing number of candidates coped well with this question. A lot of candidates conveyed the information about the good service/good cuisine in (ii). За границу in (i) was also well known. Part (iii) was the most challenging and many took экскурсии to mean 'excursions' rather than 'guides'.
- Q27** On the whole candidates did well in (i) and many relayed the information about other sports being boring with no risk involved. Опасный in (ii) was quite well known, but there were many incorrect interpretations of the information regarding мало времени остаётся для учёбы в университете – a significant number understood that Анна couldn't go to university altogether. (iii) The adjective известный did not seem to be as well known as expected. The use of похожий in that context was taxing for many, but nevertheless, a good number of candidates did well in (iii), conveying the amount of detail expected in the mark scheme and showing ability to cope with material aimed at higher grades.

General observations

It was pleasing to see many weaker candidates who in the previous syllabus would be entered for Foundation paper attempting all questions, and scoring points where they would not be expected to gain points in the past. Some pupils, however, 'gave up' too early and did not appear to make much effort with the last 8-10 questions. It is important to emphasise the 'peaks and troughs' nature of the paper to the candidates – their perseverance to the end is very likely to bring them extra marks!

Paper 2 Speaking

Performance

Individual Questions:

The markers enjoyed listening to this year's tapes and are pleased with the positive responses most candidates gave.

The vast majority of candidates seemed to have been well prepared for this year's examination. Most were given the opportunity to use a range of tenses and express opinions, and thus accessed the higher mark bands of the assessment criteria in the mark scheme.

The new specification does not include role plays and this change has greatly reduced the number of incidents of candidates losing marks through some teacher examiners' poor conduct of the role plays.

Teacher examiners seemed to be better prepared this year in a subject where the person conducting the test is often not a teacher at the centre. Better preparation by teacher examiners allowed more candidates to achieve the marks of which they were capable.

Although there were very few **exceedingly** long tests, some teacher examiners found it difficult to adhere to the **stipulated maximum of 12 minutes**, split over three topics. As has been mentioned in previous reports, there is little to be gained by taking longer than the required time, especially as weaker candidates simply get more distressed. As a rule of thumb teacher examiners should endeavour to spend no less than 3 and no more than 4 minutes on each topic.

Teacher examiners are also reminded that the candidate's introduction to first topic should last no longer than one minute. The highest marks for Communication are awarded to candidates who respond to 'a wide range of question types', so allowing a candidate to speak in a monologue for too long will disadvantage the candidate.

The most popular choices for the first topic (chosen by candidates) were 'School', 'Home Town' and 'Holidays'. The last of these particularly lends itself to a range of tenses. 'Education' also produced some very competent conversations. This year most teacher examiners gave the candidate chances to use all three tenses, but some did not and thus jeopardised the candidate's chances of accessing the entire mark range. In asking questions on a topic, there are still some examiners who limit themselves to the suggested questions from Edexcel, thereby removing the spontaneity expected.

Administrative Matters:

The vast majority recordings were of acceptable or better quality this year.

Very few centres needed reminding to send the correct documentation, but there were some who did not send LT3s, or sent the incorrect L3 form (used for French, German etc.). Several did not send the attendance register, or sent it unsigned.

In this new specification teacher examiners must take each candidate's 2nd and 3rd topics from a prescribed sequence in the Examiner's Handbook. Several centres did not follow the prescribed sequence. However, centres should familiarise themselves with the correct procedure from the 'Instructions for Conduct' and 'Examiner's Handbook' booklets. The sequence is compulsory and an essential part of the security of the examination. This year these candidates were not disadvantaged but centres who do not keep to the sequence in future may be putting their candidates' results at risk.

Paper 3

Reading and Responding

Candidates' Performance

The majority of candidates completed paper 3 successfully and most responses showed good evidence of the candidates' ability. Most candidates coped fairly well with the range of questions. Candidates should be encouraged to practise reading to extract gist for some of the more difficult questions.

On multiple choice questions and questions where they must tick a certain number of boxes (eg Q1 and Q2), candidates lose marks if they tick more boxes/choices than required.

In general though, candidates should remember that marking is positive, and a wrong answer will not score less than the 0 scored by not answering the question. Candidates may therefore score higher marks if they attempt all the questions, even if they are not confident their answers are correct.

On Q3 a number of candidates incorrectly inserted words from the text rather than from the box. The rubric for this question type will be clearer in the future. Some candidates who did not read the text closely enough and would benefit from practice in this question type.

On Q6 there were no significant problems, but questions (iv) and (v) did prove to be slightly more difficult than anticipated.

On Q7 a surprisingly significant minority did not know **бюро обслуживания**.

Q10 proved to be suitably challenging, but the most able candidates scored full or nearly full marks. Candidates should be encouraged to attempt all questions and be reminded that these A* targeted questions require precise and accurate answers. For example in Q10(a) 'advocate' was not accepted and in Q10(b) mention of the birth of a son was required. On Q10(c) a significant number did not know **взрослые** and guessed 'colleagues' or 'friends'. and some did not know **самый важный** on Q10(d).

Paper 4 Writing

This paper, combining papers 4F and 4H from the previous specification, seemed to offer few problems for this year's candidates. They appeared to attack the question paper with gusto and the vast majority gave a good account of themselves.

Question 1

This offered no real problems and very few answers were rejected.

Question 2

Quite a few candidates used *предметы* for lessons, or merely said what time they go to school. A surprising number missed out the word for Monday. Even some very good candidates failed to say **why** they liked their favourite subject – centres should ensure candidates read questions carefully. The last bullet point caused the most problems. Many candidates used *перерыв* or *перемена* without any idea of lunch. Cleverer candidates included eating lunch as one of the activities and so got around the question. In this question answering the **basic** points is enough to attract high marks.

In Questions 3 and 4, fuller answers than for Question 2. are required to gain marks in the highest bands.

Question 3

This was generally done very well indeed. The main fault seemed to be candidates failing to mention their holiday **by the sea**. Candidates should remember to follow the rubric and answer all the bullet points. Some scored the marks by alluding to a swim later on, but quite a few candidates didn't mention the sea and began the letter by talking about the hotel, so were not able to gain marks in the top band for communication. All candidates did the last bullet point well. Some didn't use the future tense, but used *я хочу* instead, which was accepted.

Question 4

Slightly fewer candidates attempted Question 4a than 4b, but those who did made a good job of it. Examiners were treated to some very original ideas for the first bullet point (not doing homework, falling asleep in class, even shouting at the teacher because he/she was boring). Many candidates didn't say directly what their parents had said, but communicated the point acceptably by implying what was said in writing about their punishment. The future tense was used very successfully by virtually all candidates, even those who struggled with the past. The last bullet point was the most taxing and there was some repetition from earlier points in the account by some candidates.

Question 4b was quite a difficult question but it was tackled well. Many candidates could not express illness in the past tense and this marred their essays. The second and third bullet points were, as expected, often indistinguishable in candidates' answers, and their interpretations of what was required varied. Examiners were flexible on this point, especially if the rest of the account was good. While it was hoped that candidates would say what they were doing **when** the accident happened, examiners accepted what they had done **earlier**, and some included this in the first part of the answer. The fourth point was dealt with surprisingly well and often at length. Interestingly, most candidates sang the praises of the Russian clinic (perhaps hoping this would score extra marks). The very best essays linked the last bullet point to the rest of the account eg by saying they were going to Spain to avoid the cold weather which had caused their illness in Russia.

In this first year of the new specification, both Questions 4a and 4b were designed to afford candidates greater structure in writing their essays. Centres should note that the full range of essay question types allowed by the specification, including more open-ended rubrics, will be used in future years.

It should be stressed again that writing far less than the prescribed word count will almost certainly result in lower marks for Communication and that as a general rule writing (sometimes) pages more than the word count in answer to Question 4 does **not** attract higher marks.

Some candidates in some centres did not attempt Question 4 at all, as though they had only prepared for questions with equivalents on the old specification Foundation paper. Centres should encourage all candidates to write something (even just a few lines) for their Question 4 answer as **all relevant work** will be credited. This may give some candidates more marks and be a truer reflection of their abilities to communicate in written Russian.

Statistics

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

1241 – total number of home candidates entered:

1241 Component	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Mean Mark	Standard Deviation	% Contribution to Award
Paper 1	50	37.4	7.2	25
Paper 2	20	18.4	2.8	25
Paper 3	50	35.8	7.6	25
Paper 4	55	40.5	10.5	25

Paper Grade Boundaries				
Grade	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
A	39	17	38	45
C	29	12	28	36
F	15	5	15	16

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Boundary mark	100	90	80	70	60	49	38	28	18

1241

Provisional statistics for the award (282 home candidates)

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	23.2	53.8	78.1	90.6	95.4	97.9	99.1	99.9

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